Glitch
Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/643718.

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Glitch
by animegrl1047

Summary

The thing that sucks being a time traveler is meeting your ancestors. It's another problem when they think you're irresistible. And you're in a FUBAR situation when they won't let you return to your time. Desmond realizes firsthand why both Altair and Ezio won't let anything get away from them... especially if he's the only one to save the world from Abstergo.

Notes

This is the first time I wrote anything with SLASH. I have not played the game at all; I just watch videos and read up on wiki about some of these events happening... which means I know I will get blasted on for any sort of inaccuracies or parts that you all will hate me for (please see the warning).

So if you plan to flame me, please do the following, allow others to enjoy the story, and let me know in private about the inaccuracies.

Please enjoy this.
Part 1: Chased

Desmond... was screwed.

As of now, he is stuck in the time period where the Renaissance was at its peak; people were enjoying life or arguing with politics, trying to make the city and their nation rich as it is. A flourish of the arts and reviving the values of the fallen Greek empire were still fresh in Italy.

With it came several feuds, betrayals, questioning morals, and deaths.

The Templars were also expanding (even after most of them were executed from the results of the ill-fated Crusades) bit by bit; with it, the Assassins began to expand throughout the nations in Europe, Asia, and other areas where the threat of Templars are.

Desmond was used to it; in fact, he was once a captive of the said Templars... except it wasn't at the time he was in right now. In fact, he sticks out like a sore thumb, even in a Venetian crowd. It would've helped if he have gotten the proper clothing on in time...

...if not for the two certain Assassins that were chasing him a while ago.

Thanks a lot, he mentally growls, glancing over in the empty room before he decides to grab the bag to put away his modern clothing so he can change to the more appropriate clothing time.

Thank God Leonardo da Vinci was willing to hide him for the time being.

He immediately takes off his hood, leaving him with his black shirt before rapidly taking off his sneakers and jeans. Finding the dark brown pants and boots the Italian painter left out for him (at least Leonardo had an idea that the time traveler was being chased when Desmond (rapidly in his semi-okay Italian) begged the painter to hide him from his enemies and to prepare the spare clothing before anything else happened.

Desmond hopes that they didn't follow him here.

As soon as he puts on the boots, he hears a knock before calling (again, in his broken Italian), "Come in!"

For once, he was happy to see the blonde painter open the door, "Leonardo, thank you again for your help."

"Ah, no problem, amico," Leonardo replies before handing Desmond his newly polished and sharpened weapon, "Don't mind me asking, but I thought you needed more time back at your... how
"do you say it... time?"

"I thought so too," Desmond grumbles back before seeing Leonardo’s questioning look, "Something happened... that did not go too well."

"Did it involve what you were searching for?"

It was also a good thing Shaun told Desmond to get on the famous painter’s good side before revealing his actual goal (time traveling is still a terrible idea...). Surprisingly, instead of anger, Desmond got lots of questioning- rather, it was a lot of curious inquiry- from Leonardo da Vinci himself. In return for all the knowledge Desmond gives him about the technology in his world, Leonardo allows his services to Desmond... as long as whatever Desmond mentions about the present time remains as a secret.

What he wasn’t counting on (and why oh why did he forget about this stupid little fact) was that Leonardo da Vinci was a good friend to one Ezio Auditore da Firenze.

At the moment he realized that, he panicked and told Leonardo to never let his ancestor see him (to which Leonardo surprisingly agreed too).

...speaking of, now might be a good time to mention that.

"No, not yet," Desmond grimaces, "But... remember that favor I requested?"

Leonardo frowns, now speaking in English, "Are you talking about not meeting my good friend Ezio?"

The time traveler gapes in surprise, dumbfounded, "Wha- How-"

"I have some books that were from England," Leonardo smiles, "And I read your... journal, was it?"

Desmond is going to kill Shaun and Clay when he gets back.

"Do not worry, amico," Leonardo assures him, "I will not expose you for my own sake nor my friend's. I'm merely here to aid you on your journey."

"Thanks," Desmond mutters, standing up to place on his hidden blade and the dark grey coat before placing on the hood, "Thank you for the clothing... if anyone asks for me, 'Dominico' has left and will not return until notice."

Thanks for Clay for thinking up the alias... and from the way Leonardo is staring at him, Desmond knew his cover was blown.

Leonardo chuckles, hearing the ridiculous name, "No problem, Desmond. Make sure to say hello to your friends for me."

So much for the alias. He stares at Leonardo, who is stifling his laughter, "I will, don't worry," Desmond nods, leaving through the door and out through the window to the three-story jump. Once he lands on the deserted alleyway (his feet numbs on impact, but Desmond got used to it), he stands up and places his ear piece before hissing, "Hey, hey! Anyone there?" At this point, he finds one of the hats he sees most Venice men wear (it was plumed, no doubt), takes off his hood, and places it on to cover the ear piece.

"Desmond? Oh thank GOD!" It was Lucy. However, unlike before in the ancient city of Jerusalem, he can hear Lucy a little better, "Guys! It's Desmond! He's alive!"
"He's not dead? Oh good," His eye twitched when he hears Shaun, "We were just debating about sending Conner or Clay to where you are."

"Shut up," Desmond quietly mutters as he blends in with the crowd. Thank goodness most people don't care about what he wears, "Did you guys pinpoint where I am?"

"Unfortunately... no," Rebecca's voice comes in, "Not even the Animus can keep up with what happened earlier."

"Great," He groans, "...I'm in Ezio's time, in case you want to know."

"That's somewhat good."

"Somewhat... good? What the hell's good about being in Italy in all places?"

"The reception is a bit better than Jerusalem," Lucy again.

"Oh. ...And tell Clay and Shaun when I get back, they're dead."

"Wait, why?" Clay's voice comes in. Desmond can hear the British man sputtering, "What did I do?"

"Leonardo da Vinci knows English, thanks to you two," Desmond looks around to make sure he isn't being followed before focusing back on walking on the road through the marketplace, "And now I'm sure he's laughing at me speaking Italian!"

"Ah come on, Des! It's not our fault you only had two weeks to learn Italian!" It was an amused Clay, "And plus, Rebecca and I helped you on it!"

"With Shaun laughing in," Lucy was giggling; Desmond can hear Shaun and Clay laughing in the background.

"Shut up and help me get out of here!" Desmond resists the urge to scream out loud at his currently distracted comrades, but he knew better, "I need help!"

"Did you at least get what we need?" Connor's voice. Straight and cut to the point.

"The way to find the last Piece of Eden?" Desmond grimaces, recalling how he got his hands on it. It wasn't pretty, considering that he was forced to pickpocket one of the greatest Assassins and ancestor Altair Ibn-La'Ahad out of all people... (before he wound up being the chase), "Yeah, I have it. What's the hold up?"

"Like we said, we don't know," Rebecca again, and this time, she sounds irritated, "It looks like the Animus did something odd."

Already the time traveler doesn't like the sound of that.

Connor sighs heavily, "While you were being chased around in Jerusalem, the portal to Renaissance Italy opened when it wasn't supposed to be."

"What!" Desmond gapes, "I thought we patched that one up!"

"We did, but it opened anyway," Rebecca groans, "Looks like I have to fix Baby up..."
Rebecca's 'baby' being the Animus 2.0.

"But how?" Desmond was now sure he got weird looks from people, but he ignored it as he does another sweep to make sure he wasn't being followed... so why was there this creeping feeling on his neck?

"Rebecca has to look into the Animus system again, and it'll take her a while to fix it... even with all of our help," Shaun replies, irritation seeping in through, "It'll take about- how long was the last time we fixed it?"

"About forty-eight hours," Clay mutters, "...non-stop."

"About two days?" Desmond hisses, horrified, "I don't know if I can last that long!"

"Why?" Connor asks... before his voice changed from being concerned to a slow building anger, "Desmond..." ...crap.

"What... the hell happened while you were in Jerusalem?"

Considering how much Connor doesn't swear, Desmond knew Connor is pissed off.

"Shit, let's see what happened..." Desmond's feeling of being watched was still there, so he decides to walk a bit faster, "I've been sent to Jerusalem to get the last map for that Piece of Eden before someone else takes it; when I got to that building, that map was gone, so I had to find it."

"And how did you find it, exactly?"

Connor better not kill me for this... "I found out that Altair had it, so I had to... um, pickpocket him while he was on his way home."

Silence.

"And then- well..." That feeling is getting closer... Desmond begins to walk faster, quickly maneuvering over the people that were incoming, "...somehow, he found out I had the map, I panicked when I saw him following me, and got into a fight with a couple of guards before running off!"

"I knew this was going to happen!" He hears Shaun groan.

"I'm not finished!" Desmond realizes he is being followed, but by who... he doesn't want to know, "Next thing I know, I was getting cornered by the guards when Altair cuts in, but I managed to get away towards a safer area before I saw the portal open-

"You mean that glitch- hey, Des, you okay?" Clay interrupts, hearing Desmond's light breathing as the time traveler begins to run.

"Clay, shut it-to where I am now, out of all places," Desmond is now panicking as he clutches onto the hat that was threatening to blow away from his run, having familiar feeling of who the hell is trying to track him, "And Altair manages to trap me before I went through the portal!"

Now he can hear the Clay and Connor groaning while hearing Lucy, Rebecca, and Shaun trying to find a portal spot for Desmond to go through into his own time, "The next thing I know, I land on
top of Ezio, out of all people, the guy tries to hit on me, I run away when I saw Altair coming towards where I was, I don't know if those two had a fight, I get to Leonardo's place, got changed, and for the love of God, hurry up with the portal so I can leave this place!"

"WHAT THE HELL'S HAPPENING OUT THERE, DESMOND!" Connor demands.

"I'm being hounded by someone and I don't want to get caught, Connor!"

He can hear Connor curse under his breath.

"Guys! Something's wrong with the Animus!" Rebecca exclaims, "I can't get a portal site ready!"

Oh no nonononono...

And to make Desmond's situation even worse, he sees some guards approaching him, wondering what the hell is going on.

...I'm fucked! He pales before rounding around towards an alleyway that leads towards the plaza. The guards yell at him to stop-

"What the hell! This never happened except when... hang on-" Shaun exclaims before yelling at Rebecca about-

"Hey you! STOP!" He can hear a guard before he can focus on his friends' conversation, which was now a flurry of yelling and some static. When he turns around, he sees a couple of guards with their weapons up... all of them with the hidden Templar symbol on their ensigna.

Ah crap.

"You better come with us, stranger!" One of the guards bark, "NOW!"

Desmond groans as he takes his earpiece off before placing it inside the bag, "Can my day get any better?" He slowly walks towards the guards... before rushing towards them, swiftly striking at a guard with his hidden blade.

Instantly, all the guards begin to attack Desmond, some of them missing as they strike their weapons towards him. Desmond, on the other hand, had some degree of experience (not just from experience of the memories, but thanks to the training he gets from his family) as he dodges from the guards' attacks and stabbing some of them with his blade.

In one fluid motion, he manages to disarm a guard before stabbing him, taking out a small dagger (thanks to Clay) before killing the next guard and grabbing his weapon, jabbing one end at another guard while striking the other before knocking them out with his hands. After looking around to see if anyone saw him (there was nobody, thank God), he shoves the killed guards inside a pile of nearby hay (that nobody was using) and gags the knocked out guards with their jackets. Sighing in relief, he takes out the hat he was wearing and placed it on one of the guards heads before placing his hood on.

"Now I've got to see how the other are-"

"Don't move!"

Desmond forgot a lone guard.
"Shit," he curses before-

A cloud of smoke hits the alleyway, assaulting their senses. The guard yells out something in panic; Desmond realizes very well who threw that smoke bomb as he covers his mouth and nose to prevent from breathing in the smoke with his right arm.

*I've got to get out of here!* Desmond was about to bolt from the alleyway when he hits against something hard, "Owwwwwowowowowowowowowowowowowowow-

-when someone grabs him and lowers the arm that was guarding his face.

*"There's no use from running away, little sparrow,"* Desmond freezes, a certain Italian assassin purring at his ear before it turns into a soft whisper, *"Forgive me, tesoro mio... for what happens next."

*"Wha-MMPHF!"* Desmond's eyes widen as he feels a cloth cover his face, a lightly sweet smell assaulting him... before his mind got cloudy. His body goes limp as he begins to collapse against a warm body. As Desmond struggles to keep his eyes open he sees Ezio Auditore da Firenze with a victory smirk (looking down at Desmond) before hearing another voice-

*"Not bad, little fledgling. But you need to do better."

Desmond's eyes shifts to see Altair Ibn-La'Ahad withdraw his blade from the dead guard before his dark amber eyes shift towards him.

Desmond sluggishly mutters "Dammit... now what?" before feeling himself being shifted-
-into Ezio's arms, who is muttering something regarding his weight in Italian before facing Altair-

*"Now?"* It was Altair's Arabian accent, *"You belong with us, habibi."

Desmond manages to strangle out a "I don't... belong to..." before falling unconscious.

At present day, Lucy, Clay, and Connor face each other, looking at each other in... was it confusion?

*"Did I just hear..."* Lucy was the first to say.

*"Yeah,"* Clay nods in shock.

*"And the other guy..."

*"Yes... it's who I thought it was,"* Connor nods numbly.

*"And they just..."

*"Yup,"* Both Clay and Connor respond, still shocked.

They sat in silence until-

*"Guys!"* They didn't respond when they hear Shaun and Rebecca running towards them, with the needed item at hand.

*"We got the... umm, are you guys okay?"* Rebecca blinks, seeing the expressions on the three's faces.
Shaun frowns, clearing his throat, "Ahem! Earth to the numbskulls..."

"We can hear you," Lucy mutters, not in the mood for smacking the tech man, blinking in surprise, "It's just... what the hell..."

"What the hell what?" The British man is growing impatient, "Look, do we need to save Desmond's stupid ass or-"

Connor, Clay, and Lucy give each other a wary look before Connor speaks up.

"Desmond just got captured by Altair and Ezio."

End Part 1

What's next: The reason why time-traveling was thought to be better than going through the Animus torture. And Desmond wakes up from the knock-out agent to meet Altair and Ezio... in a more proper setting.
Captured

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Nope. None whatsoever.

This part explains why this story is an Alternative Universe, why the Animus became a time machine, why I placed the warning in the first chapter, and why some people are not dead.

If you see the name Heather in this chapter, then that's the name I made up for Desmond, Clay, and Connor's mother (does she have a name? Please let me know).

On another note, I am still new to this site...

Once again... SPOILER WARNING.

"italics" = Italian or Arabic or any other language
plain italic texts = flashback
"normal" = English

Part 2: Captured

If anyone asks when Desmond's life as an assassin began, he's rather tell you this:

His entire life began when he ran away from his family, who were doing their best to protect Desmond. He wound up taking their words of advice by taking multiple alias and faking his fingerprints. He manages to land a mixology degree (he had to ask the head of the school to give him a nation-wide license so he won't have the trouble to renew it every time he goes to another state) and works at every bar he can. He lives in hotels, apartments, and even stays in other people homes (the ones he can trust, that is). He manages to pay people more than the usual amount to keep his presence quiet. That was, until he had to get his fingerprint for a motorcycle license.

It ended at the moment Abstergo captured him and tried to use him to search up something valuable. At the time, he didn't know it was very vital that he must be living. Well, that was the case until Vidic threatened to kill him if Desmond doesn't comply with his orders... which included his food and drinks being drugged (some of them; most of the time while Lucy (at the time, he didn't know she was working with his father) was the one giving the food, she'd hand him the non-drugged ones), injected with drugs that he resisted against, and being beat up by all-too happy Abstergo guards before being beat up by Vidic himself.

At the moment they realize Abstergo are after the Pieces of Eden, Desmond was screwed. The Assassins (aka Lucy, Shaun, and Rebecca) knew they had to escape with the help of their own. Even though rumors of the Assassin Order were done for (thanks to Abstergo), most Assassins from
other nations escaped and began an underground movement to retrieve the Pieces of Eden to prevent Abstergo and the Templars from using it for whatever reasons.

That said group included Desmond's father, mother, and his two brothers... along with other members who were now traitors to Abstergo's eyes.

Desmond was one such individual who had escaped thanks to help of his friends. If it wasn't for Lucy deciding to 'accidentally' push one of the dead guards into the hands one furious Warren Vidic and the system being hacked by some third-party organization the Assassin Order hired to cause trouble for the Abstergo Group, Desmond Miles (aka Subject 17) would have been dead at Vidic's hands.

Two months ago, Desmond was being tortured (mentally and physically) by Abstergo. Now, he was a healthy person again (barely. He still refuses to eat anything without seeing the food cooked for himself or having Lucy give the food to him).

And now, he's safe in the hands of the Assassins Order along with now Abstergo-traitors Lucy Stillman, Rebecca Crane, Shaun Hastings, and various other people who decide enough was enough with Abstergo's asinine plans of world destruction (or domination? Desmond gave up listening to Vidic after his droning, stupid speeches over and over) and help the Assassins.

His father being the leader, of course. His mother was still helping with training along with his brothers (adopted, more like) Connor Kenway-Miles and Clay Kaczmarek-Miles. And Desmond, being the black sheep out of his family, just joined in on their idea on how to stop Abstergo.

...And it wasn't a very good idea, at that.

"Please... repeat that one more time," Desmond couldn't believe this at all. Even he can tell Connor was giving his father a funny look. Clay just gaped his mouth open before shutting it; Lucy looks surprised, Shaun looks like he's about to explode and argue, and Rebecca... well...

...she's about to squeal out of delight?

"You heard me," William nods, playing around with the main memory stick Desmond manages to swipe from Abstergo (it was their only one- haven't they heard of backing up their back-ups? Even William calls them idiots), "Time travel."

"And Mom agreed to this?" Clay bursts out the very first thing that was in his mind, startling the others, "Dad- I'm sorry, but that idea is just... just insane!"

"Even I don't like the sound of time travel," Connor grunts, frowning, "What good will it do for us, Father?"

William smiles, giving the members in the room a chilly feeling, "Even if it sounds impossible, and yes, Shaun, I understand you were going to give me a speech on how science said the fourth dimension can not be turned back, but... there is a way."

"Humor us," Shaun dryly asks, crossing his arms, "What the hell are you thinking?"

"It involves us using that disk I brought back, doesn't it?" Desmond doesn't like the thought of it either. It was bad enough that he was forced into the Animus; Lucy even witnessed some of the side-effects that happened to Desmond and previous subjects. But time traveling sounds much worse than
going in and being the Ancestors themselves.

...And what the hell got William possessed to do time traveling out of all things?

William nods, "It will take time. At this moment, Abstergo will believe that every one of us is dead-

"And how the hell did you manage to achieve that?" Shaun sounds like he couldn't believe a single word of this.

Lucy grimaces, "We made human analogs like all of us and made the car explode. They should be able to get a sample of our DNA, blood, and fingerprints. The bodies are too burnt for them to tell if the bodies were fake; and I managed to hack into Abstergo systems to make sure we can't be tracked."

"How the hell did you manage to get past the security and Vidic to do that?" Desmond couldn't believe this either; Vidic should have been able to find out since they could dust for fingerprints...

Lucy glances over at William, who chuckles, "Your dad was able to provide me with gloves before I hacked into the computer system."

Ah. So maybe she wasn't the dumb blonde Shaun thinks she is.

"...I don't want to think about that, thanks," Clay looks sick, still on the thought of recreating artificial human bodies as Shaun and Desmond turn a bit green. Connor was heard grumbling about the reason being why they needed a couple strands of his hair, a pint of blood, and his fingerprints.

"Haven't you watched Mythbusters?" Rebecca arches an eyebrow, a grin on her lips, "Just use-"

"And we're stopping the conversation there," Connor shakes his head, "How the heck did we have the time to do all of that?" One look at William's smirk and Connor grumbles, "...never mind. I don't want to know about that either since you convinced Heather into the entire scheme."

"No wonder I saw Mother in the van," Desmond mutters, recalling his shock when he saw his smirking mother in the van, "Back on subject! Why can't we just use the Animus? It seems to be a safer alternative!"

That made the entire room go silent.

"I told them what happened while you were in the Animus," Lucy quietly replies, catching Desmond's eyes, "About the Bleeding effects and how it began to affect you psychologically."

He was about to say how his body can deal with those when Connor cuts him off, "You looked like you revived from the dead when we managed to get you out. It took about a month and a half-"

"Two months," Desmond corrected.

"...to get your muscles back, at least," Connor finishes, "You are not going back in the Animus and that's what we all agreed on."

Desmond opens his mouth to counter that-

"Lucy told me that you wound up speaking in both Arabic and Italian to other people before you were sedated," Clay frowns.
"At least I have two new languages on my belt!"

"Your mother cried when we told her what happened to you at Abstergo," William finishes.

That made Desmond's mouth snap shut.

"The way we're going to build the time machine is with the parts we manage to steal from Abstergo," Rebecca pauses, "We got all the machinery and the equipment to help us; remember that group we asked to help?"

"Whatever did happen to those poor souls?"

"They cleaned up any traces and any chances of Abstergo tracking us," Shaun smirks, "The computers they gave us are untraceable; this location can't be pinpointed on a map."

"Huh," Lucy grins, "So far, I'm liking the sound of that."

"But what the hell are we going to do about the time... thing?" Desmond wasn't still convinced.

"That's where this comes in," William holds up the Animus memory stick, "Let me put it this way: the Animus has enough power and ability to make us revisit the location and grab whatever we need to. It can give us the power to change time... even meet the people and visit the location at the time."

"Dad," Clay frowns, "How the hell do you know how powerful the Animus is?"

Rebecca chirps, "It's powerful enough to read Desmond's DNA and force him back in time to relive his ancestors' memories. So I adjusted some data banks around and found that the Animus program can do more than divulge into a person's DNA; it has the technological capabilities to go back in time and physically enter in it, watching and experiencing the memories first hand."

"...and what about the time paradoxes that can possibly occur?" Shaun was the one who sounds more baffled at this idea.

"What about them?" William was calm about this, Desmond realizes, "It's happened before and we're all still here today, correct?"

"H-Hang on," Shaun's frowns grows deeper, "What do you mean, 'It's happened before'? You mean... someone's actually done it?"

"Yes."

"Then I'd like to meet that person face-to-face and ask them why did to change the time!"

A groan escapes from the rest of the group. Even Connor shakes his head, facepalming. It was surprising to hear their leader let out a laugh as they all look at him.

"Is... Dad okay?" Clay whispers to Desmond, who shakes his head, "Well, we're fucked; did we do anything wrong or did Mom argue with Dad about politics again?"

"That's why you think Father's laughing?" Desmond stares at his adoptive brother before they hear William clear his throat.

"Don't worry; eventually, you will meet him," William pauses, "However, he did allow me to let you know what has altered from what was supposed to happen."

The room fell silent.
William must have gotten used to the amount of silence since he takes out a file before taking out a small stack of paper, "It involves all of you, to be precise."

Now the temperature of the room fell a few degrees as the group of adults freeze.

"...w-wait," Now Rebecca gets nervous, "What the hell? Our future got altered?"

"Let me explain and judge it for yourself. All of you are affected either directly or indirectly," William pauses as he flipped a few pages before his gaze went towards Connor, "Connor, do you recall anything about your father?"

The eldest Miles brother grits his teeth, recalling his biological father, "What about him? All I know is that he used to be one of us until he revealed himself to be a group of Abstergo when my mother died in his arms."

"How did you find out?" William asks.

"A distant relative of mine checked me out of elementary school early," Connor recalls, "Said that my mother needed some help and he was here to visit. I thought he was lying, but when I got home, I saw my mother getting stabbed by my own father along with his associates. Yes, he did say that he wanted revenge for whoever killed my grandfather and his family, but he was a Templar and my mother helped us- the Assassins."

"That relative, did you catch his name?"

"Well- wait..." Connor's dark eyes widen as he connects the dots, "N-No way... that relative was one of the Assassins?"

William nods before turning his attention to Clay, "And you, Clay? What about your past?"

"Lucy saved me at the moment Abstergo tried to force me into being in the Animus," The blonde blushes, glancing over to see Lucy's face turned a dark shade of red, "When we realized Desmond was going to be a subject, Lucy realized that my cover was blown, so she helped me fake the death of 'Subject 16' with pretty realistic blood. She and I also worked together to realize what Vidic really wanted the Animus for."

"Which comes to my next point," William glances at the blonde female, "Lucy. You were born and raised by the Order. You infiltrated Abstergo to figure out what they really want. What made you stay with us instead of relying on Vidic?"

"It was because two of my mentors at the university told me to continue with my study with cognitive neuroscience, even if the other mentors didn't agree with it," She replies, "And yes, I did have an internship at Abstergo, but I realized that some of the Assassins are helping me keep in mind about what is really true or not," A genuine smile appears on her lips, "Both William and Heather- hell, even Connor and Clay manage to see how I was and that I wasn't going insane about the Templars and their... well, to put it plainly, their 'New World Order' crap. I'll admit, I did have moments in which I questioned what William was doing... until both of them and my family talked to me before I realized what Vidic was really going for." She glances over at Clay, "They were right once Clay infiltrated into Abstergo as a subject."

They didn't see William's look of relief wash his face, "Were there any moments in which you did question the Assassins?"

"A co-worker led me to quietly investigate my friend's death," Lucy frowns, "He remained
Anonymous though... he showed me videos, documents, and various other stuff of what really happened to Leila Marino- I still can't believe Vidic had her killed for looking into Abstergo's history. Wait, that man... was he the man you sent?

William nods.

"The Templars killed an innocent just to silence their true whereabouts and plans?" Desmond narrows his eyes.

"Yeah. That's what made me realize Vidic needs to die," Lucy grimaces as Rebecca pats her friend on her back.

"We all want Vidic dead," Shaun looks at the ceiling, "For various reasons- one or the other- we want to get rid of him. All we need are the rest of the Pieces of Eden... without capturing Abstergo's attention."

Connor drums his hands against the table, "And William, you believe time traveling will prevent Abstergo from reaching their goal?"

"Yes," William sighs, "Granted, I will admit, I have been pushing all of your hard, but all of six of you are our only hope to save the world from imminent danger."

Another round of silence fell upon the group before Desmond finally lets out a sigh, catching everyone's attention.

"I'd like to see the remaining parts of my previous ancestors' lives... but then I'd go insane and be a crazy nut thanks to the side effects of the Animus," The ex-bartender sighs in defeat, "Let's hope nothing goes wrong with this."

"Same for me," Connor nods as Clay nods in agreement.

"Me too," Lucy nods, along with Shaun and Rebecca. William chuckles, seeing their determined faces.

"Time machine is it then," William cracks a smile, "Let's begin."

Desmond weakly groans, his head slightly pounding as he begins to wake up.

His eyes snap open, expecting to meet with the white tiled walls that were in his room. Instead, he sees a earth-brown ceiling... shadowed by the various candles that lit the room.

"Where the hell am I- Ow!" he grimaces, feeling the sharp pain that went to his head before lying down on... a goose-feather pillow.

He is definitely not back at home. He groans, sitting up a little as he shifts his weight so he can look at his surroundings.

The room was lit by various candles, which present the decorations in the room: there were some paintings adorning the wall, a decorated rug that lay across the room floor. There was a desk filled with various books, scrolls, papers and ink nibs scattered. Next to the desk was His bag was slung across one of the chairs, untouched.
Desmond licks his dry chapped lips, looking around to see if there was anyone in the room as he contemplated his escape-

"You're awake, fledgling."

Had Desmond not felt another headache, he could have jumped right off the bed to see Altair leaning against the wall on the other side of the room. His hood his off to reveal his face; it was similar to Desmond’s facial features except Altair’s face looks more angular, sharper than Desmond's. His lips have the same crescent scar as Desmond's (if it wasn't for the fact that Desmond's was smaller), his brown hair is longer while Desmond's has been cut short. It also seems like Altair's small mustache is gone... but his dark amber eyes manages to pierce through the shadowed wall to see Desmond getting up.

And it doesn’t help that Desmond can understand what the Master Assassin just said (thanks to Animus 1.0 and how to speak in Arabic 101 online).

Including what Altair said to him before he got knocked out thanks to-

-oh yeah. Ezio.

Where the hell was annoying bastard!?

"Why am I here?" Desmond slowly asks, glaring at Altair, "And I heard what you said back there!"

"About your lack of skills?" Altair slowly walks towards the bed before grabbing another chair to sit on, "You need more work; you should not have used your fists to finish the remaining guards."

"It's called knocking the guys out," Desmond grumbles, knowing pretty well Altair cannot understand English for what his life's worth-

"And yet you still refuse to kill those who are against you," His hazel-brown eyes widen to hear perfect English come from the master assassin (with that Arabian accent), "You look to be an assassin, your skills are of an assassin... yet you hesitate when it comes to killing."

"No, I don't hesitate! And how the hell do you know my language?" Desmond growls before groaning, feeling the headache, "Owowow fuck... My head..."

Altair sighs, shaking his head before handing the full water skin for Desmond to drink, "There is a lot I need to teach you, habibi."

Habibi? Desmond manages to gulp his share of water before staring at Altair, What the... I have heard that word before... but what was the-

The door opens, making Altair place the water skin back as Desmond slouches back on the bed, his headache slightly better. He can see Ezio coming in before closing the door to block out any more noises and taking off his hood and cloak.

"It's a good thing I decided to get a few more missions out of my way," Ezio mutters before glancing at Altair, "Is he awake?"

Altair snorts, eyeing Ezio with disdain, "You can see for yourself, feathered baboon."

"I am not feathered!" The Italian assassin growls in irritation, insulted, "But you- you look simple! That is not how I should look!"
"Practicality is everything, idiot," Altair smirks back. Apparently, he understood what Ezio was saying, even in Italian.

Ezio curses in his native language (most likely to Altair), hanging his garments as he changes into his white undershirt (keeping his pants and boots on, of course). Desmond can see Ezio is drastically different than Altair; the Italian has long brown hair that has been tied with a dark red ribbon; his eyes are colored lighter than his and Altair's and his face is fit for a lady's dream man: chiseled features yet rounded at the cheeks and chin. No wonder he's a lady's man, Desmond recalls while reliving through Ezio's memories, he had ways around lots of women... even bed a few too. The crescent scar is at his lips (Desmond had just realized that) like the both of them...

...does it run in this family line? At all?

He decides it wasn't the best idea to say anything at the moment.

"So you are awake," He freezes, seeing Ezio walk towards the edge of the bed, "I suppose I should apologize about the way I brought you here."

"Yeah, by knocking me out with whatever the hell it was you smothered me with," Desmond grumbles under his breath. Unfortunately for him, in this case, the two assassins can pick up on what Desmond is saying... causing Desmond to stare and groan, covering his face with his hands as he places his head back on the bed, "Are you serious? You can understand whatever I'm saying too?"

"Ah, yes... I can," Ezio chuckles, a small smile drawing up his lips as he sits on the edge of the bed to get a better glance at the young man lying in the bed (who is still covering his face, why does he do that? Ezio asks himself), "Are you ashamed of your language, tesoro mio?"

Okay. That word too. Where the fuck did I hear that from? Desmond can't help but wonder how similar Altair and Ezio said the words... and why do they sound familiar.

"It sounds like the language I heard the Templars speak from where I live," Altair muses, glancing over at Desmond, "It is not normal to hear it from you, however. Are you from that area?"

Desmond pauses, "...Sort of?"

The way Altair tenses at the idea that Desmond came from the land of the Crusaders... erm, no, the Templars made the modern time-traveler wince.

Great way to start off, Desmond, He can even hear Shaun's snide remark before rolling his eyes, Go ahead, shove your foot in your mouth further.

"And yet it doesn't explain how someone like you can possess-" Ezio glances over at Desmond's left arm, "-a blade such as ours."

"What?" Desmond blinks, sharply sitting up before looking at his barren left arm- "Wait a sec! Where's my blade?" Then another sharp pain to his head- "OW! Damn, that hurts!"

Altair was about to grab the water skin again before he notices Ezio grabbed it. The elder assassin glares at the Italian, who lets out a small smirk before handing it over to Desmond, who is more than happy to drink from the water skin. That preening baboon... The Syrian Assassin narrows his eyes as he lays back in the chair.

"Your blade is behind the idiota," Ezio was too happy to reply, getting an furious glare from Altair, "But from your condition, it would be too late to get out and leave, no?"
"What?" Desmond gapes, shaking his head, "No- no way! What the hell made you think I was going to-"

"The first thing you did was to look for any open spaces wide enough for you to jump through," This time, Ezio glares at Altair, who smirks, having Desmond's attention, "Then you tried to figure out the distance between you and your belongings."

*Ha.* Altair sees defeat in the young man's light brown eyes before the fledgling groans for the second time.

"I give up..." Desmond's voice muffles through his hands, preparing to lay back on the bed when he realizes that someone is holding his back. Blinking and laying his hands down, he realizes that Ezio was holding him the entire time. The water skin was placed back on the table, "...what?"

"Why do you do that?" The Italian asks, concerned.

"...do what?" Desmond doesn't like where this is going.

"Your actions," Ezio was silently laughing at him, the ex-bartender can tell.

The time traveler was about to open his mouth when he hears Altair cuts in, "The poor boy is obviously flustered over at your nonsensical actions, you brainless twit."

"I resent that!" Ezio glares at the elder, letting go of Desmond's back, who lets out a silent sigh of relief as he gently lies back on the bed, "I resent that statement and the ones you made earlier, *Bastardo.*" Ezio couldn't help but smirk, hearing a low irritated snarl from the elder, "And the Order has gotten better, Elder."

"To the usage of the preening just to show off and compromise the Order?" Altair snaps back at Ezio, "I don't think so, novice."

*And the fact that I'm the idiot from the future who just so happens to see two ancestors who are supposedly the master assassins of their time? I do have the reason to act all...just shut up and focus, dammit!* Desmond sighs, closing his eyes to allow him to relax from the tension that was building up inside of him as he hears the two assassins arguing, "Out of all things, I just get stuck here with both Altair and Ezio," he mutters to himself, trying his best to block out the surroundings, "Fantastic, Desmond. Way to fuck things up," he grumbles in sarcasm, "Wonder what else you can do to make this day better?"

He didn't notice the room went deathly silent until-

"How... do you know my name?" With it, a blade was pressed up against his throat, causing Desmond's eyes to snap open to see a slightly agitated Altair looming over him, silent shock running through his eyes.

"I... um..."

"Yes... *Desmond,*" Ezio's amber eyes narrow as Desmond's eyes shift towards the now alarmed Italian Assassin, "*How is it that you know who we are?*"

"Well... the thing is-"

"*Explain!"* Both Assassins demanded, Ezio ready to sheathe his hidden blades as Altair placed the pressure on his blade against Desmond's throat.
...fuck. This is not good.

End Part 2

What's next: Our Assassin Order at the present time debate about whether to tell William about the recent misgivings. Desmond gives the short version of his adventure to the two assassins and finally realizes what habibi and tesoro means (in a not so subtle way).
Explained

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I'm pretty sure you all know by now.

Warning: Expect a really furious Desmond, some angsty parts, and a mix between a fluffy/intense moment that is obviously SLASH. Don't like, don't read. Once again, spoilers... I think.

A few notes to keep in mind:

Ezio says something in Italian... And if I do get it wrong, please for the love of God, correct it for me since I used Google translate.

Depending on whenever it's appropriate or not, I might add in to the last scene. I don't know; what do you guys think?

Enjoy.

"italics" = Italian or Arabic or any other language

"normal" = English

Part 3: Explained

Altair Ibn La'Ahad is a calm individual. He would never lose his temper at any sort of individual, including Malik (even if his good friend condescends him to no end). And he would never, ever lose his temper to an innocent, even if his name was uttered.

But the combination being flung about... a few hundred years into the future, seeing how the Order is within the time he is trapped when he meets the brat who calls himself an assassin (well, he does have the brand of the assassin mark on his left ring finger; that was one good thing that came from the new group) and bickering with him about the ways the Order is done now...

...let's just say that didn't make Altair happy.

Add in the fact that he has no way of determining whether or not he can return to his own time to see if any of the Order were compromised due to his disappearance (Malik will kill him, that's all Altair understands) and that his mission ended up in chaos was an additional reason Altair can be angry.

But this stranger- Desmond... his name, was it? had uttered his name even after being chased by him and the brat (meaning that the stranger knew all of his moves and what he can do). Is he a Templar?

Altair growls, seeing how the boy begins to panic, If not, then how in Allah's name does he know my moves?
"W-Wait!" The young boy cries out in Altair's native tongue, panic surging into his voice when Altair pressed his blade against Desmond's skin (that will leave some impression on the boy's neck), "I-I can explain this! Please, Altair- Don't kill me!"

"And what makes you think I won't let you live since you seem to know who I am?" Altair narrows his gaze at Desmond, responding back fluidly at his language. ...why is it that he can tell that preening novice (Ezio... that was one unusual name. Desmond sounds weirder) understands what Altair is saying?

Something is obviously not right.

"Just- ACK! Stop! I can't-ack- breathe-!"

It wasn't until he sees fear rising in the poor boy that Altair realizes that it's better if he loosened the hold of the blade... for a bit. He didn't hear Desmond breathing several gasps of air.

"Not until I know you are telling the truth, Desmond," The name sounds foreign to him. Altair slightly grimaces before using his Eagle Vision... to see Desmond's body is glowing blue.

How can this be? He's not from our time, and yet...

Altair frowns, removing his blade before using his two fingers against Desmond's neck to feel his pulse, causing the young man to stiffen. Altair can see that his blade did leave an impression, making the master assassin realize he needs to sharpen his blades.

"And what the hell are you doing now?" He can hear the accents rolling from Ezio as the Italian walks over to the side of the bed (where Desmond is now). Ezio is now looking at Desmond, obvious distrust written in his eyes before glancing over to see... "Ohhh... you are trying to see if he-
"

"You should know this, brat," Altair grunts, glaring at Ezio.

"And yet I just use my eyes to see if people have good intention, si?" Ezio quips a smirk.

Altair will deal with the Italian bastard later.

"Can..." The two assassins turn to face a pale Desmond, "...I talk now? You two still need answers, right?"

Altair nods, "Speak, Dez-monde." He frowns, realizing how odd the name sounded, "...what sort of name do you have?"

He can tell the boy was a little irritated, "That's not important right now! Look, if it makes you two feel any better, I'm still having issues pronouncing your last names- hell, I'm terrible at speaking in Arabic and Italian!"

Ezio arches an eyebrow, "And yet you seem to understand us... how?"

"That's what I'm getting at!" Annoyed amber-brown eyes flash at them, "Sonuva... I'm one of you- an Assassin sent from my time, the future, to find out if there is anyway we can stop Abstergo from taking the Pieces of Eden for themselves. I was captured by those said bastards- they are Templars in my time- and they tortured me by placing me into a memory-reading machine to relive both of your lives just so they can find out where the Pieces of Eden are!" He glares to prevent the two Assassins from continuing."That's how I can understand what you both are saying, that's how I
know who you two are, and that's how I can speak in those languages! My friends bailed me out before Abstergo managed to find out the exact locations of the Pieces of Eden and thanks to this stupid idea my father had about time-traveling, I'm going back in both medieval Jerusalem and Renaissance Italy to find the maps- codex- or whatever the fuck they are- for the Pieces of Eden for us to find and use against the Templars so they don't take over the fucking world!"

Altair and Ezio look at Desmond, speechless as Desmond heaves for air from the long-winded speech. The two glance at each other before Altair sighs, That explains... most things. ...which means he was the boy who pick-pocketed me earlier.

"He's telling the truth."

Altair's eyes snap to glare at Ezio, who for once, looks serious, "Desmonde is telling the truth, Master Assassin. Will that not explain also why you hesitate to say anything after feeling his pulse? And how you manage to get into this time?"

That brat's right, Altair grimaces, looking down at Desmond, who doesn't even bother to look at the two, ...it's just as I feared from the beginning we set out the search for the Pieces of Eden in Masyaf. From what happened with Al Mualim and the result of him using the Apple...

"It seems," Altair murmurs before a small smirk appears, "The Templars have risen to challenge the Assassins again. Brat, what will you do now that you've learned about... the future of the world?"

A small chuckle comes from Ezio, "Why... to learn more about the boy, of course. To help him... and to train him to become a true assassin."

"Whatever the hell I said back there was not funny. I'm telling the truth," Altair and Ezio realize that Desmond is now glaring at them as if he was extremely insulted at the exchange between the two, "And by the way, I'm feeling much better."

"If you're thinking about leaving, tesoro, I'm afraid it won't do you any good," Ezio can tell what Desmond was about to say next, "There are guards on the lookout since one of their own squadron died from earlier."

The young boy lets out another groan, slouching as he buries his head against his hands, "Dammit!"

Altair sighs, adjusting his position so he sits on the chair, "Dezmonde-" He can tell Desmond's eyes flashes at the incorrect pronunciation, "Forgive me. Perhaps I overreacted at the way you mentioned my name. How is it that you are one of us?"

"...what?"

"The mark of the Assassin," Ezio frowns, presenting his left hand, "Look. Unlike Altair, I have a brand that shows my status. From what I understand from studying my predecessors, the assassins had to cut their fingers in order to wield the blade."

The master assassin can't help but wonder if Ezio just wants attention or is trying to help Altair.

The young boy sighs, a grimace on his face, "...I'm honestly not too sure. I really don't know. Things have changed in my time- I don't have any proof that showed that I was an Assassin. I know we have a mark, we have it somewhere on our arms."

"So what are you then?" Altair asks, now wondering how Desmond got into the Assassin Order in the first place.
"I'm a novice- I'm in training," the time traveler scowls when he sees a surprised look on Ezio's face while Altair glances at him curiously, "I had some training, but... well, because I was the only one who had knowledge about the locations I was going to be in, I had to learn some moves on my own. The Animus, on the other hand," He drew his lips in a thin line, "It forced me to move around-"

"By using our bodies," Ezio frowns, causing Desmond to let out a frustrated groan.

"...that too," Desmond glances to see the blade at the table before grumbling, "It... wasn't my idea. "Yes, I am supposed to be like one of you: don't compromise the brotherhood. But then Abstergo just..." He lets out an exhausted sigh, exhaustion and stress written all over his eyes.

Altair couldn't say anything. He can tell that Ezio is worried for Desmond as they saw the boy's posture from alert to ragged; from what Altair understands, the Templars from the boy's time ruined his life from the moment he was captured and forced him to do everything that he didn't want. For some reason, the Syrian Assassin felt a small pang in his heart; he too was once ruined by his own reckless actions that consequentially caused Kadar's death, Malik's anger, the distrust of his former leader (along with everyone else) and regaining everything that he once had: respect.

Glancing over at the Italian Assassin, Altair can tell that Ezio's face were knit in concern, worry, and-anger? Has his life been ruined by the Templars as well? He notices Ezio looking at Altair, the look of mutual understanding reached them. They both have conversed for a bit earlier before searching for Desmond (even though it was filled with suspicion as the two mention who they are, realize that one was way older than the other, and realize that Desmond was the key to all of these things before seeing the said target grab a hat and tried to blend in with the crowd).

Altair will get his answers later. But for now-

"...you know what? Forget what I just said."

He and Ezio look at Desmond, alarmed to face a distraught Desmond, who has a defeated look in his eyes before he murmurs, "It's not like you guys believe me..." The rest was all too soft to hear.

*He is wrong.* Altair narrows his gaze to see the boy let out a deep sigh, closing his eyes.

He doesn't realize Ezio is thinking of the same thing.

Lucy, Clay, and Connor saw Shaun and Rebecca's expression change into one of awe, horror, confusion. The room fell dead silent and stayed like that for what seemed like an hour-

"Well, we're fucked, aren't we?"

Immediately, Shaun smacks Clay's head, immediately catching the attention of the other Assassins in the area. Connor gestures the others to get back to work, which they scurried to do so (Connor must have glared at them).

"OW! Shaun, what the hell was that for?!"

"You took my line," Shaun deadpans as Clay winces, rubbing the hit spot, "Something like this was bound to happen! ...not counting that he was kidnapped by his fucking ancestors, out of all people."

"I definitely didn't realize Desmond angered Altair that badly," Connor rubs his temples, sitting in one of the black swivel chairs, "But to the point in which... well, how do I place this... Altair winds up following Desmond to Renaissance Italy out of all places?"
"That was the glitch that came from the stupid Animus," Clay glares at the oval gateway that was shut down, "We didn't even program it to open a spot in Italy unless we said so!"

"So? It wasn't my baby's fault!" Rebecca frowns, looking at the Animus, "She just had a rough day, that's all!"

"And now Desmond's stuck in Italy unless we hear from him," Lucy tries to tap into Desmond's ear piece, but all they hear are static, "I can't get a signal from Desmond unless he begins to speak, Connor. Sorry."

Connor closes his eyes, trying his best not to curse at the amount of trouble they are in, "Great. Now what the hell am I supposed to tell William?"

A chilling silence filled the room as Connor opens his eyes, seeing that most of the occupants (except for Rebecca, who was still fixing the Animus machine) pale, "...what?"

"Does Dad know Desmond's in the machine?" Clay asks first.

Connor nods, "I let him know that Desmond is going to retrieve the map for the Piece of Eden."

"But not getting stuck in the fucking past!"

"Actually," Lucy bites her lower lip, looking down at the floor, "I told William that Desmond was going into Jerusalem to find the map. He told me it was fine, but-"

"He doesn't know that stupid glitch and Desmond is now kidnapped by two of his bloody ancestors," Shaun finishes, throwing his hands, "That's it! We're doomed! William is going to have out bloody heads for this!"

"Shaun, we are not doomed unless we find away to rescue Desmond!" The group turns around to see Rebecca huffing, her shoulders on her hips as she glares at them, "Now are you guys going to help me fixing up my baby or not!? The sooner we fix my baby, the freaking better so William doesn't find out!"

Shaun and Clay were about to say something when Connor smacks the two in the head (which earned him a glare from Shaun in return), motioning the two to 'Get back to work. NOW.'

"All right, all right..." Clay mutters, going towards one of the computers as he sits next to Lucy, "Let's find out what the hell happened, let Rebecca reinstall and work on the Animus, and see if the glitch doesn't show up."

"Good," Connor nods before he sighs, worry filling his head, "...at least William's out for the time being."

"Where is he, anyway?" Lucy asks, looking around the area. There were only a couple of others like the tech people, except they were helping the other Assassins who are currently out in the field (most likely looking for new targets, Templars to kill or infiltrate, or to search up if they can find smaller parts of Pieces of Eden). But William wasn't present.

"I haven't seen our best Assassins here either," Shaun frowns, "Duncan's gone, along with Mick..."

"I think they went to retrieve another recruit," Connor replies, "William found him within the midst of the Israel-Palestine conflict and I think he mentioned he's going to get him inside the US today to let him become one of us."
"Another newbie?" Clay grins, "All right! What's he going to do?"

"He's joining our group, if I recall," The Native-American chuckles, seeing Clay's happy grin before he pauses, "...I think William said it'll take him about a week just to get him here and to make sure he gains amnesty to live here before we make him a member of this group."

"A week?" Lucy blinks before checking the calender, "...hang on, didn't William leave three days ago?"

"He did," Rebecca doesn't look up from all the machine parts as she begins to look through the Animus, "He told me to let him know if anything went wrong in the mission."

The group went silent except for the typing, the humming of the computers, and the drumming of fingers.

"...let's see if we can get Desmond back here before William returns," Connor mutters, his face slightly pale at the thought of a hell-bent furious William.

"Meaning we have a bunch of all-nighters to go through until Desmond decides to answer," Shaun curses as the group continues to search for their missing comrade, "Fucking hell Desmond, out of all times to make us panic, you just had to pull this one, haven't you?"

The fact that he just blurt out his past made Desmond vulnerable- more so than usual. Granted, Lucy was the first person he confided in after one Animus session went bad (since he trusts her since his capture). When he was rescued, Connor made sure that Desmond was recovered while he poured out his emotions, stress, and everything to his two brothers. And then Rebecca (she was like his little sister) talked to him after an argument between him and Shaun over how the memories played out; his father and mother finally talked to him after returning from another mission (well, his mother was more gentle than his father, who finally realizes he was being too hard on Desmond); and well, he got to talk to Shaun after the two agreed that Clay and Lucy need to get together.

It was unusual, but Desmond manages to get along with them; after all, he trusts them. They were his comfort circle; the many years without having a close knit relationship

"...you know what? Forget what I just said," Desmond sighs, not paying attention to the two assassins in front of them. **Who the hell am I kidding? They'll only understand because well... it explains why Altair is here in Italy in all places,** he bitterly sighs, **From the looks of this place, this is not where I should be- urgh, it doesn't make a difference anyway!** "It's not like you guys believe me... Great plan, Father. Now look where I am. Connor's going to kill me, along with Shaun and..."

He closes his eyes, letting out a sigh (he doesn't see... ....okay, calm down. **Remember what Mother told you? Get calm and think about what you should do next. Okay I have to let the gang know I'm alive so Connor or Clay won't have to come after me here. The other thing... find out a way to make sure I get back home. But first things first... He opens his eyes, How the hell do I get out of here?"

"Ezio," It was from Altair, but he can hear him speaking to Ezio, "I am going to look out for the guards. ...do not do anything to startle the boy. Don't let him escape either."

"Of course," Ezio rolls his eyes, "I am going to keep watch over him. ...what are you planning to do with the boy?"

Altair gives Ezio a glare, "What do you think?"
Desmond mentally groans. *Well, crap. There goes a chance of me escaping for tonight...*

"So I see," Ezio thinly smirks before calling, "You do understand I know these things?"

"Think with your brain, twat," Altair looks like he is about to punch Ezio in the face before jumping through the an open window.

"Bastardo," The Italian Assassin mutters before glancing at the water skin, which was halfway empty, "So he thinks I'm no better than a novice?"

Desmond doesn't say anything as he looks away, hearing Ezio grumble in Italian. He looks at the chair Altair just sat in and sees the chair next to it; his bag was still there... meaning the communicator is present.

*I should make my way over there,* Desmond purses his lips, trying to find a way to reach over towards the bag without any noises-

"Desmond?"

Desmond nearly jumps out of the bed, hearing his name said correctly for once. Looking up, he sees Ezio, who is now sitting at the chair where Altair sat before he left. The time traveler sighs to calm himself, "Y-Yeah?"

A soft, amused chuckle escaped from Ezio, "Are you feeling better?"

"I guess," Desmond weakly grins, "I just... I'm sorry if whatever I said back there didn't make any sense-"

"Ti credo, tesoro," His brown eyes glance at Ezio in surprise, seeing how the Italian Assassin is (and sounds) genuinely concerned, "Your life... it should not have been tainted by the Templars. And yet here you are..." He can also feel the light amber eyes glance over at his face before settling down on the scar. It was then he sees a flash of an unknown emotion flash in Ezio's eyes-

"...Ezio? You okay-"

"Merda," Ezio mutters to himself, "Non riesco a tenere più a lungo. Non con te, tesoro mio. Non più...!"

"Eh? Wait, wha-" The next thing he knows, Ezio is now sitting on the edge of the bed, tracing his thumb across Desmond's scar before lips captures Desmond's. Alarmed, the younger assassin's eyes widen as he struggles to get out, but Ezio must have anticipated that as he deepens the kiss every time Desmond tries to get out of whatever the hell he's gotten me into-ohhhhhgodohgodohgod-

Desmond had never felt that much emotion- passion even- come from Ezio. And for some reason, it clicked, causing Desmond to give a soft moan, causing Ezio to chuckle.

"Mio..." He heard Ezio murmur before leaving Desmond's lips... and a small chuckle, "It isn't just me, however."

"W-wha...?" Desmond's mind was just clearing up before feeling some shuffling, some grumbling-

"It seems that you took his first kiss, brat."

"Perhaps you'd like to do the same?"
-before another pair of lips crashed onto Desmond's.

...and it was not Ezio since he can now feel two arms wrapping around his waist as he can feel the Italian nip his neck from behind.

He gasps when he felt Altair slips his tongue in, tasting the young boy. Desmond softly moans, feeling that the connection between him and Altair click just like what happened with him and Ezio.

As soon as he felt Altair's lips leave and trail kisses from his neck, Desmond lets out small gasps of air, trying to figure out all sense of coherency through all of this... this-

"My habibi," He heard Altair murmur in Arabic as the latter nips his left ear before kissing his neck-

Ha..bibi? Hang on, Desmond's eyes begin to clear from the obvious lust that was gathering in his eyes from the two kisses, I should know what that word means-

"Tesoro mio," Ezio purrs before his hands trace Desmond's back-

Tesoro... Habibi... Isn't that a-

And then it hits him as his eyes widen in alarm-

Did they just call me their- A wanton gasp escapes from him as he feels something hard brush up against his back... and one near his abdomen before feeling someone (at this point, he was back into incoherent thoughts) palm his pants. Desmond moans, leaning his head against Ezio's shoulder as he feels the Syrian Assassin give him a hickey.

It wasn't a surprised to hear Altair murmur something about how the clothing are restricting him, Ezio agreeing before feeling under Desmond's shirt just to take it off.

"What... are you-" Desmond manages to murmur before feeling the breeze against his chest and feeling Ezio's warmth against his back and Altair tracing Desmond's exposed chest before laying kisses against his neck again.

"Quiet, tesoro mio," Ezio murmurs as he captures Desmond in another heated kiss, "Let the both of us take care of you."

"Ah..." The young man was about to protest with his last coherent thought when Ezio gently released his kiss-

"...you're not going anywhere," Altair's murmur rumbles as his lips swoop to capture Desmond in another passionate kiss.

All of Desmond's coherent thoughts crumbled into pieces, filling it with lust, desire, and compassion.

End Part 3

What's next: Desmond realizes that escaping wasn't a good idea. When he does speak to his comrades in the present, things gets worse with the Animus...
"Crap."

All eyes in the section glance over at Rebecca, whose eyes widen in realization. Only Shaun is still typing away at his station.

"...is something wrong?" Lucy asks, worried for the other woman in their group as the black-haired girl grimaces.

"I just realized something about my baby," Rebecca mutters as she glances over at the Animus, which is still on stand-by.

The said 'baby' was a white circular doorway tall and wide enough for one person to enter. It has various circuits and wires running along the curves while it was being propped by a two large stands. The wires connect to the computers stationed; along with an engine to power the machine; and a few computers with the actual Animus program sticking out. There are a couple light plugs that allows the Animus the energy to provide the access.

"What about it?" Connor asks, frowning. Can anything be worse than Desmond kidnapped? By his ancestors, no less... he grimly thinks, What the hell are they doing to my younger brother?

Rebecca chews on her lower lip, "...the Animus is originally supposed to be the time-reading DNA that hacks into anyone's memories, right?"

"Just Desmond's ancestors so far," Shaun replies, not looking up from his station, "Altair and Ezio."

"...just to them?"

"There were other subjects, but they were placed in other Animus machines," Lucy recalls the many
Animus stations that were in Abstergo when she and Desmond were making their escape, "The one we grabbed was the one that Desmond was placed in."

"I'm guessing they were desperate," Clay grumbles, "Look, Rebecca, we need to find Desmond and the more we talk, the chances of finding Desmond are not going to look so good." Connor sighs as he nods at Lucy, who also begins to type away as they try to find Desmond.

"I-I know, but..." Rebecca pauses before feeling a hand on her shoulder, Turning around, she sees Shaun, looking ragged and tired (The dark circles are starting to show up under his eyes, she realized).

"Rebecca," Shaun gently says, "We can talk about it later. Right now... we have to rescue our friend."

"Shaun..." She bits her lower lip again, only to have Shaun brush his hand against her cheek. She looks up at him in surprise.

"If we can't find him within the next hour or so, then you can tell us," The British man murmurs before seeing Rebecca sagging, a sigh escaping from her, "...as much as I hate to say this, but I miss that stupid idiot too."

"Shaun..."

The black haired girl was about to continue when they realize the room was dead silent. Blinking, the duo glance up to see Clay, Lucy, and Connor staring at the two in shock... along with a few other members of the Order, who were gaping or staring at them as if one of them grew another head. One of them nearly dropped the files on the floor. Rebecca slightly turns red at the stares, shying away.

Shaun, on the other hand, blinks... before groaning, "What the bloody hell are you all looking at? For the Queen's sake- get back to work!"

Immediately, the staring audience were working, not wanting the ire of the irritated British man (who was infamous for his sarcasm and nitpicking). Even Connor returns to his laptop to look at some files as he reread them over.

Shaun rolls his eyes before glancing at Rebecca, who now glances at him, "...like I said, let's talk about it later."

She nods, closing her eyes before a small smile escapes her, "Thanks, Shaun."

The Brit nods before seeing that now Lucy and Clay are staring at him in surprise. Then he sees a smirk on the blonde duo before Shaun glares at them, "What the hell are you two thinking?"

"So... shall I inform Desmond of the happy news?" Clay grins.

Connor looks up to see Shaun smacking his head against his table with a confused Rebecca as Lucy and Clay snicker and give each other a high-five. Snickering with amusement, Connor shakes his head, returning to his emails about who is going to do the grocery run this week along with HQ statuses... and types an email to let Desmond know he owes Connor twenty bucks.

Desmond groggily opens his eyes to see that he's still in the same room as before. Only this time, the candles were out; judging from the skies, however, it must be before dawn.

Let out a small yawn, he was about to sit up and get out of the bed until he realizes a few things:
One, he can't even get out from the bed.

Two, his ass hurts like... well, to put it plainly, hell.

And three, he can feel something holding him to prevent from leaving- wait, there's someone else next to him too.

Desmond's eyes snap open to see Ezio, sleeping next to him, his arms around Desmond's waist. ...wait, then...! Turning his head slightly, he can see Altair, whose eyes are closed, his left arm around Desmond's left arm.

Crap, Desmond slightly pales, How did I get here- Then he remembers the day before, he was going after the map, got chased by Altair and Ezio, got Leonardo to help him to at least blend in, tried to get away from this time until...

That's right, The ex-bartender mentally groans, Ezio used a knock-out agent on me while Altair took care of those guards I took out. ...well, half of them. Crap. And then he was in this room (he finally realized it was one of Ezio's rooms) with both assassins, talked with him and then he remembered Ezio and Altair giving him a kiss that Desmond swears can rival that to one of those romance movies.

And that was when... Desmond's face blossomed red as he recalls the rest of the night-

...Altair muttering something in his native tongue as he begins to takes off the only restraining piece of clothing left that Desmond had before the younger boy chokes out a moan, feeling the Syrian's mouth covering his cock as calloused hands feel his waist...

...Ezio's soothing voice as Desmond hears the Italian apologize for the amount of pain that was going to come next before feeling something bigger than fingers thrust into him...

...Altair taking Desmond's cock in hand with his and rubs them together, causing Desmond to moan back in pleasure...

...Cries of passion overwhelming them as Ezio thrusts into Desmond while Altair kisses the time traveler his right hand wrapped around the two silky heats, words of love and lust spoken to the young man by both men...

...Oh god. Desmond's blush couldn't get any deeper, couldn't it? He then realizes that he had a serious problem beginning to develop between his legs, Can things get any worse?

He bits his lower lips to cause some sort of pain without any noise (as he is afraid of waking up the two sleeping assassins anyway) to try and suppress any more dirty thoughts so that his problem can lower itself. Okay. Ow. As sort of painful it was, that didn't work, he mentally grimaces as he closes his eyes to calm himself, ... think of something else, something else that doesn't turn you on... um, well, what is there?

The time traveler frowns, his eyes halfway open, Connor drunk? ...nope. Though that was interesting. Clay and Shaun playing a game together? Wait, that already happened. Shaun being nice? GOD NO! I can't imagine that! What about... Vidic being high with Cheech and Chong?

That image enough made Desmond give a small snicker as his body shakes with laughter. It was a joke he, Rebecca, Shaun, Lucy, Connor, and Clay made when they decided to watch a movie (unfortunately it was between Cheech and Chong or Dragonball Evolution- who the hell bought that movie?) for a small break from the high amounts of stress... and the idea of the hard-ass leader of
Abstergo being calm and high while not caring about anything made the group (yes, even the usually level-headed Connor) break laughing at the high impossibility of it (as much as they want to witness it in person).

At least that thought brought his problem down. He takes a deep breath to collect himself from his silent laughter, shifting his body to face the ceiling as he gently positions the arms from the two sleeping assassins to accommodate his new position. As he move his back, something sharp shoots through his back, causing him to hiss in pain. Oh right. He forgot about that; his butt still hurts- or rather, his insides.

"Damn. I forgot to bring Advil with me," he grumbles to himself, hoping it wouldn't wake the two. Glancing at them again to make sure they were still sleeping, Desmond's mouth thins as he recalls what the room looked like yesterday; his bag must still be in the same chair; his jacket must be hanging somewhere and his clothing-

...oh right. They were on the floor.

_I need to leave_, he frowns, recalling that he has to get back to his own time as soon as possible, _But I have to give back Leonardo's clothing first just so he won't complain about me stealing them. But... how do I need to do that without waking up... those two?_

With his right arm, Desmond slowly raises it up to feel what he can swear are Altair's arms before gently and carefully detaching it away (making sure the Syrian Assassin is actually sleeping and not feeling anything). Once he made sure he detaches Altair's arm from his shoulder, he slowly detaches from Ezio's arms (which for a minute, he can hear some muttering from Ezio, causing Desmond to pause before the Italian sleeping again) before slowly (and carefully) sitting up.

If the pain wasn't there between his thighs, then he would be able to wake up quicker. But in this case, the pain was beginning to make Desmond softly wince. To cover the noise, he bits his lower lip as he successfully sits up without bothering his two ancestors. Looking back at them to see if they are still sleeping, the time traveler sighs in relief that he wasn't caught before adjusting himself (again, as quiet as he can), to get himself off the blanket.

It took a while, but he managed to get his legs free before silently getting off the bed through the only free space that he has. Squatting down, Desmond looks back to see the two assassins still sleeping.

_So far, so good_, he gives a small smile before slowly standing up, gritting his teeth to prevent any sound escaping from the pain. After giving his eyes a few moments to adjust to seeing the floor, Desmond looks around to see see his pants and boxers in a pile along with his black shirt. He grabs his boxers and quickly puts them on before snatching up his pants and shirt; he manages to put on his shirt fine. When it came to his pants, however, the time traveler grimaces, knowing pretty well this will be pretty hard considering what happened last night and how _fucking painful_ is was going to be.

...well, it wasn't as bad as before (as his body begins adjusting to it), but it's worse than landing on his ass during training with some of the trainers at the Order. He bunches up the longer parts of the pants before managing to slip them on. At least it wasn't painful as he thought it was.

"There, done with that," Desmond mumbles to himself as he finishes putting his pants on, _Guess I have to place my boots on in the streets. No way in hell am I going to place them in here!_

He looks around to see his bag on the chair before slipping it on, _Once I grab my boots and the jacket, everything will be- _He grips for the blade but he glances down at his left arm.
My blade! Where the hell is it? His mind panics, recalling that he had it on him when he was taking down the guards yesterday-

"Your blade is behind the idiot," Ezio was too happy to reply, getting a furious glare from Altair.

Desmond realizes from the positioning of the chairs last night, it meant the blade was at Ezio's desk.

Whew... he sighs in relief as he swiftly grabs his blade, Knowing this time, the guards must be awake. I'll have to be careful; they probably know about the group of guards I took down yesterday. This time, instead of latching the blade onto his left arm, he decides to put it in his bag. Feeling inside the bag, he felt the sheet of paper that he had (forced to pickpocket) from Jerusalem. He gives grim smile, recalling that his new mission is complete... before looking around for the ear piece, Where is that stupid piece of- there we go!

He gently takes out the ear piece from the bag before inspecting to see if there were any damages done to it (otherwise, a certain chirpy woman will have a hayday and make Desmond's life hell). Seeing that no damage was done, he slips the ear piece on his right ear before gently tapping it make sure there is a reaction.

"Hello?" he whispers, his voice low enough not to disturb Altair and Ezio, "Guys? You there?"

"Desmond?"

It was Rebecca.

"Hey, Rebecca," Desmond sighs in relief, happy to hear a familiar voice (for once), "Sorry I have to sound like-"

"DESMOND! FUCKING CHRIST, YOU'RE ALIVE!" That caused Desmond to wince as he frantically tries to adjust the volume of the ear piece, "HOLY SHIT, DO YOU HAVE ANY FUCKING IDEA-"

"Clay!" Desmond frantically hisses looking back to see if that abrupt noise forces the two assassins awake, "Shut the fuck up! Compared to whatever time it's over there, it's way too early in the morning over in Italy to be this goddamn loud!" (It didn't... and that made Desmond a bit suspicious. He was grabbing the boots when this happened.)

"Oh! Sorry dude," Clay now got the idea, "Sorry. It's just... holy crap. You scared the hell out of us! What happened back about... a couple of hours ago?"

The time traveler grimaces, "It's a long list. Do you want to ask?"

"Considering that you've been missing for about half the entire day, Desmond," He mentally groans, knowing pretty well this is Connor speaking, "Yes, we want to know. Are you okay? Hurt or anything?"

He opens his mouth before clamping it shut, his face red at the... other delicate parts of the night, "No, I'm not hurt. It's just... my ass hurts like hell."

"You didn't land on your butt when you jumped into the stacks of hay, didn't you?" Clay deadpans.

Desmond frowns, about to respond when he looks over the window, "...um, not really- look, give me a few seconds; I need to get somewhere since I can barely hear you guys."
"Sure," Connor agrees before saying something to both Clay and Rebecca before he can hear typing.

Desmond silently grabs the jacket that was hanging from a hook, folds the jacket along with the boots so he can hold onto it, and looks to make sure (one last time) that both Altair and Ezio did not wake up.

Yes, he is that paranoid, considering how sharp and trained these two are. But since they did help him escape from the guards and saved him from being caught...

He feels something stinging in his heart as he glances at their sleeping forms. He admits, there was a part of him that wanted to stay and ask both Altair and Ezio about everything they’ve went though (despite him seeing everything through the Animus) and want to know them better in person rather than relying on memories and what other people say.

...and the fact that they were also really good in bed doesn't help Desmond's inner conflict whatsoever.

Get a grip! Desmond closes his eyes, taking a shivering breath, You can't stay here too long anyway. You've got the map, there's a new day. ...it's not like you'll be seeing them again once you leave. Get onto that damn roof!

Sighing, Desmond gently (and carefully) climbs over the tall window, clutching onto the jacket and boots before his barefoot meets the rough texture of the roof.

He doesn't see a pair of golden eyes watching his every step.

"Okay, I'm done," Desmond mutters, speaking louder now that he's outside (and holding onto a brick that is sticking out), "What's happening back there?"

"Well, I think I know what the glitch is," Rebecca grimaces, "But for now, it's a theory; let me continue to work at it and make sure it isn't what I thought caused the glitch to happen."

"But it had to do with the Animus?"

"Apparently... ah, I don't want to mention it yet without proving myself wrong about it first."

"...that's not how theories work."

"I know, I know... just give me a chance to see if what I'm thinking isn't true," Rebecca is typing, "Ah, there you go! Found you and-whoa, why the heck are you on the roof?"

"Rebecca!" Desmond groans, "I'm trying to balance! Don't distract me!"

"Sorry!" Rebecca's voice again, "You're glad Shaun went to grab groceries with Lucy and some other guys so he won't snark at you."

"We ran out again?" He is trying to make sure he doesn't fall from the roof.

"Shaun's been bitching about running out of tea again," Connor grumbles, causing Desmond to balance himself on the roof from the intrusion of his brother's voice, "And considering how many people we're having to feed, I'm just glad we're able to ask for supplies from someone the Order can trust."
"Is he still complaining about the yogurt thing too?" Rebecca mutters, "I told him it was okay..."

"Oh yeah," Desmond perks up to Clay whisper, "Remember how the three of us bet that Shaun wouldn't be nice to anyone?"

"What about it?" Desmond finds a small spot to put his boots on as he quickly loops the jacket around his shoulder. As soon as he manages to put both boots on correctly, he puts on his jacket while hearing Clay explain about what happened earlier this morning, "Whoa whoa- hold on. Shaun was being nice? To who?"

"Clay!" Rebecca groans, "Shut up! It was just a moment!"

"Between you and Sir-Know-It-All!" Clay counters, "How close are you two anyway?"

"Shaun was nice to- okaaay, that's all what I want to know," Desmond rolls his eyes, a chuckle rising from his lips, "So... Rebecca, you like Shaun?"

"S-Shut up!" The only woman (right now) stammers, "Yes, he's a sarcastic guy at times, but on the inside, he's a loveable teddy bear! ...and please DON'T tell Shaun I said that!"

"Your secret is safe with us," Connor chuckles as Clay snickers in the background, "Oh yeah, Desmond. You owe me twenty."

The time traveler groans, "I was hoping you'd forget about that."

"Too bad. Desmond, stay there so Rebecca can find your current coordinates; we just need to get you a safe point so we can try to activate the Animus again."

Desmond blinks before looking at his surroundings; the view is strikingly beautiful with the city being awoken by dawn.

"Wow..." he whispers, "Connor, Clay... I wish you guys were here to see this."

A small chuckle was heard from the other side, "I know. Just like home, huh?"

Like home, Desmond mentally notes, Oh God I miss it already...

"Okay! I got them!" Rebecca's voice comes through, breaking his train of thought, "Oh- here comes Shaun and Lucy! Guys, guys! Desmond's back!"

The two other voices (along with some of the other Assassins) were clamoring in surprise as he hears instant typing and mutterings about why they can't place on the headphones. Then he hears, "Desmond, you still there?"

"I'm here, Clay," he mutters, "What should I do?"

"Well, for one, stay put while we get a good location for the portal!" He can hear Connor giving out some orders, "Rebecca's got a good location on you, so hold still; this is going to be a while!"

"How... long exactly?" Did they fix that stupid glitch?

"About a couple of minutes, sadly," Rebecca chirps, "But don't worry; we'll see if we can get you out glitch-free!"
"Got it," Desmond nods as he props himself to sit at the rooftop, watching the sunrise. Sighing, he manages to breathe in the fresh air as the sunlight begins to shine upon the town. He can hear some birds chirping, the bells clanging from some of the boats that were in the river along hearing the distance voices of people either waking up or preparing their day. A smile widens in his face, awe-struck by the beauty of it all, "This is beautiful..."

"It is."

Desmond nearly jumps from where he is sitting until he feels a presence next to him. Then he freezes; it was Altair (fully clothed with his hood on).

Ah crap, he dismally groans, Really? Clay, guys, hurry up... can't you guys go any faster?

"...damn," Desmond mutters, looking away from the Syrian Assassin before his chin was caught, forcing him to look at Altair's eyes.

"You were trying to leave. Why?" Altair asks- well, more like demanded.

Desmond pauses as if he is trying to think of a coherent response-

"Even if your attempt at Arabic is terrible, I can still understand you."

The time traveler groans, "It's that bad, huh..."

Altair softly chuckles as he gently kisses Desmond's temples, causing the young boy to blush, "Your accent must have influenced the way you speak. Try saying something to me, fledgling."

Desmond looks down in embarrassment, licking his dry lips before trying to sound out, "I... I am trying to say..."

The Syrian Master Assassin chuckles, gently rubbing Desmond's back, "Do not be nervous, habibi."

He called me his again... why me? I thought Maria was... Desmond's blush grows darker, "...do you remember what I said yesterday?" When he sees Altair nod, the young boy continues, "The thing is... Altair, it's important that I have to-"

"So I see you're awake, Desmond."

Desmond looks up to see Ezio (in strangely, just his dark vest, shirt, pants and boots on). And he can tell Altair's mood changed into irritation.

"You're finally awake, novice," Altair frowns, seeing Ezio sitting next to Desmond. A chuckle comes from the Italian, "And you too, elder? What caught your attention so early?"

The Syrian Assassin growls in irritation before Desmond places his hand on one of Altair's shoulders, "I'm pretty sure Ezio still respects you, Altair. Don't worry, all right?"

Altair was about to say something to counter about Ezio before seeing the young boy's worried look (actually, he doesn't want to get into a middle of a fight between two master assassins). Sighing, he taking his hood off as the sunlight beams in, "Fine. Only for you, my habibi."

Desmond sighs in relief, seeing Altair look out at the sky, seeing the sun rise to its highest until he hears a series of groans and curses from the other side. Then he hears someone (possibly Connor)
mutter about getting something fixed. Desmond’s heart drops a little, knowing pretty well what was going on. *Well, there goes me escaping...*

"**Hey, bad news, Desmond,**" Rebecca’s voice comes into a wince as they hear some shouting and talking on the background (possibly between the four members of the group), "**The glitch just activated again. I can get your coordinates and your readings now. But...**"

He knew what Rebecca was going to say next.

"**There's no way I can open the portal back home until we fix the glitch.**"

"Thanks," Desmond whispers, gripping his right hand as he looks down, "What should I do?"

"**I don't know... the others are debating about it right now,**" Rebecca continues, sighing before hearing her voice filled with worry, "**That means we can't let anyone through the Animus until the glitch is fixed; for now, you'll have to be in Italy and stay in the general area until I fix the glitch in my baby.**"

"You're still going a good job," Desmond whispers, an exhausted smile on his face, "Just... let me know the progress."

"**Will do. Sorry Desmond. Just keep the communicator on until Connor comes in.**"

*Shit,* Desmond sighs heavily, catching Ezio's attention, *Now what?*

It wasn't until he feels a gentle tap on his right shoulder. Looking up, he sees Ezio, who looks worried, "Are you worried about something?"

The time traveler pauses before shaking his head.

"Are you sure?" Ezio wasn't convinced. And from the look at Altair's face, neither was the Master Assassin.

"Yeah, I'm fine." Then he turns back to view the city.

The three were silent for a while, watching the sunlight brighten the city, causing the civilians to stir and bustle with activity. Even Desmond admits it's nice; he's stuck in Italy, but compared to the cities he's lived in, there was nothing that can compare to the sight of seeing a city like Venice, especially during the Renaissance period. It wasn't until he feels Ezio's arm loop around his waist, possibly giving him comfort. Desmond hears a small grunt from Altair as the Syrian looks back at the scene (Desmond's left hand is still on Altair's shoulder).

"Were you trying to leave?" The Italian asks Desmond, noting his clothing, "You do understand... that this place is farther than the plaza."

The time traveler freezes, knowing pretty well the plaza was where he usually enters in whenever he uses the portal to enter into Venice. *Then how the fuck did Ezio know about where I usually come from?* He frowns, *Nobody should notice- ever!*

"You were running in that direction yesterday," The Italian continues, seeing Desmond's reaction, "Altair and I saw you."

"But... Altair doesn't know about Italy," Desmond mutters, "Then how-"

"When you were out, I had the novice show where the key points of his city were," Altair replies, his
eyes turning back to the two assassins, "He showed me where you were heading off to."

Desmond sighs, his shoulders sagging, "You caught me."

"At least before the guards got to you, tesoro mio," Ezio murmurs, kissing the top of Desmond's head (Ezio called me his too... and he's supposed to be the big flirt!), "Did you have a nice sleep?"

The time traveler grunts, "I can't... stand because of the pain."

Altair blinks before he frowns (knowing pretty well the events from the night before), "...Are you feeling better?"

Desmond grimaces, "Sort of. It's not that bad." He gently grips Altair's shoulder, who sighs and mutters something about being gentle next time.

"You're hurt?" The Italian's eyes flash with worry, "Where..." Then his amber eyes widen, connecting the dots, "...Desmond, you were a vergine?"

The time traveler blushes a bright red, "What? O-Oh. Er...maybe?"

Ezio groans, hanging his head, "Why did you not say anything then? I should have been more gentle!"

Well, that summed it up!

"And you just realized this?" Altair stares at Ezio, "Did you think he was experienced?"

"I thought he would be, considering his age," The Italian hisses, "Merda..."

"Guys... I'm okay," Desmond replies, catching both assassin's attentions, "...it's just I have to get used to it, that's all."

"From your current state, I am not sure how you managed to get out here," Altair shakes his head, "Do you have anything to help him, novice?"

"I am not a novice," Ezio glares at Altair again, "And yes; if we can leave the roof, I can give some medicine to help Desmond. Will that be fine?"

"You do realize I can still understand the both of you," Desmond sighs, looking up at the two, "Yeah... actually, medicine will be great."

"Your way of speaking is unusual," Ezio chuckles, shaking his head as he gently lets go of Desmond's waist (as much as the Italian Assassin hates it, especially since when he sees Altair help Desmond stand up, a flash of jealousy was seen through the Italian's eyes), "Bene. When we get back to the room, I'll get new clothing for the both of you... then we'll see from what we should do from here."

"About...?"

"About finding a way to fix some things," Altair replies, not facing them as the three enter back in the room from the roof before Ezio leaves the room to retrieve something, "Do you not remember, Desmond? This is not my time."

Oh. Right. I led him here, Desmond grimaces, "Hey. I'm... I'm sorry. I should not have... led you here."
If Desmond would have seen Altair's expression, the Syrian Assassin was shocked to hear (somewhat) perfect Arabic save the accent.

He hears the master assassin sigh before wrapping his arms around Desmond, "Wha- Altair?"

"Had I not done so, I would not have met you, habibi." Altair murmurs, "I do not regret a thing."

O-Oh, Desmond blushes, How the heck is that the two are... argh, too much for now. I'll have to get an explanation later!

Altair gently lets him go as Ezio enters inside the room, handing the master assassin a towel, "What is this?"

"Something to dry yourself when you are done," Ezio replies, irritated, "There's a washing room down the hall for you to use."

Altair frowns before shaking his head, taking the towel and grumbling something about respecting people older than them. As soon as the door to the room is shut, Desmond sees the Italian Assassin looking at the assortment of clothing he has, musing over what looked like to be a choice of wear. The time traveler lets out a silent sigh, sitting on the bed before placing his head down. He can still hear the bustle of activities and talking from his ear piece; the volume was lower (because of Clay's loud voice) than usual, so Desmond takes the ear piece out and taps the volume button to make the sounds louder. It was soothing too; his right ear was beginning to ache.

He frowns to himself; the glitch appeared in the system just yesterday (What time is it in 2012?) and it appeared again when they tried to open the portal. Rebecca said she had an idea what the glitch was and that she will try to debug the Animus and fix it. So much for an escape...

"Desmond."

The young boy blinks to see Ezio standing over him. Strangely, he isn't acting all cocky as opposed to yesterday or earlier; instead, Desmond can see a small spark of fury hidden in his eyes. Whatever it was, the time traveler doesn't like it.

"Is... something up?" he tentatively asks, a little worried.

"I was wondering," Ezio replies quietly as he sits next to Desmond, "Does that man not enjoy my company whenever I am near you?"

Desmond sighs, and this time, after thinking about it, he responds in what Desmond hopes was Italian, "Altair... is someone who is not talkative. You, on the other hand, are the opposite; a flirt and you talk more!"

Ezio looks at Desmond is surprise before he chuckles, causing the American to stare at him, "...is my Italian that terrible?"

"No, it isn't," The Italian chuckles before turning to pin Desmond against the bed, "In fact, I think you talk rather well. What other surprises do you have, hmm?"

"I... ummm..." How the hell is Ezio so good with his words?

He can see Ezio's gaze brighten, which was good, "Knowing how long it will take for the elder to finish, I don't have a lot of time, mio tesoro." And then he feels a gentle kiss from the Italian before hearing the man murmur, "I'm sorry about last night... are you truly all right?"
"I'm... it honestly hurts when I move around," Desmond replies before feeling Ezio nibbling at his left ear, *But he usually doesn't treat his one night stands like-*

"You are a strange puzzle, Desmond," Ezio is looking at him again and dammit, did Desmond just speak his thoughts again? "Unlike the other donne I've been with, I'm more intrigued with you... something precious that has to be acquired through special means." He chuckles, seeing how red Desmond's face got, "Even if I have to share with Altair just to have you."

"Wait, what-" Now Desmond was confused, just what was-

"Desmond, are you there? Who are you talking to?"

Shit, shit shitshitshit.

It was Connor's voice.

He can tell Ezio's eyes widen in surprise before glancing down to see the clutched ear piece, "What is that?"

Connor's voice came back, this time in surprise,"Desmond, that was Italian- was that Ezio? ...what the-"

The door opens and Altair comes in, half-naked. And from the way Ezio is smirking and Altair is staring, Desmond can tell this is **not** going to end well.

"You, what the hell are you doing with my habibi?" Altair growls at the Italian (who is making no movement to get off the American)

"Who said Desmond was your tesoro?" Ezio fires back. The Master Assassin was about to respond-

"Arabic too- hang on, Altair is there as well?" This time, it was an alarmed Lucy over the ear piece, "Desmond! Are you there?"

"Y-Yeah, I'm here-" The time traveler manages to squeak out before seeing Altair and Ezio's surprised expression.

Silence was heard until Clay speaks, a bit of laughter coming through his voice (as well as stifled laughter from Lucy, Rebecca, Shaun, and Connor). "...Des... did they just... call you their 'darling'?"

Desmond facepalms, groaning as his face turns a **very** dark red.

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**End Part 4**

To you guys wondering if this story is going to anywhere, yes it will head somewhere serious.

What's next: The three visits Leonardo, who manages to help translate another important document before realizing that a certain item might be closer than they realize. In modern times, Rebecca states her theory on the glitch to Shaun... before overhearing something about a certain blonde woman. And Desmond realizes why he will never get out of being the one in bottom in sex (with the help of his friends via communicator).
Poked Fun At

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: ...not mine.

This is another reason as to why this story is Alternative Universe: THESE EVENTS DON'T EXACTLY FOLLOW THE GAME PLOTLINE. Meaning there is nothing regarding the 2012 incident for the AC Series (and NASA has debunked that theory); just stupid Templars getting their hands on things they shouldn't touch (ever). So once again... spoiler warning; some of these events are based on what I read up, and I apologize in advance for any forming headaches.

Thanks to those who are following, viewing, and giving kudos to this story! Enjoy this chapter!

"italics" = Italian or Arabic or any other language
"bold" = over the mic
"normal" = English

Part 5: Poked Fun At

While he was reading up on his ancestors and previous assassins, Ezio Auditore de Firenze was interested in the events that happened in Masyaf and how one Altair Ibn La'Ahad became to be a Master Assassin. Even after the hanging of his family by the bastard Ulberto Alberti, Ezio swore vengeance to those who harms anyone Ezio deems as trustworthy and the people he cares for.

He was also very infamous with the ladies, which explains why some of the women that see him curse him into the nine-levels of hell (A small chuckle escapes from Ezio, recalling a certain writer responsible for those nine levels of hell) whenever he flirts with another woman.

Ezio wants to kill the man that murdered his family and get answers as to why involving his family in the scandal.

What he wasn't prepared for was meeting the attractive time traveler and (Ezio can't believe he is using this word) adorable Desmond Miles...

...and one very stoic and irritating Altair Ibn La'Ahad.

He recalls something his mother said at one point about meeting the ones that he will care for more than others; Leonardo da Vinci was a great friend and aided him tremendously in various missions, repaired his blades, and deciphering several pages of a certain man's Codex. Niccolo Machiavelli, the one who made him the Assassin and aided him where Mario couldn't; his comrades Bartoloneo d'Alviano for liberating the Castello from Templar control; La Volpe, who was able to aid him into
stopping the Pazzi Conspiracy before it became a disaster to all of Florence; Antonio de Magianis and Teodora Contanto, who helped him stop various Templar Assassins to reaching their goal; Paola, who was able to aid him into lowering his noteriety and renew his friendship and contract with Leonardo. And finally, his mother, his sister Claudia, and Mario- his parental figure and mentor- aided him so much before he truly became an assassin.

At the moment Desmond arrived in Italy, there was an air of familiarity surrounding him. It was as if the young man was with Ezio the entire time (and at times, controlled their bodies); now he finally gets to see his supposed *angel custode* in real life... he never realized how precious Desmond was to him.

Then again, he can tell Altair had the same feeling about Desmond. For some reason, it *irked* Ezio to no end. Yes, Ezio did study up on some Arabic; he clearly knows what Altair meant when he refers the young time traveler as his 'habibi' and *why* Desmond was important to him.

Doesn't that made Desmond important to Ezio too?

Ezio sighs, running his hand through his hair. Clearly, the young boy had aided both assassins through the Animus (and it didn't sound good) since he clearly was with them as he experienced their memories.

...what they weren't prepared for was the way the young boy *reacted* to their advances as well as-

"Clay, you asshole, *why* the hell did you have to say *that* in front of everyone?" Desmond seethes at the small, clear device Desmond calls as a 'communicator' to his time.

- the new technology he brought with him.

"*S-sorry, it's just- it's too... ohmygosh, this is just too... AHAHAHAHAHAHHAAHAHAHAHAHA!"* The man's voice on the other line (Ezio presumes it belongs to 'Clay') was trying to breathe in, but bouts of laughter escapes from him, "*You know, I kind of figured you'd be hit on by someone sooner or later..."*

"*Is that really necessary?"* Desmond replies, exasperation present on his face as he sits at the wooden chair, "*What the hell made you think it was going to happen, anyway?*"

"*Ohhh no, it wasn't Clay who thought you weren't going to get laid by someone back in time,)*" A teasing, chirpy woman's voice came this time, Ezio notes. He can tell Altair glances at the machine (as he is changing into the clothing provided for him) unusually, "*THAT was me and Lucy.*"

The time traveler stares, gawking at the ear piece, "*Rebecca, you and Lucy... H-Hang on a sec-*"

"*Oh come on! Think about it!*" The woman's voice, Rebecca giggles madly, "*You're the mysterious time traveler who has a very important mission to go to, no way of explaining why you are there..."*

"*Oh God...*" Ezio lets out a small chuckle, seeing the American blushing at his expense.

"*You don't trust anyone you don't know,*" Another female's voice, this has to be Lucy with a hint of teasing in it, "*And yet you somehow gain the trust of people because of your charms-*"*

"*My- Lucy!*" Desmond gapes, "*I don't have any charms whatsoever!*"
"Now that I can supply with," The new voice has an accent, Ezio notes with surprise, "Have you seen Desmond try to flirt with a girl? It was atrocious!"

"You mean... oohhhhh, you mean Myrna! No, he wasn't flirting! Myrna was! And you were betting whether or not Desmond was going to get lucky that day!" Rebecca's voice was heard again, "...now that I think about it, we thought Myrna was doing all the talking because poor Des was a nervous wreck..."

"Huh? Oh- I remember that now!" It was that other boy- Clay, was it? Ezio realizes that his tesoro was blushing red since he was hiding his face in his hands. Even he can tell Altair was interested where this conversation was leading. "I think it was later that when we were betting if Myrna was going to top Desmond-

"WHAT!" Desmond gapes, "You guys were WHAT? And... hang on, what about Myrna?"

"What? Sorry, dude, but you were dense!" Clay groans, "You know... girl at the coffee store? The one where we go for runs? She had a HUGE lusting for you!"

Now that perked Ezio's attention; as well as Altair's. Someone tried to go after Desmond before?

"She... did?" Desmond asks, blinking in confusion, "I thought she was really nice!"

"Uh huh. And the perfect bod to boot. COME ON! How could you not notice that?"

"...I was tired?"

So maybe this 'Myrna' didn't get her way with Desmond after all. Ezio sighs, shaking his head.

"...you're hopeless AND dense." Then a grumble that sounded like "No wonder Rebecca and Lucy were asking if you'd go top or bottom."

"What was that, Clay?" Desmond asks warily. Instead, the accented voice returns, this time calming down from laughter.

"That explains a lot why you, Desmond, can't-

"Shaun!" Now Ezio couldn't help but laugh, seeing how the poor boy got himself into the situation. Granted, he could help Desmond (he'll console him later), but...

...well, there was a part of him that wanted to know more about where Desmond came from. Ezio can hear Altair let out a chuckle as he sits on the other wooden chair, fully clothed, amused and curious at the present. And Desmond was giving him and the elder a withering glare (that failed due thanks to the blush that was growing on the young boy's face).

"See? They're enjoying our conversation!" Clay beams.

"They're laughing," Desmond grits his teeth, "AT ME."

"...and Shaun is laughing his head off." The serious voice responds back. Ezio can't help but wonder who it was again-

"Connor, please help me!" The time traveler groans, glancing back at the ear piece in misery, "And tell that Brit Asshole he's a dead man when I get back home!"
A chuckle, "All right, all right. I think that's enough torture for Desmond, guys."

Connor, huh? Ezio was wondering about this Connor and Desmond's relation to him, It seems as if he is close to Desmond.

"One thing, though," Connor's voice pauses, "Why DID they call you by a pet name?"

"What?" Desmond stares before blanching... and blushing again, "...not now. I'll... explain later, okay?"

"As in about a week, baby brother," Connor's voice deadpans, "Meaning you're explain it to me now."

"You two are siblings?" Ezio asks in surprise (and grudgingly agreeing with Altair it was best the poor boy's torture), "You sound nothing alike each other!"

The American blinks, looking at Ezio again. Altair just glances at him, wondering if it was true too (The voices on the other line probably died down to listen).

"He's adopted into our family... Clay is my other brother."

"You have two brothers?" Altair finally speaks, but in more genuine surprise than before.

Ezio arches an eyebrow, a small smile on his lips, Well, well, tesoro mio... you never cease to amaze me.

"We're... technically brothers, but we're not related by blood," Desmond replies, "Connor is the oldest; Clay is the middle child; and I'm the youngest."

"I see," Altair nods, "Why did you not mention this before?"

The time traveler opens his mouth before sighing, "Do you recall how I was able to relive your memories?"

"Yes... but what does it have to do with us?" Ezio persists, wanting to know. So Desmond was the bambino of his family... but why does he look worried about mentioning it?

Desmond opens his mouth before closing it, rethinking his thoughts as he looks away from the two, "...you don't want to know. Trust me. I've seen most of your lives. As much as I want to tell you, I don't want to cause the two of you any more trouble than I've already done."

"And that's already bad enough for us here. You might as well mention it to them since they probably-," They can hear Shaun grumbling before Desmond snatches the ear piece in irritation and places it into his right ear to muffle the rest of whatever the accented man was saying.

"Shaun! Shut up!" Desmond hisses before turning around, "Sorry. I'll be right back." And with that, he walks out of the room towards the washing area (where Altair was before), leaving the two master assassins alone.

Ezio blinks, "Interesting... so they must be the Assassins Desmond mentioned."

"The ones that rescued him?" Altair grunts, facing him with an irritated glance, "As much as I hate to agree with you, you might be correct. Otherwise, they would not have known Desmond being here with us."

The Italian nods... before shooting Altair a glare, "Wait, what do you mean by you hate to disagree with me?"

Altair rolls his eyes, "Amateur. You don't know that I already don't like the way you behave to Desmond? It has to be the worst way I've seen a mentor act to a novice!"

"And you're not any better, elder?" Ezio scowls back, his jealousy flaring up, "What do you expect me to do? Treat him as if I'm his landlord? I will not! I will not teach him as if he is an actual novice!"

"Your style of fighting is slower than what I can do, you don't use any lethality in your blood," The Syrian snaps back, "You are a peacock, you seem to attract more attention with these ridiculous clothing-"

"It belonged to the last Assassin who wore them!" Ezio is tempted to sheathe his blades out, angered that Altair insulted his father's clothing, "And I have the scars to show you how much I have killed! What of your accomplishments? You once disgraced the Order by your actions!"

"And what of it?" Altair snarls, prepared to sheathe his hidden blade out, "I have worked my way to return to triumph in the Order despite my actions in the past. Yet you don't think I have some sacrifices to deal with too? I lost a good friend, the trust of my fellow assassins, and a family!"

"What of them? My father and brothers were betrayed and I saw them hang!" Ezio hisses, "I did work my way into the Order- I prevented another betrayal that would have happened to this city of mine!"

"Ha! Compared to what I had to endure with Al Mualim's betrayal to the Order? It is nothing!" Altair laughs harshly.

Ezio narrows his eyes, furious, How DARE he!

The two don't see Desmond enter into the room, all cleaned to see the two master Assassins ready to duel each other, preparing to unsheathe their weapons.

"You laugh at me- this is unacceptable!" Ezio growls, triggering his hidden blade to come out, "I would rather show you what I am capable of instead of talking, Altair!"

Altair narrows his eyes, "Are you suggesting a challenge then? So be-"

"Altair! Ezio!"

In an instant, both Assassins stop, seeing Desmond standing between them, a horrified look on his face.

"You really love to pick on Desmond, don't you?"

Shaun looks up to see Rebecca as she pour in her coffee, "What do you mean?" He asks, pouring hot water into his mug before steeping the tea bag, "...oh come on! Don't tell me you're still annoyed about what I said to Desmond!"

"I am, sarcastic brute," The black-haired girl rolls her eyes as she takes a flavored creamer and pours it in her coffee, "Desmond's like a bro to me."

"You mean our little brothers," Shaun leans against the counter, "Clay's equally as immature as
Desmond is."

Rebecca sighs before taking a sip of her coffee, "Aaahhhh... sweet, sweet coffee."

"I don't understand why you Americans enjoy that sludge so much," Shaun shakes his head before frowning, "Rebecca."

"Hm?"

"What do you think caused the glitch?"

The technician looks up in surprise to see a worried Shaun, "...you still want to hear about it?"

"At this point," The Brit frowns, "I'm willing to listen. That stupid Animus messed up our chances of getting Desmond back-"

"That... **might** be why the Animus is still glitching. It's messing up on purpose."

Shaun blinks, confused, "...repeat that with an explanation."

Rebecca takes a deep breath, placing her half empty coffee mug down, "Okay, you know how Desmond has been the one who can successfully read into Altair and Ezio's memories while nobody else can? And Clay was lucky not to enter it because he was just overhearing what was happening?"

"Yeah, I recall that," The British man nods, knowing very well that in order to make sure Clay doesn't get the side effects from previous subjects, William had to ask Shaun, Rebecca, and Lucy to create a special device that will prevent Clay from being qualified to be in the Animus. They had their doubts, but it worked... only once, which caused the Animus program to malfunction for about a month (much to Vidic's fury), managing to give Clay the time to escape with Lucy's help before destroying the evidence by giving it to William, "What about it?"

"There were previous subjects who weren't about to correspond with Altair and Ezio's memories; Desmond was the one that fit the most since he was the most direct descendant of the two," Rebecca takes one more gulp of her coffee, "He was able to relieve most of their memories, making the Animus 1.0 successful in its task; the thing is, we programmed it so it can take us back in time, to go in there ourselves. The first test went fine; afterwards, it was Connor, Clay, and Desmond that managed to get in the Animus safe."

"Rebecca," Shaun was beginning to sound exasperated, "What exactly is the glitch?"

"The Animus is acting on its own," The tech woman responds, "There's something in the Animus that's preventing Desmond from returning home."

The British man sets his tea down, dumbfounded, "...Are you suggesting there's some AI to the Animus? That can't be-"

"It's not programmed by one of us, Desmond has no way of programming the Animus, and there is no way in hell it was remotely done by anybody else- not even Abstergo," Rebecca responds to what Shaun was about to ask, "If it was being hacked on, the databases should have caught that a couple of hours ago."

"You mean yesterday," Shaun mutters in shock, "...meaning the glitch happened."

"-when Desmond was in Jerusalem, grabbing that map from Altair," Rebecca nods, "That time, we all saw- hell, even Connor noticed nobody got into the system. I tried it again two hours ago- same
thing. Something in the stupid system is preventing me from opening a portal so Desmond can return."

The British tech Assassin sighs, running his hand through his copper hair, "Fuck. Just what we needed. Can you try to reread through the system again?"

"I can try..." Rebecca mutters before hearing a tap on the kitchen counter, "Oh, hey, Asano."

"Hey guys," The Japanese-American tech Assassin comes in, "Got any more green tea?"

"In the counter," Shaun directs him as Asano looks around, "...Oi. Something up?"

Asano looks around before taking out a small external USB port reader, "Something I need to show you. It's something about Lucy."

"What about her?" Rebecca blinks, taking out her iPad as she places in the USB reader into the port before inserting the USB stick, "She's been busy recently-

"It's something I checked up on," The Japanese man's face hardens, "Under William's orders."

"What's going on?" Shaun asks as Rebecca begins to read the information.

Asano whispers, "William wanted me to hack into the email database we have. Recently, he's been getting some strange emails from Lucy and he wanted me to check out what they were really about. I didn't want to do it, but I managed to hack into her account by using the master database. I found her emails... along with the corresponding ones." He motions Rebecca to hand the iPad to him (she did) before he begins tapping a few things before handing them back to Rebecca, "Read these files. Tell me what you notice."

Both Rebecca and Shaun give each other a glance before reading over the emails. It wasn't until ten seconds later Shaun pales before shaking his head, "...that's not... it doesn't even sound like him!"

Asano nods, "Whoever tried did a very poor job at being discreet about it."

"But... why..." Rebecca's voice was in a horrified whisper before she came across one email, causing her to nearly drop her iPad, "No. No no nono. Oh God... no..." She feels Shaun wrap his arm around her shoulders, a concerned look on his face. "I mean... she's been more withdrawn but- not like this..."

"I'm sorry," Asano quietly murmurs, "...but I'm afraid it is so."

"Guess William had the right thought," Shaun grunts, soothing Rebecca (she wasn't crying; she was just breathing to calm down), "Rebecca... we've dealt with some of these before. Don't worry. Even Templars have their fuck-ups; we have ours too. This might be one of them. You even said so yourself; she has been more withdrawn lately."

"She did a damn good job at covering it up too," The black-haired woman grunts, "...the Templars have their fuck ups too?"

"A few of our new recruits have been former Templars who finally realize Vidic's ideas were really stupid," Asano sighs, "William's wondering what made them understand that."

"Do I want to know?"

"No. Trust me. You don't."
"Me neither," Shaun mutters before glancing down at Rebecca, "Are you all right, Rebecca?"

Rebecca nods, reading the rest of the emails, "Fuck. We are so screwed."

Shaun's lips draws into a thin, hard line as he glances at the young man, "Thanks for this. Did you-"

"I made sure I burned any future traces as well as mine," Asano's face is grim, "I alerted ALL HQ's... as well as William."

"And?"

"The emails are going to be directly rerouted to him from now on; he play that role before..." The Japanese technical assassin narrows his eyes, "...there is one other thing you should know: William has anticipated something like this, so he had a couple of us set up a new area. And-" He hands Rebecca a small bag, "-to program these in so that Abstergo will never know what we did with the Animus. There is another one being built by some of our best techs as we speak."

"Good," Shaun nods, "And about... everything else?"

"We're going to burn this entire area here too," Asano replies, "I've passed an email to Connor and Clay; they should have an idea of what is happening. All I can say is make sure you tell them what I showed you."

"Okay," Rebecca and Shaun nod before Asano looks around.

"Where's Miles?"

"He's inside the Animus, why?" Shaun asks, "I thought you knew that."

"Well, tell him to get him to get his ass out of the Animus asap," Asano frowns, "Once we get Desmond out, we're heading over to the new location. William will be waiting for us there. And the other thing," He lowers his voice into a whisper, "Whatever you do, do not let the mole get wind of this. If it happens, it's all over. Good luck."

A quick nod from Shaun and Asano leaves the kitchen, his green tea at hand. Finally, Rebecca glances at Shaun, "...now what?"

"We need to talk to Connor and Clay now." Shaun hisses, "I'll ask Lucy for either take-out or for her to sleep."

"But we already got-" Her eyes widen at what he meant, "...Well, I guess some take-out won't hurt. Chinese, Thai, Japanese, or Italian?"

"Something that takes the longest to cook," The British man fishes out a series of take-out menus, "Help me find a place that takes a while to drive over to."

Fighting was something Desmond doesn't enjoy, even though he was an assassin-in-training. So it explained a lot why something in his head told him to stay in the room with Ezio and Altair when he left to finish his talk with the others (before getting Connor to ask what he should do now that he's stuck in Italy). So when he returned to see both Ezio and Altair about to kill each other, Desmond knew he had to stop them.

"Desmond..." Ezio and Altair were about to explain when Desmond lets out a sigh before seeing their blades.
"No wonder I had a bad feeling earlier when I left the room. ...freaking bleeding effect." The last part was rushed, but Ezio manages to catch it, his eyebrows knotting in confusion as Altair frowns as the two return their weapons to their sheath.

"Che diavolo? ...Bleeding Effect?"

Something you'd rather not know, Desmond doesn't like it, but it gives him several advantages. At least he saw that both assassins were calm now.

"...Desmond," Altair was the first to speak as Ezio relaxed (although Desmond can see the Italian was still glaring at the master assassin), "What is going on as of now in your time?"

Desmond's frown returns as he sits on the edge of the bed, glancing at the two Assassins, "I told you both how I manage to get into this time; Altair, you followed me into Italy through something that went wrong from the Animus. The thing was..."

He pauses, possibly to not sound confusing for Ezio and Altair as he dwindles his thumbs, "...there is a mistake in the time machine that my friend is trying to fix. I don't know how long it's going to take-let along what caused it... but it means I'm stuck here." Then he glances at Altair, "That means until my friend fixes it, you're stuck here too."

"With this ridiculous peacock?" Altair grumbles, glancing over at Ezio, who rolls his eyes, "...I understand. The sooner your friend fixes the problem, the sooner I can leave so I will not have to deal with the novice... the sooner I can handle what I have for my habibi." Desmond knew the last part was meant to be just for Altair himself, but for some reason, it found him blushing.

It was odd; despite Altair's initial hostile behavior towards him, he seems to warm up to Desmond... rather quickly. To Ezio, on the other hand... well, Desmond just witnesses first-hand why to never leave the room with the two alone. Crap.

"To be fair," Ezio scowls, itching for a fight against the elder, "You did intrude at the moment I caught Desmond."

"You were flirting with him as if he was one of your concubines!" Altair shoots back in Arabic, causing the Italian Assassin to roll his eyes while Desmond lightly blushes.

"He was... well, a lost sparrow. How could I not resist?" Ezio's light amber eyes glance over at the time traveler, who instantly blushes darker once Ezio gives him a small grin. Desmond can see Altair glaring daggers at Ezio as if... wait. Was that jealousy?

"A-Anyway!" Desmond's voice quickly brings the two out of their death glare match, "I... I have to return some things to a friend of mine since it seems like I don't have to return anytime soon."

"And that is?" Altair asks as the American presents the items he has in his hands, "...I see. And who is this friend of yours?"

"Someone I met in my travels," Desmond responds in Arabic, beginning to stand up before feeling the pain shooting up again, causing him to wince, "I... ow, I owe him a lot anyway; he aided me while I was in Italy." Standing up, he smiles weakly, "I'll... go and find him."

"No, you're not," both Ezio and Altair said at the same time, alarming Desmond.

"Oh come on!" Desmond groans, hanging his head, "I am walk-"
"You're still in pain, habibi." Ezio glares at Altair, but the Syrian ignores it as he helps Desmond stand, "Do you want one of us while you recover?"

"No!" The time traveler pales, recalling what he said earlier, "I-I mean... argh, I'm okay! You guys... didn't handle me that rough." Well... DUH. Otherwise they wouldn't be panicking over you right now."It's just how to tell Leonardo why I didn't-'"

"Leonardo?" He freezes, knowing now he goofed up as he sees Ezio's eyes widen in surprise, "You know of my good friend Leonardo da Vinci?"

Desmond blanches, Well, fuck. Thanks, verbal diarrhea.

"Desmond. Who is... this Leonardo you speak of?" Altair asks, glancing at Desmond as Ezio blinks before muttering something in Italian, pacing around the room.

"His full name is Leonardo da Vinci," Desmond replies, a little worried about Ezio, "An inventor and an artist. In my time, he is more known for his artworks and attention to detail. He is also known for various inventions that were relevant to my time... and he is one of Ezio's allies." He knew what Altair was going to ask next, so he decided to continue, "Yes, I had to meet him in person and I also knew what his personality was like in the Animus."

"I see," Altair nods, his grip on Desmond a bit tighter, "...It seems like the feathered fool is not taking this well."

"You think?" The American groans as he leans his head against Altair's shoulder, "Well, I'm fucked. Ezio's probably going to kill me."

"If he does plan on it, I will not let it happen to you, habibi." The Syrian sighs, gently kissing Desmond's ear (causing the said boy to blush) before watching Ezio grumble about something, rubbing his temples.

"Thank you," Desmond mutters before frowning.

Something has been bothering him since yesterday; maybe he shoveled it in the back of his mind, but how in the world can Altair understand him? There HAD to be a massive language barrier between the three of them and yet they can speak and talk as if they were in one. Desmond has explained how he can talk in both Arabic and Italian (horrendously) to both; how the hell is it possible that they can understand his English, Altair's Arabic, and Ezio's Italian with little to no problem?

"Hey, Altair?"

The Syrian man looks at Desmond (which was a little bit scary since he does look like a more serious version of Desmond) with concern, "Yes, habibi?"

"How can you... well, the thing is-"

Desmond was about to finish when he felt himself being yanked out of Altair and into-

Wait, Ezio looks livid.

Well, there goes my life! The time traveler pales as he tries to escape his grip from Ezio's right arm, "I-I can explain-""

"There's no need to explain anything," Ezio growls at Desmond's ear. He can hear Altair exclaim something, but Ezio had his left blade drawn out at Altair's throat, stopping the Syrian Assassin at his
tracks, "Desmond."

"W-What?"

A sigh of frustration came from the Italian, who is still glaring at him. Altair couldn't do anything; as soon as he moved closer, Ezio glares back at Altair, not wavering the position of his blade. Desmond squeezed his eyes shut, expecting for the Italian to bark at him-

"You foolish sparrow... why did you not seek me out for whatever help you need?"

...what?

He opens his eyes to see Ezio, whose expression changed into one of being an upset person. Instead of asking, Desmond squeaks, "Come again?"

"Why did you trust Leonardo first, but not me, Desmond?" Ezio asks, this time in a softer voice, "What were you afraid of, tesoro mio?"

The American sighs, turning away with regret building in his mind already, "I... well, I asked him not to let you see me in worry that you might kill me or... yeah. Something like that."

Ezio is baffled, "W-What? Why would you think I would do that to you, Desmond?"

"I..." Desmond licks his lips nervously, ",...I didn't think you'd trust me easily as..." he warily glances over at Altair before switching to Italian, ",...sorry. I was scared when I first entered in Italy by myself, and I did not want you to see me."

"He's afraid you might be angry in asking your friend Leonardo for his assistance," Altair responds for a stammering Desmond, a small smirk appears on his face, ",...huh. Maybe he was right to not trust you first after all. It seems as I have an advantage."

Ezio glares at Altair, "You stronzo-"

"The same for you, Altair," Now Desmond was blushing in embarrassment, ",...I did not want you to be suspicious of me when I first entered Jerusalem."

Now Altair looks surprised as Ezio's body trembles with silent laughter. The Syrian frowns, "What... do you mean?"

"If I met you during my first time entering Jerusalem," Desmond bites his lower lip, "I would have run for my life."

It didn't take long before Ezio laughs, earning a furious glare from Altair, "And do you find this hilarious, you preening imbecile?"

"Yes, stronzo, I do."

Desmond can't help but give a silent sigh of relief. At least they're not killing each other now, he then glances over at the two, "Hey... guys?"

Altair and Ezio glance over at Desmond.

"...Don't you think we should head over to Leonardo's area right now?" The time traveler pauses, "And Ezio? Your blade..."

"Hm? Oh... right," The Italian sheathes back his blade, lowering his left arm, "Forgive me, elder."
"Of course I do. Asshole." Altair grumbles, rubbing his neck to make sure there wasn't a mark on it, "If this gets ruined, Ezio, this is your fault."

"We shall see later," Ezio rolls his eyes, "There should be a spare version of your wear inside the chest. You can change into that."

Altair nods warily before going over to the chest to find his spare clothing. Desmond sighs... before realizing something, "Do I need a change of clothing?"

"Of course, tesoro mio," Ezio chuckles, a bright smile on his face as he sees Desmond before nipping the American's ear (Desmond was blushing again), "You will stand out wearing something like that."

Desmond sighs, Oh course. "And um... Ezio?"

"Hm?"

"Can you... um... please let go of me? I think Altair's glaring at you again."

"Ezio!" Leonardo da Vinci smiles, placing down his palette to see Ezio walking in, "How has it been?"

"Not bad. And you, my friend?" Ezio chuckles, hugging his good friend.

"I am taking a small break to work on a commission," Leonardo suggests to the drawings that he has strewn about at the tables in front of him, "The flying machine that we have achieved to make works really well!"

The Italian chuckles before glancing back at the door, "Come in; he already knows about one of you." Both Altair and Desmond walk into the room (the former is leaning against the wall, his hood up and just doesn't say anything as he looks around), catching the inventor by surprise before he chuckles, looking at Desmond. At least he looks like he blends into the Venetian crowd.

"I take it that you didn't get the chance to return yesterday?"

"There... was a small problem back in my time," Desmond sighs in defeat before handing Leonardo his clothing, "Thank you for the clothing; I have to thank you for yesterday's help."

"It's no problem, Desmond," Leonardo gives the time traveler a smile of sympathy, "Anytime you need help, I'm more than happy to aid you whatever I can."

The time traveler nods, "Um, is it all right if..." He digs into his bag to take out a folded up brown paper and hands it to Leonardo, "I have another favor to ask."

"Does it involve translating?"

"Yes, it does," Altair finally leaves his position to walk over to the three others, "You are the one whom Ezio said can read my language?"

"And you must be...?" Leonardo asks before seeing Altair's hood off. The blonde artist looks in surprise as he looks back and forth between Desmond and Altair, "Oh Lord... you must be Altair Ibn La'Ahad. But... you two look exactly the same!"
"They do, don't they?" Ezio frowns. It did give him an unsettled feeling; at the moment Altair presented his face to the Florence Assassin; the first thing Ezio realized was both Desmond and Altair look too similar to each other. Now he can pick out the subtle differences between the two (aside a little bit is from height), "The pages I asked you to translate... this is him before he wrote the pages."

"I see," The inventor nods before bowing down, "I am Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci. It is a true honor to be at the presence of a Master Assassin."

Altair was a little surprised to see the inventor greet himself like that, but nonetheless, he nods back, "It is an honor to meet an ally of the Assassin Order." Then he glances back over at Ezio as Leonardo stands up again, "...so, it seems you do know what you were thinking in trusting someone who can aid you."

"What, you question my allies, stronzo?" Ezio challenges.

"Ezio!" Leonardo glares at his friend as Desmond chuckles (silently), "What makes you say that?"

"Lots of reasons," The Italian Assassin dryly replies, crossing his arms, "He and I do not clearly get along."

"I can tell..." The blonde artist mutters, clearly seeing the death glares Ezio and Altair are giving each other as he carefully opens the folded paper, "Desmond. Is this... some sort of treasure map?"

Desmond shakes his head as he gently takes the map, "It's a clue to another... artifact I've been searching."

"And where did you get this from?" Leonardo asks before seeing Altair's eyes on the map. Catching a hint, the painter sighs, exasperated, "Well, at least that explains why you were in such panicked state yesterday."

"I did not have enough time to explain who was after me!" Desmond protests, a light red dusting his face, "What was I supposed to say- 'Oh yeah, I got two master assassins chasing after me because I grabbed Altair's map'?"

"Why did you take my map?" Altair frowns, glancing down at the time traveler, "I have been wondering about that for a while."

The young man sighs, shoulders sagging, "I told you it was a part of a mission, didn't I?"

The Syrian sighs, shaking his head, grumbling under his breath, "Had I known about it, I would have lend you the map, habibi."

That caught Leonardo's attention as he looks up from the map, "...Desmond, did I just-"

"Not. Another. Word." The time traveler groans, hanging his head as Altair chuckles, a small smile appearing at his face. The artist was confused for a minute-

"Oh come now! Surely you're still not embarrassed about that ordeal, tesoro mio!" Ezio chuckles, wrapping his left arm around Desmond's waist (ignoring Altair's glare at him), "What did your friends say?"

Desmond's face turns red before muttering something very incoherent to the current occupants in the room.
And that was when Leonardo realizes why Ezio and Altair hate each other. He hid his grin as he can hear Ezio prod Desmond more before Altair cuts in, resulting the two in a small, jealous-fueled bicker, Well, well. Maybe that might be another reason why Desmond couldn't reveal himself to you? The artist returns to the map... before his smile turns into a look of alarm and surprise as he rereads the map and the inscriptions on the map, No. No way... but I thought the only Piece of Eden was the Apple Ezio has in his possessions! This, on the other hand...

...oh dear God.

"Desmond."

"Si?" Desmond looks up at a grimacing Leonardo, who gently lowers the map and hands it to the young man, "...so... what is it?"

"It's a map for a Piece of Eden," Leonardo explains, not bothering to go into English, "But I am guessing you already knew about it?"

"He does." Ezio frowns as Altair looks at the map with Desmond, "...is something the matter, Leonardo?"

"Yes," The inventor's lips drew into a thin, worried line, "This map is... where was it found?"

"I found it in one of the Templar's bodies," Altair replies, grim at the thought of the way he had to get it, "What Piece of Eden is this map for?"

"I afraid I don't know..." Leonardo pause, "Only except this map looks too familiar."

"...what?" Ezio looks back at the map again before he pales, "C-Che diavolo? Impossibile!"

"What?" Desmond finally asks, "What's wrong?"

"That map..." The artist heavily sighs, "...is of Venice. The Piece of Eden you are looking for is located in this very city."

End Part 5

What's next: Desmond forces Altair and Ezio to work together (unfortunately, there's a catch for the poor time traveler); Rebecca and Shawn reveal not just Rebecca's theory to Connor and Clay, but something about Lucy...
Affected

Chapter Notes


Just a question: Do you guys like Lucy Stillman at all? I've read about her in the AC wiki so... do you think she would still be considered as an Assassin (and yes, I did read on her history and her loyalties, so I've been spoiled already)? To be honest, I've been playing around with two ideas in my mind...

WARNING: Aside the spoiler warning? ...well, maybe at the end, but that really doesn't have to have a warning now does it?

Enjoy this chapter!

"italics" = Italian or Arabic or any other language

"bold italics" = over the mic and phone

"normal" = English

bold sentences = emails or screams (depends on how it's used).

Part 6: Affected

"We have a serious problem."

Connor and Clay were looking through Rebecca's iPad; Connor's face hardening with silent fury while Clay's eyes narrowed, seething anger entering his thoughts.

Rebecca and Shaun face each other in slight worry before looking back at the two other Assassins.

The two Miles entered into the kitchen about ten minutes ago, looking for food to eat when they saw Shaun and Rebecca looking at the take-out menus in front of them. The strangest thing was even though Connor wanted something else rather than pizza (he had too much of it and the last pizza guy gave him a frozen pizza) and desired some home-cooked stuff for once, he finally gave in after Clay said he'll pay for Connor's meal. But Rebecca being the one who wants to try out new stuff (and Shaun being the picky guy as usual), they decide to get some orders from a new place that deals with 'healthy meals'... whatever the hell healthy was these days.

The most unusual thing was the place was about fifteen miles from the warehouse... along with the fact that Lucy is driving (Connor can understand that, seeing how much more awake she was; she slept in her seat while Shaun got the groceries). She agreed with it, seeing how Rebecca and Clay managed to convince Lucy to try out the food... and then being the one to drive, seeing how tired they all are.
After writing down their orders and giving their money to Lucy (all cash) before she left the area, Connor can tell something was off with the tech duo... until Rebecca hands Connor her iPad and tells him and Clay to read over the files she just pulled up. After protesting over reading some emails for privacy's sake, Connor begins to read it (with Clay reading over his shoulders)... before he got to the responses to the emails Lucy had sent to...

...whoever the fuck was acting as William.

Rereading one of the corresponding emails again, Connor can tell that William never acts like this:

Hello Lucy,

Your last email troubled me, more for your sake than the fate of the project. I have no idea what has gotten into you, but you're going to come down with an ulcer if you don't relax a little. You're doing excellent work, there is nothing for you to worry about. In terms of how Desmond is doing, however, I need you to keep eye on him. Report anything that you obseve that might be relevant.

When you do get back here, we'll run several tests on him-

"Several tests?" Connor seethes, not bothering to finish the email, "What the hell does this guy think he's doing to Desmond?"

"Apparently, what I'm worried about," Rebecca bites her lower lip, "From this email, it's obvious this guy can't be William. William himself mentioned he refuse to place Desmond in any more testing environments because of his Bleeding Effect."

"There are other ones," Shaun draws his lips in a grim line. Connor and Clay nod as they continue to read the next email.

Hello Lucy-

Sorry about the slow reply, just got back from lunch. Good question! I'm not sure if we can do that, but ask again once you're back here.

From your previous report, Desmond seems to be progressing perfectly. It seems as you are all accomplishing something as of now. Just make sure your friendship doesn't jeopardize our goals. Great work as always and hang in there!

"Dad doesn't even know what the hell Lucy was talking about," Clay seethes, "Did she tell this person everything?"

"Not exactly," Shaun frowns, pointing to the previous other emails, "She didn't mention about how Clay is still here alive, how the Animus is officially a time machine... it's all focused on Desmond, his mental progression, and whatever the hell they are trying to go after."

"Well... ugh, crap." Clay groans, running his hands through his blonde hair. Connor glances at the time; ten minutes have passed since Lucy left, "...say, how long is Lucy supposed to be gone?"

"It takes about fifteen minutes to drive down there since it's practically lunch time for those poor souls," Shaun grimaces, "And then knowing the amount of people that's in the place, it'll take around ten minutes for the food to prepare, pack up, and another fifteen to drive back."
"So, forty minutes," Connor nods, *So far, so good. As long as she's gone, we have to do something about it without her presence.* "Did you make sure there's **nothing** that connects her to the base here?"

"I looked at her computer and scanned it," Rebecca shakes her head, "I turned the mic off and made sure there were no recording devices anywhere."

"Not even in any of the stuff she keeps?" Connor glances at Lucy's workdesk; the headset was plugged off, her computer was still active, and aside the sparse sticky notes cluttered over the computer screen, there was nothing. No pens, notebooks...

...nothing.

"I checked it all," The black haired girl nods, "No microchips or anything."

"Good," Connor nods in relief as Clay reads the rest of the emails, "Okay. So what else did Asano say after he showed these to you?"

"Asano said there will be another base set up," Shaun explains, "William already knows about these emails and said that we will be moving to another facility as soon as possible. When we get Desmond out from here, we move **directly** to the new area."

"That's the nature of our area," Clay grumbles, handing the iPad back to Rebecca, who immediately closes the emails and takes out the flashdrives, **"What about the emails?"**

"I'm deleting all traces of it from my iPad," Rebecca taps a few buttons before hearing a small 'bleep', "And William said he'll be trying to imitate as his stupid self until we get orders on what to do about Lucy."

"Speaking of William," Connor was wondering about something, "**How did** he get ahold of these emails? Lucy doesn't know William's email; only the **four** of us have it. Desmond is too busy to even check his emails."

"Asano told us he got strange emails from Lucy recently..." Shaun trails off before frowning, "...**hold it. How the hell** did Asano get the order to hack into the email system? I'm sure William might have asked me to do it."

"But Lucy was there too," Clay points out, "And remember those update emails you get from him? You forward **every** info from him to us."

"Oh God, no wonder," The Brit grumbles before sighing, "**So... what was it then? An AI? Or... what?**"

"Speaking of AI," Rebecca claps her hands, something clicking in her head, "...I wouldn't tell this to Lucy either, but I think I have an idea what the glitch to the Animus might have been."

"Please tell me you have something interesting," Connor groans, recalling the way the glitch came up, "At this point, I might as well give up going into the Animus if this glitch keeps up."

"Same for me, dude..." Clay shakes his head, "So. Becca. Theory?"

The girl was about to respond when her cellphone rang, "Whoops, hang on a sec!" Running over to her cell, she picks it up, "Y'hello?"
"Oh! Rebecca, thank god!" It was Lucy, who sounds really annoyed, "Traffic is hell over in the city. It's lunch break and some naked guy decided to think it was a brilliant idea to stand over at the walking area and preach about something over at the street I'm at right now."

"What the hell is that guy... I hate to ask, but did someone try to run him over?"

"I don't think- oh crap! I think someone just did!" Lucy now sounds horrified, "Holy- oh crap crap crap... H-Hey, look, I think this will take longer than I thought."

"Seriously?" Rebecca groans, "How long?"

"Since the police and ambulance just showed up to figure out the new way to make alternative routes and making us wait since the drivers up in front are witnesses," A groan was heard, "This is going to probably take about half-hour or something."

"Good god... what's wrong with people these days?" The black haired girl holds up her iPad, which has the words LUCY IS IN TRAFFIC. THIRTY MORE MIN. "So... what about the food?"

"I'll let you know when I get it," Lucy sighs, "This is going to be a pain..."

"I'll give you all of my yogurt for this," Rebecca sighs in relief, knowing that somehow they got more time to plan out something, "Thank you so much Rebecca!"

"Hey, no problem," The blonde girl nods on the other line, "I'll let you know when I get to the restaurant; this is going to take a while."

"Be safe!" Rebecca chirps as she hangs up her phone and places it back on the charger, "...well, looks like we got more time."

"What happened?" Clay asks, arching an eyebrow, "Traffic shouldn't be that bad..."

"Some naked guy got run over on the street."

"Naked guy got... why do weird shit happen to us?" Clay groans, "Just the other day, I thought I saw a goat running around in the street!"

"A... goat? Never mind, let's get back to focus," Connor stares at his blonde brother before returning his attention to the iPad.

"At least we got more time," Rebecca walks back to the group, "...as much as I hate to admit, I feel sorry for the guy that got run over."

Shaun nods, rubbing his eyeglasses, "I'm willing to bet this will show up on the news. Let's hope Lucy doesn't present herself; otherwise, we are screwed."

The three others nod in agreement.

Connor sits up, "So... Rebecca, your theory on the glitch?"

"She thinks there's an invisible AI in the Animus," Shaun frowns, glancing over at the glaring Rebecca, "She said that we didn't program the portal to open from Jerusalem to Italy; the same happened when we tried to get Desmond out from Italy. And then what happened earlier; at that point, there were no traces of a hacking or Abstergo trying to block Desmond in that time period."
"It just appears whenever we try to open a portal to 2012," Clay muses, "What about a virus?"

"Not likely," Rebecca shakes her head, "I ran a close-up sweep of the Animus. Had we decided to plant a virus in there, it will corrupt the entire system and trap Desmond in Italy."

"I'm more convinced that the Animus is just having technical issues," Shaun crosses his arms, "What do you guys think?"

Connor frowns, Rebecca's right. There is no way there was a hacking from anyone; we made sure of that. And besides, the Animus was only programmed for very few purposes. There is no need for an internet connection- it doesn't run like that! We also made several sweeps to make sure Abstergo or any other party can try to track the Animus. There had been technical issues, sure, but didn't we already fix it?...well, crap. I just want this day and this stupid mission over with.

"Sorry Shaun, but I have to agree with Rebecca on this one."

"What?" Shaun stares at Connor before giving an irritated huff, "...and you, Clay?"

"I'm actually more convinced on Rebecca's theory than a hack attack," The blonde man strokes his chin, "But... it won't hurt to make another security sweep."

"Seriously?" Rebecca grumbles, but she makes her way towards her computer (which is the head mainframe of the Animus) as she begins to type a few commands into the Animus, "Well, just in case Shaun might be right... I'm going to run a sweep now; let's see if there was a breech in security recently." Then she blinks before asking, "One more thing... if William calls, should we tell him that Desmond got kidnapped in Italy by-"

"No," Connor quickly replies, shaking his head, "We just say that Desmond's mission is going to take a while. It's already bad enough that we saw him and Heather panic when we told him what happened when he's in the Animus and the Bleeding Effects. I don't want any more hell raising up in here." Like it already has, he mentally reminds himself, "I don't want to know what Father says if he finds out about a glitch in the Animus. If he knows, we are dead.

"Not even when we know clearly that Desmond's safe with his ancestors?" Clay asks, worry at the edge of his voice, "...just what is going on over there?"

"To be honest?" Shaun grumbles, "I don't want to know."

They remained silent for about a minute before a thrill ring comes from another cellphone, alarming the others. A bit alarmed, Connor takes out his iPhone before answering it, knowing pretty well who it is, "Hey, Father. I got a question to ask."

"Oh, well, I was actually calling to see how you and the guys are holding up," William replies, a little surprise in his voice, "But it sounds like you were hoping I'd call. Before that, how's Desmond?"

Connor slightly pales as he nearly drops his phone, "Desmond's doing fine in the Animus! He... just contacted us a while ago; he's still on his mission."

"...uh huh. Well, if Desmond contacts anyone of you, let him know your mother and I are safe and sound in America; we just got the new recruit in. We're going to take a few days in another HQ for now just to make sure we burn our traces."

Desmond, you owe me big time, The eldest brother rubs his temples, irritated that their youngest
brother had to be stuck in the stupid Animus, "When are you planning to return here?"

"That is actually the reason why I wanted to call," William sounds serious now, "Is Lucy here?"

"She actually went to get us some lunch," Connor has a feeling it had to do with the emails they were talking about not too long ago, "It will take her a while for her to return."

"Good. Get me on screen," Their leader orders as Connor motions Rebecca to bring her iPad, "I need to give you all new orders once Desmond returns."

"New... orders?" Clay, Shaun, and Rebecca echo in confusion as Connor plugs his iPhone to the tablet; after pressing a few buttons to activate the call app and video, William's face shows up on the larger screen, "Dad, what do you mean new orders?"

"Before we get to that," Connor narrows his eyes, "Father, what about the emails?"

William sighs, a grimace evident with regret, "I wasn't expecting those... in fact, at the moment I read them, I knew I should have done something to aid Lucy. I guess what I've done wasn't enough for her."

"Apparently so," Connor grunts. He had to admit, Lucy did wave off some off-putting auras whenever she enters inside the room; only whenever she's around Desmond, Rebecca, or Clay was she able to ease into comfort. At times, Connor did activate his Eagle Vision... and sees some red tinted aura surrounding her, shadowing her blue outline. The reason why he never tells anyone about it was because they thought she was one of them; a trusted Assassin.

Looks like that wasn't the case from what he saw.

"How did you get those emails in the first place?" Clay finally asks. To this, Connor realized, William's frown grows a bit deeper.

"About that... it was really odd. I don't know how to place this, but... for some reason, I received one of her emails as a forward."

...wait, what?

Altair doesn't know whether him being in Venice (the city he is in right now) was a curse or a blessing. But at the moment, he was just thinking that fate has been toying with him: he has been disgraced from the Order, only to return just to realize his eyes has been opened to see his own master was a traitor to the Order... in turn, he has obtained the fruit of all knowledge- the very Piece of Eden that Al Mualim have tried to possess himself with. Altair doesn't plan to use it anytime soon- in fact he has hidden it from all sights from anybody in the Order (only he and Malik know what to do with the it).

It was only in his time that he hears whispers of rumors about a new Piece of Eden; one that holds the same amount of knowledge and has stronger abilities than the Apple possessed. The map he originally possessed had information as to its location along with the description of what it was; what he was going to do was take it back to Malik and to the Order to see if they can crack the inscription and have a set of men search for it at once (hopefully before the Templars realize the map was gone).

But after hearing what Leonardo said, Altair now realizes that fate was not toying with him; for some reason, it was guiding him.
Not that I believe that Allah has lead me here, of course, he mentally reminds himself, Not everything is done from the Gods or fates!

As long as they can search for the Piece of Eden and hopefully help him return to his time (and Desmond... well, what about his habibi will have to wait). But the others, on the other hand...

"It's here?" Desmond was bewildered, looking at the old map, "...no. Noooo way."

"I wish I was lying," The blonde painter rubs his temples and was about to finish when Desmond stops him.

"No, I meant- this is impossible!" The time traveler's eyes widen in alarm, "There was no such... oh God. The way it was written, the way this map is presented- There is no way in any history was there a Piece of Eden here!"

"And how would you know that?" Altair can hear Ezio ask the time traveler before he stops, recalling Desmond's story. The Master Assassin frowns, knowing pretty well that the strange... technology (it was the Animus; even the name sounds unusual to begin with) forced his habibi to suffer through not just the Italian Assassin's life, but through his as well.

Meaning he knows that at this point, I have it with me, Altair's eyes narrow as he sees Desmond sitting down, his expression alarmed, But he hasn't inquired about it yet.

"Novice," He calls out to Ezio, who was about to persist in asking Desmond, "Stop asking. You know pretty well how he understands this area." Altair sees Ezio glaring at him (Leonardo stifles his laughter- are all of that Italian brat's allies like this?). But he can tell that the other Assassin understands as they glances over at Desmond.

"I can tell you this," Leonardo gently takes the map from Ezio, "This map is greatly detailed; whoever drew this knew the Venice we live in very well."

"So how did it wind up in Altair's time?" Ezio can't help but ask the one question that also been nagging in Altair's mind, "It doesn't make sense! Back then- Italy was beginning to flourish; it was to be one of the great nations again."

"I don't know myself," Altair replies, "All I recalled was that a Templar guard had it in his possessions before I took it."

"You mean you killed them before you asked about it," Ezio flatly replies, "Did you not realize that perhaps one of them could have information as to how they recieved this map?"

"I did ask, novice," Altair replies, "All I recall is that the map was taken from a tower nearby Jerusalem before-" And he glances over at Desmond, who currently watching them, "-Desmond took it."

"Fantastic," The Italian mutters, "There was nothing pertaining to who wrote it?"

"No," Even when he asked Malik about the map, all his friend replied was "I am not sure who wrote it; all I understand is that there is a map for the another Piece of Eden. Before those Templars can take the map for themselves, I suggest you hurry up and stop asking me these questions!"

Well... so much for returning to his friend. At least now Altair knows he's in the right place.

Leonardo clears his throat, catching the assassins' attention, "If I can hold onto this map, I may be
able to find out more about who wrote this and what their intentions are. I can also try to find out what these inscriptions mean and what purpose they serve."

Ezio lets out a sigh of relief, "If you were able to understand the Codex pages, Leonardo, then I will be greatly indebted if you can help us with the current predicament."

The artist begins to laughs, surprising Altair and Desmond, "Ezio... dear God, you're just as bad as Desmond! I told you once before and many times over- I am more than happy to aid those whom I trust. And at this point," Leonardo nods to Altair, "I can trust him over there as well."

"You are certain?" Altair asks, surprise overtaking his voice before activating his Eagle Vision to reveal a the overwhelming blue hue surrounding the blonde artist. As he reverts his eyes back to normal, he nods, "...as long as you trust the Order, then I fully accept your as one of my own."

"Thank you," Leonardo nods, a smile of relief before facing the young man, "...are you all right back there, Desmond? It seems as if something has caught your tongue."

"N-No!" Desmond manages to get back into focus, "It's just... surreal, that's all." A weak chuckle escapes from him as he stands up (and Altair has a feeling he needs to interrogate Desmond later since the young boy is lying), "So! What... happens now?"

It's a feeble change in subject, Altair frowns, Something is wrong with Desmond. Why... did he panic earlier about the contents in the map?

Ezio lets out a sigh, glancing over at Leonardo's map, "I need to seek out Mario so he can aid us; perhaps he and the other Assassins know more about the new Piece of Eden than what we do."

"And you plan to go alone?" Altair asks, arching an eyebrow.

The Italian stares, "...I'm presuming you will be come along, si?"

"I plan to," Altair replies, his eyes narrowing at the thought of having to explain to the Italian Order how he managed to get to this time, "What made you think I wasn't?"

"Well..." he can tell the blonde inventor and Ezio share an uneasy glance; then Altair realizes what the implication were: the fact that his presence himself will raise a lot of questions from the Italian Order; as well as Desmond's. Leonardo sighs, "...you do realize that-"

"I'll tell them what happened, but what about Desmond?" Leonardo asks, glancing over at the American, whose lips were drawn into a thin line. Both Ezio and Altair knew that question was coming. For one, Altair wasn't keen on letting Desmond come along- they had killed a few guards yesterday; another was how in the world to explain to any other Assassin why Desmond showed up, why does he look like a bit like Altair and Ezio, where the hell did he come from, how did he get his hands on the hidden blade without the mark of an Assassin...

...there were bound to be lots of questions that needed answers. He gives Ezio a pointed look, "As much I hate to say this, but for once, you and I need to head over to the Order to explain to your leader- if you have one-"

"His name is Niccolo Machiavelli," Ezio dryly replies before motioning Altair to continue.

The Syrian's narrows gaze turns into a glare, "...all right, so you have a leader. That is fine; we'll have to make a convincing case to him about my appearance. As for... Desmond," He glances over at the young man, who he is pretty sure is overhearing this, "...No, I can't risk his safety."
Nor can I risk losing my habibi. Altair mentally reminds himself of the guards that are willing to take him down. Yes, Desmond has the potential and skills, but they need to be improved on. Badly.

And his mental message must have reached Ezio, whose lips were set on a thin line before he nods, "...I'll make sure he'll be taken care of in a safe place- Leonardo, will it be all right if he stays here?"

"As long as he doesn't ruin anything, then I'm fine," The inventor nods, "But... perhaps you should ask him first?"

Ezio shakes his head, "I can't. Leonardo, he's... not ready. He's not ready to meet the others. I can't risk it, I don't want him to be under anybody's scrutiny-"

"No!"

Both Ezio and Altair look surprised, not expecting Desmond to stand up from his seat, looking furious at the mentioning of him excluded from meeting the Order. Leonardo also looks surprised, nearly dropping the map. The time traveler's brown eyes were blazing in determination as he walks towards the two assassins.

"I'm coming- I don't care what you say, but this was supposed to be a part of my mission, my reason for coming into the past, and I can't fail now. Now that I know what I should be doing, I might as well finish the job. I'm also willing to finish this as a fellow Assassin- I'm not willing to give up!"

Desmond looks defiant, ready to defend any opposition that the two throws at him. Altair was surprised, trying to prevent his mouth from hanging open just from hearing the time traveler's determination. Ezio opens his mouth, ready to say something before closing it. Leonardo just looks surprised, but the Syrian can tell the inventor looks... proud?

No wonder Ezio had a good reason to be furious, Altair muses, Desmond and Leonardo trust each other as fellow comrades when Desmond couldn't give any reason to trust neither me or the brat in our initial meeting.

He can't help but feel jealous.

"...Fine," Ezio sighs in defeat. Altair is too wary of why Desmond wants to accompany the two; just a day ago, Desmond was trying to run away from being discovered by any member of the Order (at any time).

Why does he finally agree now? The Master Assassin doesn't like it; he can see relief and happiness in the Italian Assassin's eyes (before said Assassin smirks, causing a flare of jealousy to ignite in Altair- How dare he smirks proudly like that!). There is another part of him that is also relieved that Desmond is gaining courage as a fellow Assassin... and also because after Ezio turns to tell his friend his plans, Desmond gives Altair a small smile.

"I will be all right," The American possibly mistakes the Master Assassin's feelings (at the moment), "Just... don't worry about me, okay?"

Worry about you? You have no idea, habibi.

"I take it that you plan to visit Niccolo and your uncle?" Leonardo asks, causing the others to face him, "In that case, I must come too. This document... you will need my help to translate the rest, no?"

"Of course," Ezio chuckles, "We will need all the help we can get!"
"Well, it is possible... except for one thing."

"And what is that?"

"I'm afraid there's going to be..." Leonardo trails off before glances at Desmond, worry filling his eyes.

Altair frowns, knowing that look a little **too well**; one that Malik often uses when there was a second half to the problem that Altair thought he knew about... and whenever Malik sees something else that Altair himself doesn't.

"...Desmond, will you make sure to prevent my friend Ezio from thinking murderous thoughts to the elder Altair? I have a feeling this Piece of Eden cannot be retrieved alone."

Any mission Ezio has been given, any challenge he has been presented, he always does it to prove himself that he can finish such challenge. Yes, there were times in which he had relied on the aid of his Italian brethren and his uncle, but that was because they were essential.

But **with** the very man he doesn't like at the moment? The one and only Altair Ibn-La'Ahad who had insulted not just his accomplishments but his honor and skills?

That was where Ezio refuses to cross the line.

"*Why should I work with you out of all people!?!*" He finally manages to ask Altair at the moment they return to the safe house they stay in. He sees Desmond staying still, but at that point, what matters to Ezio more is that after what had happened and the mess he is officially dragged into, he **purely** blames Altair for it.

"*Why would I?!*" Altair asks back, not at least pleased with the current developments (his hood was off at the moment they returned), "*After all, the map was originally mine - written in the language in which I can understand.*"

"*And I can read it too!*" Ezio shouts back, feeling the irritation and recalling the insults the Master Assassin called him out on earlier (most people in Italy should understand why to never anger Ezio unless they want a death wish; apparently, Altair signed his death the moment he insulted his father), "*I don't see why you have to stay here; in fact, why don't you find out how to get back to your own time yourself?!*"

"*I do not have the resources, fool.*" The Syrian snaps back, irritated.

The Italian was about to continue when he groans, *Of course. Ezio, you forgot about yesterday's events, didn't you? Unless someone around this area has that... time machine... Desmond mentioned, there is no way Altair or Desmond can return to their own time.*

The fact that Altair would have to find some way to return to his time does give Ezio some form of relief (although not by a lot); but it **had** to require some form of help from him one way or another. The idea about Desmond returning to his time, however, doesn't suit the Italian Assassin well at all; the young man's presence is a comfort to him as opposed to the elder.

"*So I have to be stuck with you here?!*" Ezio bitterly asks, mentally reminding himself to **not** kill the elder with his blades.

"*Hmph. What do you think?!*" Altair glares at him again.
He doesn’t see Desmond getting a bit uncomfortable at the current atmosphere, nor did he hear the young time traveler asking the two to stop arguing.

"And about earlier-" Ezio is beginning to feel infuriated, still stung about how little Altair thought about his plight and how he got into the Assassin’s Order, "How dare you laugh at me! You might have a terrible orderal to deal through- but mine took years to plan!"

"Yet you are still foolish and clumsy," Altair sneers back, "You don’t understand the way betrayal deals to you when it was in front of you the entire time!"

"Hey-"

"I HAD that happen before, elder! Your past actions do mean something to the order!"

"And yet it seems like you still flaunt with your sickening flattery and clumsy actions."

"I AM NOT CLUMSY!"

"Oh? I didn't see you take any actions against the guards the day before."

"Stop it..."

"Why you-"

"You call yourself an Assassin? Did I not mention your flaws earlier?"

"You insulted my skills and my-"

"That’s it!"

Ezio was about to shout again, but Desmond prevented him and Altair from moving when he firmly grabs the fabric from their shoulders. "Wha-"

"STOP. ARGUING." The time traveler seethes, irritation seeping through his eyes.

The Italian sighs immediately, not wanting to invoke the wrath of his tesoro (as he experienced this a little too much). He sees that the Master Assassin isn’t pleased from the interruption either.

Perhaps I pushed him a little too far, he grimaces, ...but I should hear him out.

"And why should we? When it was the novice that began it in the first place!" was the first thing that comes from Altair, in which Ezio flares from.

"What was that?!"

He knows Altair is doing this on purpose, just to make Ezio lose his barely-kept temper-

"Oh for the love of GOD!" Desmond groans, throwing his arms in defeat, forcing the two to stop another argument from happening, "I give up. Are you two seriously just going to argue with each other all day?"

"Unless you have a better way to deal with this bastardo!" Ezio growls, irritated, "I still refuse to work with this idiota!"

"And I'd rather work with a novice than being with the leech," Altair dryly states back, crossing his
arms in irritation.

"You unbelievable stronzo-!"

"Stop it!" He can hear Desmond growl in annoyance; even when Ezio was about to protest, the glare Desmond gives him was a bit frightening, forcing the Florence man to silence himself as he covers his mouth with his left hand.

And yet, The Italian coyly hides a small smile, I seem to enjoy this side of Desmond...

Desmond now knows how Connor felt when he and Shaun were hurling insults to no end (and it didn't help that Clay egged him on) as he rubs his temples, "Is there any way you two can get along for just a few minutes?"

"No," Altair immediately replies.

"I'm sorry, but I'm afraid it's not possible," Ezio sighs.

The American groans, muttering, "And Connor thinks he has it worse than I do... Look. I know the two of you don't trust each other... yet. But..."

A somewhat terrible idea comes into Desmond's head, but it's the only one he has. Well, it's better than none, he mentally groans, feeling two pair of irritated amber orbs glaring at him, "I'll do anything if you both work together and put aside your differences! Just stop arguing!"

That manages to catch both Assassin's attentions as their irritation wavered, their glares turn into something that of surprise as they face each other.

"Did he just...?" Altair asks Ezio, who nods, "...well. I suppose that changes things."

The Italian murmurs, glancing over at the Syrian, "For once, I agree with you."

Desmond sighs, Good. That was easy, "So... does that mean you both will begin to get along?"

"...yes." The groans of the two assassins makes Desmond breathe in relief, a small smile appearing in his face.

Thank you! He can thank whatever it was that made the two silence their non-stop bickering, "About time... I was wondering when you two would..." Then he blinked, realizing had they would have agreed, they would have done some... argument first... His mind halts him from continuing that train of relief, That was too easy.

"I am going to let Mario know we're coming to visit him and the Order tomorrow," Ezio's voice snaps Desmond out of his mind track, "...and I'll be getting some food for us to eat."

"Hopefully you do not lose track of where you are going," Altair shakes his head as the Italian grabs his belt and places it on.

"Of course not!" Ezio snaps before recalling Desmond's 'promise', "I do know my way around this city."

The Master Assassin sighs, muttering something in Arabic that neither one of them can understand. ...well, maybe Ezio, but Desmond... not likely.
The Italian clicks his tongue in irritation before facing Desmond, "You'll be fine, little sparrow?"

The time traveler nods, a light blush at the nickname that Ezio gives him, "Y-Yeah, I'll be fine."

Why the hell is it that whenever Ezio or Altair says his name, he winds up reacting like that? The same for when he says 'tesoro' or 'habibi'; had it been back in 2012, Desmond would just brush any idiot off (especially the drunk ones). But for both of them...

...maybe there was something about the both of them Desmond wasn't sure of yet. Not to mention it made him question his feelings towards them; initially, it consists of admiration, awe, and even a bit of fear when he experienced their memories. But now, while the admiration is still there (they are- after all- Masters of the Assassin Order), that fear is beginning to be replaced with something else...

...was he beginning to form a bond with both Altair and Ezio?

If that was the case, all he knows is that he's going to be in deep trouble.

"Tesoro," He blinks, seeing a worried Ezio, "Are... you all right? Ever since we left Leonardo's, you have been thinking more. Is something bothering you?"

Desmond shakes his head, "L-Like I said... don't worry about me. I'm... feeling better."

He can tell Ezio wasn't buying it.

"When I return, you'll be telling me what is on your mind, si?" The Italian Assassin murmurs in his ear before he feels a charming smile against his ear, "...and I did hear; you said you will do anything just as long as I get along with the elder?"

Shit.

Ezio chuckles before kissing Desmond, causing the young man to whimper from the amount of passion from it, "There will be more of that later. I'll be back, mio tesoro. Just make sure to have enough energy when I return."

And with that, the Italian Assassin places his hood over his head and disappears as he leaves the room. Desmond's face was red as his mind gears to comprehend what the hell just happened. Did he just- Did he... oh fuck.

"H-Hey," The young man quietly asks to the other Assassin in the room, "Did... I mention anything that made the two of you decide to work with each other?"

"What are you talking about?"

Had Desmond not realize that there were arms wrapped around his waist, he would have turned around in surprise to see Altair right behind him, "You didn't..." then he trails off before his blush returns, "...let me guess. You did."

The Syrian Assassin chuckles, nipping against Desmond's ear, "I have no idea as to what you are talking about, habibi. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that you will do anything just to prevent me from fighting against that preening idiot?"

"That's what I just-!" And he was stopped when Altair gives him a heated kiss, "H-Hey!"

"Am I not allowed to do anything with what is mine?" Altair chuckles, teasing dark amber locking with alarmed brown. When Desmond doesn't reply, he turns the young man around to face him and
takes the opportunity to deepen the kiss, causing a soft moan to come out from the young man. What Desmond doesn't realize until a few seconds later was there was a hand running up his shirt (he had taken off that ridiculous shirt that Ezio gave him to wear earlier), exploring his chest, brushing over his sensitive skin.

Gasping and softly moaning at the sensual touches, Desmond couldn't help but unconsciously grind against the older man, causing Altair to give out a soft groan before releasing the kiss and nipping his neck, "You're testing my control, habibi..."

The time traveler whimpers out a small apology, but it turns into a soft needy cry as he feels another hand travel underneath his shirt and slowly trails his spine as he feels Altair's lips against his neck, pressing and nipping at the area where the Syrian gave him a hickey from the previous night. Whatever the master assassin was doing, and ohmygod did it feel good, Desmond wanted more as he whispers a needy, throaty "Please..." as he brushes his hips against the older's hips hard.

He doesn't see dark amber eyes swirl with desire, barely trying to keep his control until he hears (through his lust-filled mind) the Assassin mention something about Desmond being a tease. It wasn't until hands fumble around his pants did the young man realize what Altair was going to do. As if Altair knew what Desmond was going to say, the Syrian murmurs, "Don't worry... I'll be gentle."

All the young man can do is give out a small nod before feeling his pants coming off and heated lips capturing his again...

It wasn't until later when Ezio returned to the room that he sees Desmond looking at a book. He had heard the Italian enter in before when Altair was just looking for a cleaning material for his blades. For some reason, both Assassins don't argue with each other (Well... just watch; the two of them will launch into another one sometime later).

"Where did Altair go?" Desmond asks, looking a bit confused when he doesn't see the Master Assassin enter behind Ezio. "The elder went to grab some tools from the blacksmith," Ezio replies before glancing at the book, "Are you all right?"

" Eh? About what?" What about, exactly? The time traveler frowns, "I mean... I'm fine-" "From earlier, tesoro," Then he feels the Italian Assassin wrap his arms around his waist, beginning to nuzzle his neck, "Is everything all right, Desmond?"

What should Desmond say? That he was getting a little stressed from all the fighting between the two (and handling both Ezio and Altair from killing each other); a bit of the fear from a somewhat repeat of the guards from yesterday, and not to mention that if he tries to escape, he is pretty sure both Altair and Ezio will try anything to prevent him from returning home (and they are doing a damn good job with it... although he's honestly not sure (at this point) about what he is feeling. And he was pretty sure Altair said the words "I love you" to Desmond earlier, but he might be imagining things; the key word being might).

Oh yeah. And not being able to return home where there was a stupid STUPID glitch in the Animus program. Speaking of- what the hell is going on back at home? Rebecca said she'll try to keep him updated on the Animus' status... Desmond makes a mental note to get on the communicator at some point before he gets to meet with the Italian Assassins Order.

He swears that someone up there is a sadist and is trying to screw with his life in the worst ways
possible; why do these things keep happening to him?

Instead, all that comes from his mouth is, "I'm... I am all right. Please... don't worry about me." And that is accompanied with a small smile before he feels the Italian's hold on him slightly tighten, "Ezio?"

"Don't worry me like that. Please." He hears the Italian whisper before feeling a gently brush against his lips. Desmond lightly blushes before hearing Ezio chuckle, "Now... where were we earlier before Altair intruded us?"

"W-Wha-" And then the American's blush darken, "...oh. Um-" And he was silenced with another kiss, this time more passionate than the last, Ohhhhhhh... It doesn't help Desmond as he begins to grind against Ezio (like with Altair), causing the Italian to let out a small groan of impatience.

"I'll make sure to let the elder know who he's dealing with," Ezio purrs at Desmond's ear as he begins to remove the young man's pants while pressing heated kisses against his shoulders, "...after all, you are mine."

...I am going to be in deep trouble when the guys find about this.

End Part 6

What's next: Ezio introduces Altair and Desmond to the Italian Assassins Order. William reveals how he manages to get Lucy's strange emails. And unfortunately for Desmond, something causes him to have a Bleeding Effect.
Acquainted

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Ahahahahaha no.

Hopefully this chapter goes into something more serious as opposed to... well, the last six. I seriously have to stop torturing Desmond (then again... when has Desmond gotten any luck?) or else this story can't progress anywhere.

Also... I divided this chapter to make it shorter. It was either that or having to endure about fifty pages of one chapter.

WARNING: Once again, spoiler alert. And a moody Ezio. Not to mention that I don't even know how the hell most of the members of the Italian Order are like... like I said, I don't even have the game.

Enjoy!

"italics" = Italian, Arabic, any other language OR a flashback (depending on how it is used)

"bold italics" = over the mic and phone

"normal" = English

bold sentences = emails, screams, or Bleeding Effect (depends on how it's used).

Part 7.1: Acquainted

"Whoever made the Animus must be a sadist who had nothing else to do with their lives except trying out a fucking wet dream to relive a past life."

The entire room stares warily at Clay, who blinks before he frowns, seeing the other assassins' reaction, "...what? You know it's true!"

"And implanting one very unwelcoming image in my head," Shaun dryly mutters as the group continues to bustle at their daily activity.

...well, more like trying to get some rest in. Shaun and Clay were still up; some of the other assassins were at their stations, working away for the tactical support for the other field assassins. Connor was overseeing several areas; just after he and William talked, he was requested for help from one of the field assassin groups; they were safe in the end as Connor commands them to go to the nearest safe house and wait for a few hours with the Bureau leader until William gives them orders on what to do next (which knowing his father and how tactical and strategic he was, he should be giving them orders on how **not** to get caught in their current situation).
Connor shakes his head as he tosses his trash from the take-out that Lucy brought them earlier; granted, it was worth the time that it took, but it wasn’t just the food. A slight frown tugged at his lips, seeing the other assassins going away at the computer; in Rebecca and Lucy's case, the two were actually taking a nap (that was right after Lucy got the food about two hours ago... Rebecca at the couch that was propped against the wall; Lucy was on the floor with various cushions and blankets to keep herself warm).

I have a feeling that whatever the hell is happening to Desmond is going to take a while, The eldest Miles brother lets out a small breath, running his hands through his hair before glancing to see Shaun giving Clay a small bicker regarding something about... well, he'll have to ask them later. Right now, he is trying to make sure that Desmond's movements are up to par with the Animus program. Speaking of that stupid said program...

When Lucy returned with the barely warm take-out, Rebecca's scan was done (and they ended William's call a while before), revealing that there wasn't even a single thing tapped into the Animus, no hacks, no attempts to screw the code or to survey it... nothing. Not even their computers were hacked in either. Shaun's theory was debunked, causing the Brit to become more irritated at Rebecca (even though the others did see Shaun hugging the black-haired girl, muttering something that causes her to blush). Connor asks them to manually open some programs up from the Animus- which as one can imagine with the high amounts of sleep deprivation and stress, caused the three to balk and complain to Connor before the they decide to go ahead. They barely got past the first part with Lucy returned... and Clay did the honors of telling the blonde about the glitch while eating their meals.

At least Connor was glad Lucy took the theory to the glitch pretty well. She was just worried about Desmond, which was something the entire group was focusing on. What he was also glad for, however, was the fact that they didn't mention anything about the emails that were in Lucy's email box. For the time being, the others decide that it was the best idea to keep treating her like one of them until they get more intel about the emails; if she even suspects a change in anybody, then she would be suspicious as well.

That caused him to frown, glancing back at Lucy's empty desk. ...it's strange though, he frowns, Who knew about these emails?

He closes his eyes, recalling the rest of the phone call from earlier...

"So she didn't send the emails to you herself?" Connor asks, before seeing William shake his head.

"Wait, back up!" Shaun echos, confused, "Hold on. I thought you directly received her emails!"

"No. I didn't," William shakes his head, "Someone forwarded the emails to me, addressing that this should be something important I needed to look at. I did and then I realized it was Lucy’s emails. More of those came and the next I know, I asked Asano to see who she was really sending it to since they were addressed to me... but the way she emails sounds more like a report of some kind."

"Meaning... we were right to be suspicious of her at this point?" Connor's eyes narrow; This can't be good. At all.

"As upsetting as it is, I have to say keep an eye on her and keep her at range- even away from Desmond at all costs since it seems her allegiances swayed to the other side," The leader of The Order's gaze hardens even though his eyes have signs of regret. "I'll have to email the leaders of the other HQs to alert them about this. If anything she says OR does throw our plan off and alerts THEM, we have to do what we must."
An unsettling feeling crawls into Connor's mind, but the thought of being betrayed is nothing new to him... or William. It's just to the others it has been worrying them. He can tell Clay will need an outlet to vent his anger (at himself or Lucy?). But for Desmond?

Connor squeezes his eyes, Crap. Desmond... he trusts Lucy out of all of us since the escape and at Abstergo. This is not good.

"Understood, Father," Connor quietly replies, Clay, Shaun, and Rebecca's expressions slip into one of an uneasy grimace.

"One more thing," William pauses, "Are you sure Desmond is all right in the Animus?"

That caused the group to face each other in panic, paling.

"Hang on for a sec, Dad," Clay was about to change the subject into something else when something that sounds like a beep catches William's attention.

"Hold on," William's face morphs into one of surprise, "It's a colleague of mine. I have to take this... do you mind waiting?"

To be honest, all of them (even Connor) couldn't help but thank God for a distraction as they all nod.

"All right. I'll call back." And with that, the screen went black with the END CALL flashing. It wasn't until a few seconds later did Shaun, Lucy, and Clay hear a loud smack behind them; they turn around to see Connor's left hand covering his face; his eyes were closed as he breathes in, grumbling about wanting payback for this.

"Um... Connor?" Rebecca finally asks, trying to resist the incoming laughter.

"Desmond owes me a lot for this," Connor mumbles through his hand, "The scan's still going, right?"

"Up and running," Shaun checks on the status, "...huh. Odd... nothing's come up yet, which worries me."

Clay grunts, crossing his arms as he taps his fingers, "I'm getting pretty worried about him. Are you sure we can't go into the Animus to try to find him?"

"And what if we do?" Connor stares at his other brother, "You do realize that Desmond's with Altair and Ezio... and what if the glitch winds up happening to us? As much I want to save him, unless we fix that glitch in the Animus, there's no way anybody here can afford to take the risk to enter in there without being trapped!"

From the looks on their face, Connor knew that they want to help Desmond, but this is what they can all do at their end. The room got silent until a ring came from the iPhone. Tapping onto the call button, William's face appears again, this time looking hardened and serious.

"William?" Rebecca asks, "Is everything okay?"

"I just found out something," Their leader narrows his eyes, "I'll tell you in a minute. In the meantime, I have to make sure our new recruit understands what we're doing with the Animus-"

"Whoa, whoa, STOP!" Connor's eyes widen in alarm, "WHAT!? The new recruit-"

"Something happened to him and if what I recall from what Desmond told me..." William trails
off before sighing, "It's complicated and I'll tell you later. For now, these are your orders until we receive new information regarding those emails."

The four tenses, waiting for them.

"When we find the full information about the sources of these odd emails and the recipient of these emails, here are your orders: Burn everything; destroy the machine, take the Animus, and be sure Abstergo doesn't know what we did with the Animus. Make sure Desmond returns safe from the Animus," William sounds like their leader: cold, hardened, and serious.

"No fucking kidding," Clay mutters, calming down before he unclench his fists, "...wait, Dad! Who forwarded Lucy's emails to you?"

"About that," William narrows his eyes, "I was going to ask that as your next assignment when Desmond returns: Find out who Erudito is."

Connor mentally groans, rubbing his head against his temples as he leans back against his desk. So, it isn't just Desmond, Lucy, and Abstergo we're going to worry about. There's this Erudito as well...

He has heard about him before; but he just don't know from who. Possibly some of the newbies who joined who mentioned him? Or was it...

...maybe Desmond told Connor and Clay about him?

I doubt it, The Native-American's lips were drawn into a thin line, Desmond doesn't even know the first thing about hacking into any system unless Rebecca or Shaun are nearby. Clay and I manage braely handle the Animus technology; and with the glitch acting up every time we try to get Desmond back home, there's no telling what the hell's wrong with the program. Ugh, if only there is some sort of way-

"Oi, Con!"

His dark amber-brown eyes turn to meet an irritated Clay, "What?"

"I didn't say anything," The blonde frowns, "And neither did Shaun. But... since you are asking, we got through the second part of the program."

"And?"

"Nada."

"Fantastic," Connor grumbles before seeing Rebecca and Lucy coming towards them, "...shouldn't you guys be sleeping?"

"I got enough sleep from last night," Lucy rolls her eyes, "Rebecca and I will survive on coffee. We'll take care of the manual sweep from here."

"But-"

"Yes, we're sure," Rebecca hands Connor a folded up blanket with a pillow on top, "We grabbed these from the spare closet. Get some sleep, okay?"

Connor groans, taking the blanket and pillow from a now awake Rebecca, "Fine. But if anything comes up with the glitch, Desmond, or William, wake me up."
"Gotcha," The black-haired girl nods as she stretches her legs, "I'm gonna get some coffee..."

"Actually," Clay hollers, "Grab me one too! Make sure it's not that Irish Cream flavored crap Shaun likes!"

"Hey!" The British man glares at Clay, "I drink tea, you bloody sod!"

"...and that makes you a freaking prude."

"Clay."

"Yeah?" There was a grin on the blonde's face.

"When you and that moron of an Assassin returns from the Aminus, I will find a way to make your lives miserable."

"Try us."

Rebecca lets out a small snicker as Lucy's hands meets her face. The eldest of the group sighs, shaking his head before smacking the two upside their heads, "Shut up. As amusing as the idea of Shaun torturing the two of you sounds, I need to sleep. And from the rate you two are going, get some rest."

"But."

"Rebecca and I can take care of things," Lucy smiles softly, ruffling Clay's hair, "Get some sleep, okay?"

The blonde was about to gawk, a small blush on his face. This time, Shaun stifles a snicker as he mouths, Payback.

"And that wasn't a suggestion either," Connor smirks before dashing to claim the couch.

The two men blink, look towards the direction their temporary leader ran off too, back at each other, and when Rebecca returns with three mugs at hand, she sees Shaun and Clay going after Connor, trying to wrestle for the couch.

"What's up with them?" Rebecca arches an eyebrow as she hands Lucy a coffee mug.

"I dunno," Lucy shrugs before drinking her coffee, "...Clay's napping?"

The black-haired technician nods, "You're taking his coffee?"

"Well, I actually like the creamer he puts in it..." Lucy mumbles, a small blush on her face.

"Awwww. Someone's got a teensy crush on-"

"H-Hey!" The blonde's face is now a bit darker, "...Desmond knows and I don't want you saying it to Clay. ...promise?"

"Girl's honor. I swear," Rebecca giggles before placing on her headphones to blare out her music playlist before beginning to type out the commands to open up various files and programs to help with the manual sweep, "All right... Let's get cracking!"
"Are you sure your order will be able to help us?"

Ezio glances over to Altair, who is leaning against the wall of one of the buildings as the three were waiting for their fourth person to show up. Desmond was actually sitting on an empty crate that someone left out, looking at his

To put it plainly, Ezio was somewhat relieved when he saw his painter friend meet with him... before his fears surfaces again after he motions Altair and Desmond to come with him (in civilian clothing that disguised their actual wear). The fact that he is nervous about introducing his ancestor and his descendant to not just Machiavelli, but to his uncle Mario...

Leonardo can tell the worry that fills Ezio's mind.

"Don't worry," Leonardo sighs, looking wary at the young man, "It's not like they'll suspect him to be a robber or a Templar."

"What do you think I'm afraid about?" The Florence man whispers back, "Mario will- well, he will understand before he begins to ask questions, but as for the others- La Volpe and Machiavelli's trusts will be too hard to gain-"

"Ezio." The painter stares at Ezio, cutting him off, "I understand about Altair, but the Order respects his actions and what good he has done for the order. As for Desmond... You do realize that it will be fine, right?"

"And why would you say that?"

"Because..." Leonardo glances over to Desmond, who gently shifts his bag as Altair looks around his surroundings (possibly using the Eagle Vision, Ezio figures, to make sure there are no Templars at their trail), "...it would seem to me that Desmond didn't gain only my trust."

And that just left Ezio gaping, making him realize that he underestimated his tesoro a lot.

Just how much information does he hide?! He can't help but ask himself in alarm, stopping his stride before feeling something bump against him. Turning around, he sees Desmond, who looks up at the Italian in surprise before giving a sheepish grin.

"Sorry about that," The time traveler mutters and was about to follow Leonardo and Altair (who is now talking with the blonde painter more about the map) when Ezio swiftly grabs Desmond's wrist.

He can't but smile as he hears a small noise of surprise as brown eyes meet Ezio's light amber, "Ezio?"

"You... For someone who is supposed to be an Assassin-in training, you're constantly filled with hidden secrets. How many people from the Order did you encounter before meeting me?"

Desmond's brown eyes widen in surprise, "I... I don't know?"

Ezio arches an eyebrow, knowing pretty well that the American is lying. Honestly, his tesoro was too easy to read... he made a mental note to make Desmond work on hiding his thoughts better.

"Okay. I might have consulted Paola on a small favor I asked of her on one mission."

"Paola?" The Italian echos in surprise; how in the world did Desmond wind up getting the trust of one of his family's longest friends?
"I had to find out a way to divert the guards' attention when one of my missions involved getting something from a guard. ...with La Volpe's help."

The thief too out of all people?

"La Volpe knew you were here?" Ezio is now baffled. If he knew correctly, it took Ezio a while for him to gain La Volpe's trust. How did Desmond gain La Volpe's trust so easily-

"And Bartolomeo. But I just asked for some assistance in location and... um, Ezio? Are you okay?"

Okay, this was getting ridiculous. He can see Leonardo shaking with amusement, a grin threatening to break out from the artist's face as he (and Altair) see Ezio's alarmed expression. Altair just shakes his head before glancing over at a sheepish Desmond, who is trying to gently let Ezio's hand off his wrist. Instead, Ezio's hand slightly tightens at Desmond's wrist as he gives a silent sigh, trying to ward off his alarmed questions that he'll save for later (most likely directed to the three Desmond mentioned earlier).

"I'm... I'm fine," Ezio murmurs before sighing, shaking his head, feeling off-guard for once, "It's just... how?"

He can see Desmond blink before realizing what Ezio was asking, "Oh. ...well... ah shit. I... well... um... crap. I'm screwed."

It was the same expression when the Italian realized that Desmond knew Leonardo; the look of fear. And Ezio had a feeling he knew what the respond to that one was; even he knew Altair was going to somehow find a way to mention this and not let this go.

Was his tesoro truly frightened of him when he first came into Venice?

He stops walking, causing the others to glance at him as he closes his eyes, thinking of his emotions at the moment. He did recall Desmond's words from yesterday and admittedly, had Ezio would have encountered Desmond for the first time, he would have recognized him... before demanding to know how he knew everything in Venice, about him, about his comrades.

It honestly pained him to know that his Desmond would not have trusted him initially (and apparently, easily) as it would for others. Well, the same could have been said for Altair, but it seemed that the older man gained Desmond's trust much easier than Ezio did (from what it seems like). He looks up to see a worried Leonardo asking Desmond if the Italian Assassin was all right; Altair as well, but it seems like the Master Assassin was ready to strike Ezio if he was to repeat what happened yesterday.

Maybe that was what bothered Desmond yesterday.

"Um... hey, Ezio," Desmond's voice cuts his thoughts as Ezio blinks and faces him, "Would you mind... We need to get going to the Order soon-"

"Desmond," And this time, he shoots a glare at Altair that lets him know he's not going strike at anyone; to Leonardo, he give a small thin smile, letting his friend know he's fine (in fact, he is not; he is feeling different emotions at once: jealous, hurt, worry, concern) before returning his attention to the tense time traveler, "Let me make one thing clear."

He heard a gulp from the American. Sighing and getting tired of seeing his tesoro tense in fear, Ezio pulls the young man into a tight hug.

"From now on," Ezio can't help but feel something like possessiveness clench his heart (the same
feeling that comes to him whenever he sees Altair touch Desmond), "If you need some form of help... let me know and I will do anything. All I need is your trust. Please, I won't do anything to harm you! Please... let me help." It did sound urgent, but he just wants to gain his tesoro's trust.

Desmond's brown orbs widen in surprise; Altair's stare at Ezio narrows. Leonardo frowns and shakes his head, placing his hand over his palm, muttering something about 'not gaining trust like that' in his native tongue. (At least nobody was around where they are).

Maybe, maybe this was a part of some retribution from the flirting, fooling around, and whatever actions Ezio might have committed in the past, even with losing his first love (and didn't take consequences since he thought he can get away with anything). But with Desmond... it was different.

"Ezio, wait, didn't you-

"Favore credetemi. Favore... Fidati di me, il amore mio..." The Italian whispers, wanting something, anything that says that Desmond can just finally relax and trust him. The feeling that he once held with Cristina... it has now returned-

"...Ezio. You said that yesterday," Desmond's voice finally found some ground before feeling two arms wrap around his back and a small chuckle, "Don't worry... I trust you. But please, for the love of God, don't try to look like you're about to kill me next time I mention that I've already met some of your comrades!"

Well, it was enough for Ezio to hear. The Italian feels more at ease and relief washes over him as he tightly hugs him, "Grazie, tesoro mio- no, amore mio."

"No... problem?"

"Ahem," Ezio's head looks up to see Leonardo, who has a very amused look on his face, "...as much as I would want to see his lovely scene continue, may I remind you... that your uncle Mario and others might be waiting?"

"Merda!" Ezio curses, slowly releasing Desmond from the hold, "Thank you for the reminder!"

"I will blame you if we are late," The artist rolls his eyes.

"I know, I know..." Ezio sees Desmond slightly blushing before running up to catch up to Leonardo and Altair. He softly smiles; maybe gaining Desmond's trust was easier than before.

But he definitely did not miss the angered jealous-fueled glare he got from Altair as the two Assassin walk to catch up to Leonardo and Desmond.

"Is something wrong, elder?" Ezio smirks, "Or are you just upset that-

"I don't like you, novice," Altair growls, "Are you truly genuine around my habibi? Or are you just pretending to get over your past feelings for another woman just so you can fool around once more?"

And that's when Ezio's smirk turns into a frown in a millisecond before his rage comes up again.

"My feelings for my tesoro? I care for him... a lot. A lot more than I care about my first love! And what about you, elder?"

Altair's glare can truly pierce through him.
"I too care for Desmond. Perhaps more than what I felt for Adha."

Adha? Altair had a past love as well?

"Ezio! Altair!" They turn around to see Desmond and Leonardo, standing, waiting for the two Assassins. "We're waiting!"

Ezio and Altair gave each other a wary (if not also angry) stare before running to catch up with their other two comrades. He makes a mental note to deal with Altair much later...

...if he can restrain himself from placing a blade on the Master Assassin's neck and threatening him to stay out of his and his tesoro's life, even if Desmond did plead the two of them to get along.

"Nipote! Leonardo!" Mario Auditore beams, his eyes crinkling from old age as his face splits into a wide grin. "It's good to see you both again!" He can see the other two people entering inside the Order (Ezio did send him a notice before to let him know aside him and Leonardo, there will be two others coming with him; he said that they were not their enemies).

"It's good to see you too, Uncle," Ezio chuckles, knowing how relieved Mario must have been, "How are Mother and Claudia?"

"Those two are fine, as usual. They want you to keep in touch with them," The black-clad man replies seeing Leonardo, "Ah! Leonardo! How have you been? Have you decided on my offer to stay at the Villa?"

"I have considered," The blonde artist beams, "And I will take you up on it; after these events that recently happened, I truly need a break."

A chuckle comes out from another member of the room- it was from Antonio, who was conversing with Bartolomeo, Paola, Teodora, and La Volpe, "To work on your new inventions again? I thought the flying machine was already done!"

"Oh no; I am here on another account, Antonio," Leonardo shakes his head, recalling the many problems that went with the flying machine, "Ezio and I are here with other comrades... and we brought a friend of ours." A grin was on his face as the third newcomer takes off his hood as he takes in a new sight, "I'm pretty sure you must know Desmond?"

That must have caught the attention of Paola, Bartolomeo, and La Volpe. Teodora and Antonio blink in confusion as they see the young man reveal himself.

"Well, well!" Bartolomeo chuckles, seeing the time traveler's slight surprised face, "Desmond! I presume you didn't get killed? You barely lasted from the last fight with the guards!"

"What fight?" Ezio immediately asks, but Desmond cuts him off.

"B-Bartolomeo! I'm all right from that fight," The American chuckles, recalling the rowdy fight some drunken guy began and it ended up with the guards getting into a nasty brawl... which in the end, Demond and Bartolomeo had to intervene since one of the condottiero's friends was in the fight, causing Desmond to get various bruises before he and Bartolomeo got treated by Paola. And this was after he asked La Volpe to help him with another one of his missions.

"So... what are you doing back here?" Paola asks, her eyebrows knit in confusion, "Do you need some help of some kind?"
"Well..." Desmond was about to speak, still trying to figure out what to say.

"Desmond, I thought your missions here were completed. Did you not report back to your leader?" La Volpe asks, crossing his arms as his face sets into one of suspicion.

"Ah. Well. About that-"

"He encountered me along the way after he stopped by Leonardo's," The Italian Assassin cuts in smoothly, earning a look of either relief or irritation from Desmond, "I asked him to come along to meet our comrades after Desmond reveals himself to be a novice in training." He can feel not just Altair's glare at him, but also one from his tesoro... and Leonardo sighing, most likely thinking how can Ezio get away with these ridiculous stories.

"So he is one of us, I presume?"

The Order glance to see the last person to enter inside where they all gathered; a strict man with a black cloak (that covers his red and black ornate clothing) enters in the room; his sword is hanging from his belt. His black ahir is sleeked back.

"Ah. Niccolo," Ezio nods in acknowledgement, "I presume you got my message?"

Niccolo Machiavelli nods, walking towards where Mario, Ezio, and the others were, "When Mario mentioned that you requested our help, I assume it was something important. But before we get to that..." He glances over at Leonardo, "It's good to see you again."

"And the same as well," Leonardo nods, "Are you well from the last encounter?"

The politician nods, placing his hand against his head, "Yes... remind me to never go near that blasted artifact."

Desmond and Altair share a look of surprise, ...Blasted artifact? Is he talking about-

"And who might this person be?" Desmond looks up to meet the famed politician looking at him, "Is he new?"

"Actually... no," Ezio chuckles, "I was just introducing this new fledgling to the others and Mario. Desmond, this is Niccolo Machiavelli: a talented swordsman and a fellow Assassin."

"Niccolo is one of the leaders who help the Guild, next to Mario and several others," La Volpe nods, but his eyes held some form of irritation towards the man, "He has the abilities to help us not just in combat, but in the state of affairs in Venice and most of Italy."

And if Desmond recalled about that, he knows how much suspicion the thief has against Machiavelli. The others- Bartolomeo and Paola- would know how the politician works in Venice while Antonio and Teodora can gather intelligence and ideas from Florence. Along with Mario, they at least have some degree of trust in the man who will be later be known to have an influence in philosophy and politics (in Desmond’s time, that is).

"Desmond," Niccolo nods, "An Assassin novice? From where do you hail from?"

The American slightly pales, trying to figure out where to answer-

"He... is a good friend of mine! Desmond is someone I have been acquainted with and he wanted to join the Assassins," His eyes were washed with relief once he sees Leonardo jump in for him, "Ezio just met him a while ago."
Well, it wasn't exactly a lie (since there is a degree of truth to it), but it was better than nothing. Desmond mentally made a note to thank Leonardo if given the chance.

"...I see," Mario strokes his chin, nodding before noticing the fourth person (Altair; he was really good at being silent, isn't he?), "Ezio. One other person stands before us... who is he?"

"Ah!" Ezio turns around before pausing and hanging his head, "...Merda, are you seriously going to remain in that hood for so long?"

"And what would they say once they see my face?" Altair's eyes were hidden, but his voice was obviously filled with concern.

"...I believe that is when we'll tell them, si? After we mention about the other reason why we are here..."

The Syrian sighs, shaking his head, "They better believe you, brat. This visit better be worth it."

It wasn't until Altair lets down his hood that the room fell into a sudden silence; Mario was in shock along with Niccolo; Paola, Teodora, and Antonio look surprised— even Bartolomeo's eyes were threatening to pop out. La Volpe gently leans himself off from the wall, alarm present in his face.

The Master Assassin glances over at the entire area; it was a small area, built enough to sustain and hide the Assassins that were stationed in the city. It was another safe house for them since it contains a series of books and maps that have their missions written on it. The Assassin insignia was present on one of the drapery (that can be taken off easily if needed).

"This... is Altair Ibn-La'Ahad," Ezio introduces the Syrian, "Altair. Welcome to the Italian Assassin Order."

"So I see..." Altair nods; he can tell the other Assassins were looking at him as if he was a legend. To make sure that he wasn't in a trap or in the presence of any Templars, he activated his Eagle Vision earlier, he can tell that Ezio's allies were filled with blue; no reds.

It seems as if the brat was smart after all. And Desmond knew who his allies were.

"Altair Ibn-La'Ahad... himself in person?" Mario gapes in awe before getting over his initial shock. Even the others were surprised to see the Master Assassin's presence, "Oh dear God... It is an honor to meet you in person, Altair." He outstretched his hand and folded his left ring finger as a signature of to see if anybody will react to it.

"As I have heard from Ezio about the Order," Altair nods, shaking Mario's hand, "I take it you made a way to prevent your finger from being cut?"

The Auditore chuckles, nodding, "The others as well."

"We have heard various tales about you and the way you managed the Assassin Order," La Volpe nods, acknowledging Altair's presence, "It is good to meet the Master of Masyaf."

"Niccolo... is everything all right?" Teodora calmly asks the politician. He nods before glancing his dark steel eyes at the Syrian Assassin.

"How is this possible that you are here?" Niccolo was the one to address the question that was blooming in the minds of the other Assassins of the Italian Order, "Your history was about three hundred years ago; your legacy carried on from the Orders of Masyaf all the way towards here."
"I understand all of that was through a series of notes I wrote," Altair nods, looking over at the book Leonardo has in his hand, "But that is not why we are here."

"Oh?"

Leonardo takes out a familiar scroll and presents it to them, which catches everybody's attention almost immediately once they caught the Assassin insignia on the center of the scroll, "This map is why we are here."

End Part 7.1
Bled

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Nope, not mine. EVER.

Did anybody get bored from the first part? ...Well, if you guys did, here is the second part to Chapter 7...ish (I can't believe this site is making me write it as Chapter 8...). Thanks to those reading this story; and without further ado, enjoy!

WARNING: Spoiler alert as well as my attempts of the following (I apologize for the amount of boredom that will proceed): Teodora's personality (if it is out of character), my hash attempt at a Bleeding moment, and well, my attempts at making the personalities of the Italian Order stand out from one another.

EDIT: I fixed a few sentences (thank you Black Cat!)

"italics" = Italian, Arabic, any other language OR a flashback (depending on how it is used)

"bold italics" = over the mic and phone

"normal" = English

bold sentences = emails, screams, or Bleeding Effect (depends on how it’s used).

Part 7.2: Bled

The room was bustling with activity; Mario, Niccolo, La Volpe, Bartolomeo, Paola, and Antonio were looking at the map of Venice with Leonardo, Ezio, and Altair were at the other side of the table, pointing out the parts of the maps and inscriptions that the others were confused on (most of the help was from Leonardo since he was the one who had translated the map).

Desmond can see that some of them were ready to spring into action while the others were more calculating, hesitant to take action. At least it was wise for Desmond to not say anything (rather, it would be a really brilliant idea for him not to say anything at the moment); Altair, for some reason can still understand the Italian language; Desmond can pick up on a few things they mentioned: he knows that it was imperative that the map should not fall into the hands of any Templar members, any of the Borgia members, or anybody allied with the Cross.

It wasn't until he feels a small tap on his shoulders that he sees Teodora, "O-Oh... Buon giorno, Signora Contanto-.

"There is no need for formalities. Call me Teodora," A soft chuckle escapes from the former nun, "Your name is Desmond, am I correct?" The courtesan smiles as she sees the young man nod in approval (especially in pronunciation), "My, the others are busy... do you mind if I sit here?"
"No... not at all."

She sits down next to the young man. A tender smile appears on her lips, "Paola's told a lot about you. It seems like you were very popular with the ladies and helpful to others back in Florence."

"Ah, yes... I am," Desmond nods, "I did stop by there for a few errands at the city. And- wait, the women?"

Teodora lets out a small chuckle, "They seem to enjoy your company. I don't find it odd if any one of them are actually attracted to you." She didn't miss the way a certain Auditore assassin's amber eyes twitched at the mentioning of a woman trying to get Desmond's attention (and she had a feeling it did not have to do with the ladies this time), "Perhaps it's because you were of a great help to them when you aided to find our 'convent'."

The young man slightly blushed, "I... ah, to be honest, I am really trying to help those in need. It's not like... well, I know that sometimes people say that they've been blessed when someone helps them. But... to be honest," He faces the ground, the blush gone, "...I just don't want people being in my position since I was like some of those people."

"And if God up there truly wills it," He looks up to see Teodora, "It is odd; peoples' fate are being handled by God and being intertwined as if their lives were either meant to be or to be tainted with blood. But in the end," She glances at him with a soft smile, "It all depends on those who hold their lives. We control our own fate."

"...eh?" Oh... wait. Desmond's mind clicks, recalling Teodora's past, Thank God for Shaun's research... for once.

"Do you believe in..." The young man doesn't even need to continue as Teodora knows what he was going to ask.

"The thing I understand is that God gives us a reason for people to live together. Love... is one of the few things that allows people to understand. A partnership, perhaps," She chuckles, "That is why I left the stuffy life as a convent nun. I aim to help those in need... as long as they can aid the ones I help in return."

Desmond blinks before nodding, "I see." He doesn't even need to ask how the hell Ezio knows her; aside those other times he saw the said Italian Assassin flirting with various women (at this point, it was obviously nothing goddamn new since he saw it first-hand), "To be honest... I don't know if there is a God out there."

"Oh?"

"But-" He glances up at her, "I know what I believe in and I respect any religion anybody believes in. I understand there is a God and what people say about him; for you, I understand why you did what you need to do."

"And you?"

A small grimace, "...experience. Finding out about things. For me, just trying to live, going through the Creed or what they want to believe in... I just want freedom." He pauses, "Isn't that life enough for anyone?"

Teodora was surprised; had this young man been inside the Church, he would have been branded as a heretic- traitor even, and would have been exiled (there were notable people to this rule that were fellow Assassins). But she can see what he is trying to say; after all, he did not balk at her beliefs and
didn't even try to question her. She gently pats his back, causing the boy-Desmond- to look at her in surprise.

"We all have that desire," she pauses, "It is up to the individual, however, that determines whether we choose to go with the desire or to follow what we think is the best for our lives."

Desmond look at her in surprise before he silently chuckles. The Florence woman glances up to see the others finally coming up with a plan (it looks more like Mario is talking to Ezio, Altair, and Leonardo along with Niccolo and La Volpe; Antonio just took a few books out as he looks at them with Paola and Bartolomeo). It wasn't until she sees Paola gesture to her to come over where the four were.

"If you'd like," She faces the young man again, "Why not stop by Florence again and see those whom you've helped? One of them wanted to know of your recent whereabouts; she seems to be interested in you."

That, she saw, causes Desmond to stiffen (a bit)"Thank you for the offer, however-"

"Unfortunately, Teodora, as interesting as an idea would it be for Desmond to get along with some of the new courtesans," The two see Ezio pay Desmond on the back (causing him to slightly stumble before glaring at him), "I'm afraid that this little sparrow will be busy with our new mission."

She was about to ask why when she sees the way Desmond was flustering when Ezio places one hand around his waist. She then lets out a giggle of amusement, "Well, well I see... Non vuoi che nessuno gli giri intorno tranne te, Ezio?"

The Italian man blinks before sighing, "Tu...sei una donna molto pericolosa. Si, ma preferirei fosse solo mio e invece mi tocca condividerlo con quello stronzo di Altair."

Teodora laughs, shaking her head (in which she can see Desmond is sputtering something that she couldn't understand), "My. Non stai diventato un po' troppo possessivo, forse-"

"Teodora!" And now she can tell Ezio was now getting embarrassed or irritated, "Desmond è mio! Non mi interessa quello che dice il vecchio, ma è mio tesoro!"

And she definitely did not miss the jealous glare Altair was shooting at Ezio; it was too obvious.

"Let us find out what the others want," She smirks, can't wait to tell this to the other woman in private. However, from the looks of the others, it seems like the map business seem to be more urgent, "...then we can talk about this afterwards."

To say that Mario was a bit shocked was an understatement.

This might as well be worse when the Apple came into this city, He recalls the amount of trouble it took to get that artifact from Borgia's men (and the man himself). Looking down at the map again, he realizes that the map was exactly drawn and written to code... as if the cartographer knew Venice and drew it at the exact moment where they are.

Leonardo manages to translate the other blurbs that were written in the same language the Codex was written in; Altair knew what the blurb said and even aided the artist when he had trouble describing the words. But the location was not indicated; was it possible that the blurb were clues to the location of the Piece of Eden?

"This map... could tell us where a new Piece of Eden is in Venice..." Mario frowns before looking
up, "Does anybody else know about this aside you four?"

"No," Ezio shakes his head, "Only us present here."

"Where did you find this map?"

"I found the map at the hands of a Templar guard," Altair replies in an even voice, "However, the only problem was... this was back over at Jerusalem."

"So- wait, this doesn't sound right," Antonio blinks in alarm, "Forgive me for changing the subject, but Altair. How in the world did you manage to wind up in our time? Niccolo, how long ago did."

"About three hundred years ago," Niccolo sharply replies.

"...right," The Venetian thief mutters before glancing at the Syrian Assassin again, "Let me try this again: Ezio. How did you meet Altair?"

"I... Well... Damn." Their newest member sighs, shaking his head, "I didn't mention this earlier."

"No. It also came up since we saw your behavior towards the Master Assassin, Ezio," La Volpe smirks, seeing Ezio give him a deadpan glare, "...or maybe we should ask Altair?"

"It would be best if we told the truth," Altair stops Ezio from talking further; at this time, it would be the best idea to say how he got to Venice, "...it was through a portal I managed to enter into your time."

"But how!? There has been no such thing as... traveling through time!" Teodora was the one to sound alarmed, "That's impossible!"

"Through... 'a portal?' What sorcery did you manage to enter in here?" Mario demands before hearing Ezio clear his throat, "Do you know about this, nipote?"

"I actually have," His nephew pauses as he glances over at Altair and Leonardo (the former sighs and nods while the artist just gestures to get on with it), "...however, Uncle, I believe..."

Ezio turns around to Desmond, who tenses as slightly amused (if not serious) light amber meets slightly panicked brown, "...perhaps, it would be better if Desmond should tell what really happened."

Now all attention was all focused on the young man, who freezes under all of their stares.

Mario frowns, his eyes taking in the time traveler who was sitting next to the ex-convent nun. He believes about why Altair has been sent here, but the boy was unusual to begin with: he was gaunt to be an Assassin, his garb is even more unusual, and yet he wears the hidden blade. He can tell the boy was fidgetting under the gazes and looks the others are giving him; especially that from Niccolo, who is wondering about Desmond's presence. He has been oddly silent the entire time, Mario realizes, And yet it seems as if he was expecting that question the entire time...

What did catch him off guard was the fact that Desmond has a similar scar on his lips as his nipote... and the fact that Ezio trusts him more than Altair.

"...I see." he mutters, "Niccolo. I see no reason to regard him with suspicion."

The politician nods before his eyes glance at the American, "Desmond."
The young man nearly jumps up from all the tension, "Y-Yes?"

It was obvious that he had the tendency to get nervous around those unfamiliar to him, it seems.

"Perhaps you should tell us your actual purpose of being here..."

He can see the time traveler sigh in some form of relief-

"...as well as your true origins."

That caused Desmond to stiffen. Seriously!? He gives a glare at Ezio, who just gives him a glance that read something along the lines of 'It was either they had to find out or I had to tell the truth.'

Just fucking fantastic.

The American pauses before he stands up, knowing that he should have told the rest... instead of leaving some out of the loop. Well, at least Leonardo knew that Desmond was not from their time; the others, they had some idea that he wasn't from Italy, but they didn't voice it (well, then again, La Volpe, Paola, and Bartolomeo did give him confusing looks when Desmond was trying to word his Italian correctly or said anything regarding something that happens in the future). The others...

...this is going to be kill joy. Great.

"I..." He then tried to word his sentences just so he won't make himself even more of a fool before giving up from all the stress, "...I should start talking, shouldn't I?"

As if Mario knew what the entire order were thinking, he nods before gesturing a seat to Desmond, "That will be a wise idea."

Desmond nods, if not tense as he feels the entire Italian Assassin Order looking at him. He glances over at Altair, Ezio, and Leonardo, who each give him a nod. Well, for Ezio, it was more like a look that reads for Desmond to be calm and if he can, he can aid the time traveler in explanation. He sits at the seat next to Mario, letting out a heavy sigh.

At least they understand whatever the fuck he's saying in English.

"To start off, I'm an Assassin from the future, not anywhere from here. I'm born in March 1987. I was sent here on a retrieval mission..."

Leonardo glances over at the table to see the current state of affairs that were taking place at the table where the map lay. He can see Desmond trying to answer each question accurately (and carefully, the artist notes; the American did relax, but he still seems to be a bit on edge) with his friend and Altair next to him, helping him out while Mario and Niccolo continue their questioning. From the looks on Mario's face, however, Leonardo has decided that Desmond has told them about the state of the Assassin Order in Desmond's time (it was 2012... correct?).

Perhaps I should have warned Desmond about the Italian Brotherhood before we came here, The artist sighs, worry on his face, ...and maybe to the Master. Only out of all of us, Desmond is the only one who truly knows the fate of everyone in this room.

He admits, the first time Desmond enters inside Leonardo's workshop (this was when Leonardo decides to revisit Florence and at his other studio), the artist was alarmed to know that a foreigner knows his name. While he agreed to help the frantic young man (for safety, Desmond had frantically said), he knew Desmond was not from his time (and from the attempted Italian and the fake name).
His curiosity got the better of him; after two more encounters with Desmond, Leonardo offered the
time traveler any sort of aid. The only catch is that the American has to explain to him the real reason
of why he was here (well, with Altair, that seems to earn the Assassins’ interest and questioning)... as
long as he tells Leonardo the inventions that took place in the future. Hence, how Leonardo and
Desmond got along quite well.

*Merda. Poor boy; he seems to have a lot of his shoulders,* Leonardo sighs, shaking his head. He
knows that the two courtesans, the guard captain, and the Florence thief were also trying to
understand the extremity of the situation. La Volpe, he realizes, seemed to have taken some
appreciation for both Desmond and Altair (more to the latter than the former, it seems).

"This... is the Apple of Eden you have discovered?" Altair asks, smoothing his hands over the box.

"Yes. We managed to retrieve it before the Spaniards took their grimy hands and delivered it to
Borgia," La Volpe nods, "The only thing we understand about the Apple is that it belongs to the
group called the First Civilization."

"And not of anything else?" The Master Assassin asks, surprised. The Venician thief shakes his
head.

"After Niccolo, Mario, Ezio, and Leonardo looked at the Apple, they said it was not for the weak
minded and it would be best if we kept it until we find somewhere to store it in."

"I see..." Altair glances over at the box where the artifact was stored, "...it would be for the best to
never let this get into the hands of the Templars."

"That we understand," La Volpe nods, "But nobody knows the true purpose of the Piece of Eden... especially this one. From what they told-" He glances over at Mario, Niccolo, and Ezio, who were
done talking with Desmond; it seems like Ezio is now talking about a few things with his uncle and
the politician regarding the young man (who decides to go over to the chair that he was sitting at
earlier), "-all they saw were confusing symbols-"

"They were numbers," Leonardo muses, his fingers on his chin as he walks over towards Altair and
La Volpe, "Lines, words, symbols that I have never seen before. Not one of us can truly understand
the contents."

"So it is different than previous ones I have heard about..." The Syrian frowns, "What does this
particular one do?"

The artist frowns, "There are whispers- some of them from your Codex- that the Pieces of Eden have
unique abilities to them; some more prevalent than others. But one thing was for certain: The group
that is called The First Civilization created these items to boost their own kind and once used it for
their own purpose."

"Hold it. The First Civilization?" La Volpe asks in confusion, "Who... exactly are they?"

That causes the three men to fall in silence until-

"We used to call them gods," They turn to see Desmond walking up towards them, wearing a
solemn (if not bitter) expression, "...those who came once before. Heavenly being from above."

"And what happened to them, habibi?" The Syrian asks, concerned that the American is acting a bit
strange at the moment (he can also see Leonardo hiding a smirk; the Venetian thief is just confused at
the nickname). Desmond grimaces, his fists gripping.
"They were-

And that was then they noticed the lip forcing itself open, revealing the metallic orb with the grooves into it before it began to activate.

"What the-!

The Apple glowed brightly with a piercing ringing noise, causing the others that were near the Apple to shield their eyes from the bright light before hearing the master thief cry out in pain, collapsing on his knees, trying to hold his head. The two heard more shouts; turning around, they saw Ezio and Desmond also looking at the Apple in alarm; the other members in the room were on the ground, some of them holding their heads in pain while some of them shielding the eyes.

Unlike first time, Leonardo notices that the symbols and writings on the Apple were different. Instead of the flashing symbols, dots, lines, and numbers, this one seems to presenting four identical pillars with what looks to be constellations; one of them was beginning to shine brightly-

"STOP THAT THING!" He can hear someone cry out in pain-

Ezio immediately runs and slams his hand over it, the glow surrounding the Apple dissipated. It wasn't until the other members in the room manages to manages to get up; obviously some of them still suffering from some headaches that resulted from the glows of the artifact (Bartolomeo, Antonio, Paola, Teodora, and La Volpe were the first to experience this; both Niccolo and Mario knew what to expect, but they still suffered from the headaches).

Automatically recalling what happened last time, the Italian Assassin immediately place the Apple back inside the wooden box and shuts the lid before locking it.

Altair lowers his arms before growling, "The Apple... what the hell happened?"

"All we recall is when one of us suggested-

They turn around to hear a sudden cry of pain from-

-Desmond?

Fuckfuckfuckfuckfuck! Desmond's eyes dilates as he winces, his hands onto the sides of his head, trying to keep the pains that were stabbing at his head as he steps away from them-

He was at the Acre, trying to retrieve something for Al Mualim to redeem himself for his past mistakes - NONONOWHAT THE HELL HE'S NOT ALTAIR, HE'S DESMOND MILES AND HE'S AWAY FROM ABSTERGO-

And there he was, trying to retrieve the wooden box from the guards that were trying to deliever it to Borgia - EZIO'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM, HE'S FUCKING DESMOND DAMMIT-

He doesn't hear the people in front of him that were alarmed at his actions; even he hears Ezio asking what the hell is happening.

The whispers of knowledge were upon his hands as he holds the strange orb in front of him-WAIT HE ISN'T HOLDING THE APPLE OHGODOHGODOHGOD CALM CALMDOWN CALMTHEFUCKDOWN OHGODWHATISHAPPENING-
He is stabbing whatever life is left from the disgusting man that was a traitor and the death to his father Giovanni; the cause of his pain and suffering-NO, WILLIAM IS HIS FATHER AND HE IS MOST CERTAINLY ALI-

"This isn't- His eyes! Something is wrong!"

"His blade-"

"Restrain him! NOW!"

He feels someone trying to grab him, preventing him from his current actions; immediately, terror blooms into his mind as he begins to thrash around, feelings of terror, vulnerability return-

At the moment he feels the sharp pain go through his stomach, his eyes meet the ones of his - I AM NOT IN OHGODGODCRAPCRAPCRAP ITHURTSHURUTSHURTS-

He lets out a loud scream of pain, feeling the invisible knife go through his stomach as his vision suddenly flares into a panic of red-

"Desmond! DESMOND!" A cry was heard from someone, but he doesn't know who; all he really wants is-

"Well well... since you do not plan to cooperate for today," A sneer was heard from the old man that is holding him in the prison called Abstergo, His eyes widen in panic, knowing this memory too well - "Then our best guards here will show you what happens to those who won't work with us." A series of footsteps, and then next thing Desmond knows, he is beginning to fight back against the guards by punching the first few that come to beat him up- NONONONONONONONONONONONOTAGAIN-

"What is- Oh God, the boy-!"

"ANTONIO! TEODORA! GET THE DOCTOR!"

"Paola, grab something to help me stop-"

-he feels the pain of being kicked, punched, and eventually after seeing that his knuckles were beginning to bleed, he is getting restrained by a guard while hearing Vidic commanding orders to do something - GETAWAYGEYAWAYFROMME-

-The pain continues to spread throughout his body as he struggles to stand up-

Desmond lets out another cry of pain, a chaotic storm about to consume his mind as he is ready to punch whoever is restraining him-

"I can't hold him much longer-"

"The doctor is on his way!"

"Cazzo, I can't stop the-"

"HOLD HIM DOWN! Where is the-"

-Feeling the horror and anguish that consumes his mind before feeling a sharp pain on his head-
-hearing the voices of various people before feeling something being injected into his system, forcing him to-

"I apologize, Desmond Miles," His eyes widen at the sound of an unknown voice that did not sound like anybody in the room at all, "But this is the only way I must talk to you."

Who- He was about to ask when he feels his mind was split by pain once again, forcing him to cry out in pain before feeling his energy instantly sap out-

"DESMOND!"

It was the last thing he hears before he falls into a blinding white light, forcing his body to fall limp.

It wasn't until Desmond's body goes limp did Altair realize something else was wrong (aside the wild look that was possessing in the young man's eyes earlier along with his movements).

"Merda," he hears the thief La Volpe hiss as the man tries to feel Desmond's pulse on his neck, "He's barely conscious and his skin is feeling cold."

"How the hell did this happen?" Niccolo demands, "What in the world just happened to cause the boy to react this way?"

Ezio growls, obviously upset, "I don't know! At one moment, we were just talking and after we opened the box to the Apple, it glowed without anybody touching it."

Altair immediately stops Ezio from continuing, "Wait. The Apple did this?"

It wasn't until they all look at the only thing that could have possibly done the most amount of damage.

"How in the...?" Leonardo frowns, glancing over at the wooden box the metallic orb was contained in, "...could it be possible that this simple orb caused it? All what happened was just the same as before."

An uneasy silence fell in the room as they all glance over at the now-relaxed orb... before Mario pales, "Hold it. Could it be that this Piece of Eden is..." he glances over to the unconscious Desmond, "...cazzo."

"Dear God..." Paolo whispers, glancing at the Piece of Eden, "What do we-"

"Get that Piece of Eden out of this room," Niccolo does not sound happy, Altair notes, "Leonardo... you said it was not for the minds of the weak, correct?"

"Yes, I did," The blonde artist grimaces, recalling the first time he inspected the Apple, "I don't think it's the best idea to inspect it at the moment."

"What were you planning to do with the Apple?" Altair asks, stepping forward into the new conversation. He recalls when Al Mualim took the Apple, things did not go well since he was forced to fight his former mentor. When Abbas took control, the man nearly lost his life just from holding the orb. And now?

"We..." Mario answers, "We were supposed to store it at the Rocca di RavalDino; one of our allies was supposed to protect it."
The Syrian frowns; something told him that wasn't a good idea, "And who is this ally... that is supposed to protect the Apple?"

"Caterina Sforza," Niccolo replies, catching all of their attention.

"What...? Caterina is an ally?" Ezio asks, wide-eyed in surprise, "How could you not have mentioned this earlier!"

"We were going to mention this sometime soon," The politician frowns, "And it seems like you already know her, so perhaps it would be easier for you to persuade her to guard the Apple."

"It could be possible, but-" The Italian Assassin glances over at Altair, "...is something the matter?"

Yes; do not leave the Apple in the hands of any civilians, Altair mentally grimaces, knowing first-hand why the Apple is truly dangerous. But he can't tell that to them; Ezio can easily wield the Apple as efficiently as he can, "...Ezio. Tell the others to take the Apple into another room and inspect it again. Something must have triggered the Apple to activate without one of us touching it."

"Are you suggesting that we look into it again?" Ezio stares exasperated, but Niccolo cuts him off.

"It is harmless when we last touched it," The politician glances over at Mario and Leonardo, "These two and Ezio were with us when it happened. Do you want us to inspect it again?"

"If you do not mind," The Master Assassin nods.

"Let's go into another room and wait until Antonio and Teodora returns with the doctor," Mario suggests, "We can hide the Apple somewhere until the doctor leaves."

"I agree. Paola, Bartolomeo, stay here with Ezio and Altair," Niccolo nods as he, Mario, and Leonardo begin to leave the room. The artist glance over at the others.

"Don't worry. Let us know when Desmond wakes." The artist assures them before shutting the door. After a few seconds of silence (except for Paola taking out some bandages that they managed to retrieve earlier), it was the captain that breaks the tension.

"So what happens now? What happens after the boy wakes up?"

"We need to get the Apple out of Desmond's sight," Altair sharply replies, his voice cutting through the chaos of the room, "If we need him to wake-"

"Hey! HEY! Can someone hear this?"

The room falls into an unexpected silence as they hear an unknown, tinny voice. But Altair and Ezio knew exactly who it was as they glance over at Desmond's bag.

"Is that that... what the hell?" Bartolomeo asks in surprise, "Is that voice of an angel?"

"No, amico," Ezio shakes his head, "That voice sounds like-

"DESMOND! CAN YOU HEAR ME? This is Connor!"

For the love of Allah- what the hell is he requesting Desmond for? Altair mentally curses, his eyes narrow as he walks over to the bag and begins to search for the communicator, Now isn't a good time to mention your presence!
"What do you want?" He demands, much to the surprise of both Bartolomeo and Paola. Only Ezio remains silent.

"Altair?" Connor's voice shifts as he begins to respond in Arabic, "What... are you doing here? Where is Desmond?"

"Desmond is..." The Syrian pauses before sighing, "He is unconscious."

He can hear a groan before seeing Ezio slap his hand against his face with a bemused Paola. Bartolomeo glances over at the door before glancing back at Altair in surprise.

"Unconscious? Wait, what happened to Desmond?"

"He..." For once the Master Assassin doesn't know what to say. They just saw his habibi go into some sort of trance, thrashing around before yelling in different words that he can recognize... and ones that he couldn't. It wasn't until he sees Ezio walk up and take the communicator from him and quickly responds.

"Desmond's personality changed into one of a madman," The Italian replies as he motions Paola to grab the bandages and patch up what she can before the doctor arrives, "He was screaming in pain! He said he was not Altair or me-"

"He said WHAT? ...oh god." Altair's eyes shift into one of suspicion as Desmond's oldest brother's voice shifts into one of horror. Does this man Connor know exactly what Ezio just talked about? "Shit... please tell me whatever you just said did not happen."

"Do you want us to lie then?" Ezio frowns, "No! Desmond began to break out, holding his head and started to say some unusual words-"

"And did he begin to hit at anyone?" Connor was beginning to panic, "Were his eyes dilated to the point in which they were black?"

"His eyes were-" Altair freezes, recalling that the young man's eyes were dilated wider than usual when he was trying to free himself from Bartolomeo and La Volpe's restraints, "...yes, his eyes were almost black."

"What happened when you were trying to hold him down?" Ezio demands to his comrade. Paola still trying to bandage the reopened wound.

"The boy... Desmond... He was speaking in other languages, one of them we can't even recognize," Bartolomeo frowns, "He even tried to hit me and La Volpe!"

"He was bleeding as well," Paola gently places the compression on the reopened scar, "It wasn't a lot of blood, but it happened right when he was screaming in pain."

"Cazzo," Ezio's eyes land on the bleeding wound; it didn't spill much, but some of it were present on the shirt Ezio let him borrow.

"All of this happened just now?" Altair can hear Connor trying to breathe steadily-

"Yes," He's pretty sure the man from the other side can hear the comments from the other two, "...it did."

A loud bang nearly made them all (except for Altair) jump in alarm, glancing over at the earpiece,
"Shit! How the hell did the Bleeding Effect return? I thought Desmond was fine from that! It was bad enough we can't get him to get back home because of the-"

"Bleeding Effect?" Both he and Ezio echo in confusion. Silence filled the room before hearing a series of muttering from the other line.

"He didn't tell you two about it? ...shit," Connor's voice begins to fill with a sense of dread, "Great. Do you still want to know?"

"At this point," Altair doesn't even care about the stupid Piece of Eden or trying to get back home; he just wants his habibi safe from whatever the hell is is suffering from, "To help my habibi, any information will be useful."

He can tell Ezio is clenching his fists as the two Assassins wait for the man on the other line to respond. Paola and Bartolomeo is glancing at them, a concerned look on her face.

Finally, Connor lets out a terse sigh, "The Bleeding Effect is one of the side effects Desmond got when he was forced into the Animus back in Abstergo. It only happens when he is at his highest peak of stress or been given a..." There was a pause before hearing some shifting, "...look. Let me ask you and Ezio something; are you two alone in the room right now?"

"Bartolomeo, Paola. If you don't mind..." Ezio nods to the woman, who knew it was best for her to leave the room. Tapping the other man, he glances over at the Italian Assassin. Altair knows that Ezio is concerned for Desmond as and the others are just as worried. The Syrian can tell that the brat was brimming off an aura of genuine worry, concern, and fear of losing Desmond.

...and he can't bear it either. But right now, he glances back at the communicator once the door was shut, We need some help.

"We are alone," Altair responds as he sits down at his chair as Ezio does the same.

"...good," He can tell Connor is still hesitant, "Just one thing; how am I sure I am able to trust the both of you even though you two kidnapped my brother?"

The first thing Desmond sees when he opens his eyes was that he is in an all-white space that looks all too familiar to him. Gasping, he scrambles to his feet, looking around to see that surrounding him, it was all white. Except with the transparent symbols and lines that appear now and then, he knew where he was.

In the fucking Animus. Crap. But he wasn't inside the stupid DNA hacking machine! How the hell did he end up here?

"...the hell's going on? Can anyone hear me?!"

"Loud and clear, Desmond."

The time traveler stiffens, hearing the unknown voice echo throughout the Animus. It had the echo feel like he heard from Minerva's voice (back in Ezio and Altair's memories) but this one... doesn't sound the same as any other member of that First Civilization group.

He turns around before seeing a figure materialize in a form of a man, wearing a metallic, intricate armor and a metal helm that resembles that of a wolf's head. The cloak he has covers his left arm, revealing his right arm; the rest of the robes drapes to cover his legs. His hair and beard are black; his
aura—unlike what Desmond saw with Minerva, was a pale blue. His dark eyes pierce through Desmond as he slowly walks around him.

"Wha... Wha-" The American croaks, "B-But I thought Minerva-

"Menrva does not know I am still here," The man responds, "Nor do Tinia and... Uni. It's surprising; I figured you knew about those three. This must mean you know of our history as well."

"Menerva? Tinia? Uni? What the- Who are- Wait, who are you?!" Desmond sputters in alarm, "And where the hell am I?"

A ghost of a smile past through the man as he stops his circle to meet the time traveler face to face.

"I apologize. This place is where you would call the Nexus." At the instant, the white space suddenly turns into a pitch black space; the only source of light was underneath them, surrounding them in wisps of white light; various signs, numbers, and figures appear in a dim light, swirling underneath Desmond, each far away from his sight as the pitch black begins to decorate with small dusts of stars. Surprised, Desmond turns to face the man, who is facing him again. This time, unlike the piercing glare, it turns into a look of a patient man.

The time traveler gapes before finally (coherently) managing to ask, "You forgot your..."

A small smile appears at the man's face, "You know me as Hades or Pluto. My real name is Aita."

That was something Altair did not want to even hear. Yes, they did help Desmond without any sort of warning; they did pursue him at the moment he appeared. And they helped him—how in the world did that constitute kidnapping?

"How did you get the idea we kidnapped your brother?" The Syrian glares at the communicator, "We did not do what you think we did!"

"...right. And Shaun's going to announce he's high on Prozac."

Even though Altair does not understand what Connor just said (there were also many things Desmond said that did not make sense either), he can tell that the man on the other line was not convinced. Of course. Like Malik. He dryly adds.

"We did not kidnap Desmond like you said," Ezio replies in a serious tone, "We were trying to help him! I will not allow my tesoro be harmed by the hands of those Templars!"

"There were guards looking out for him and he was the type to get noticed," Altair steely replies, gripping the edge of the chair, "What else were we supposed to do? Force him to die?"

"So explain why you refuse to let him out of your sight."

They give a wary glance at each other.

"Well..." The Master Assassin was trying his best to delicately place the main reason for his protective (borderline to possessive now) streak when he hears Ezio cut in, announcing the reason why.

"The thing is, Connor," That part was dropped with irritation, "The bastardo elder and I truly do care for Desmond and-"
"You novice!" Altair hisses, "Don't you **dare** reveal what we did to-

"How can I resist?" Ezio glares at the Syrian, "You did the same thing with him too-"

"Will you keep quiet!"

"How can I? After all," The Italian grows a bit irritated, "I do get what is mine-"

"Desmond is mine too! He doesn't belong to you, brat!"

"Oh yeah? Then what happened that first night we met, huh? You and I- yes, I am referring to the **both** of us, I am not an idiota- made sure Desmond-

"Ezio."

"-wasn't hurt and that we **marked** him-"

"Ezio..."

"-not to mention that he was clearly enjoying our actions the day before-"

"Ezio!" With that, Altair gestures towards the earpiece, "Your mind does not comprehend with your mouth, does it!"

"What are you-" The Italian was about to snap back until he did a double-take on Desmond's communicator. He pales (slightly) when he realizes how much he just said, "...cazzo."

"Thanks a lot, novice," The Syrian glares at Ezio, "Now what-"

"Altair... Ezio..."

That made the two of them freeze at their current positions as they glance at the communicator, hearing one calm and **furious** Connor Kenway-Miles.

"...I'm guessing the main reason you two have been calling Desmond 'yours' is because **YOU TWO FUCKED MY YOUNGER BROTHER?!""

...Shit.

**End Part 7.2**

What's next: Aita reveals to Desmond that the Piece of Eden that is stuck in Venice was not recorded on the Apple for a good reason. And Connor isn't exactly happy about Desmond's Bleeding incident... and what he just heard.
Part 8: Informed

Desmond was still gaping in alarm as he realizes what the man just said to him, "...wait, come again?"

The wolf-helmed man arches an eyebrow, "Did you not hear me? I said-"

"No no no, I heard you. What I want to know is," The American's eyes flashes in suspicion, "How the hell do you know about my mission? I thought it was just... the guys back at... okay, how do you know about it all?"

Aita pauses before glancing at him, "For now, I'm afraid I cannot answer that. It's something... that I would rather keep as a secret."
Great. Thanks a lot for not telling me, Desmond stares at him, How about this then? "Why the hell did you pull me in here?"

"That," The man's face is solemn, "...is something I can answer later. But before I do that, do you have any more things to ask? It seems as if you've got a lot of questions."

"Yeah. How the hell do you know who I am?"

Aita chuckles, "I just know by seeing everything. I am not that oblivious to the world's surroundings."

"So how-"

"I can not answer how I know these things, Desmond," The First Civilization man responds, "It is better if you know yourself."

So much for that. Desmond's face changes into one of an irritated one, "Do I really think these thoughts out loud?"

A small chuckle answered his question, causing him to scowl.

"Not my fault I'm a curious person. Look, Aita, you mentioned earlier that the others- I know about Minerva, maybe Tinia and Uni... wait," The time traveler stares at the First Civilization inhabitant, "I honestly don't know what those two look like. I know who they are in Greek... that's not important, is it."

The man in front of him sighs, in some form of... relief? "That is good that you did not encounter Uni yet; Tinia is a close friend of mine- a brother. You shall see him hopefully soon." He closes his eyes before facing Desmond again, "But how exactly did you meet Minerva? She is another close comrade of mine."

The young man pauses, shifting in his hoodie before frowning, "...Um..." Let's see... how the hell am I going to explain it to someone in the First Civilization about the fucking Animus?

"I was..." He can feel Aita staring at him for an answer.

...argh, fuck it! I might as well mention it to him!

"I saw her through the memories of one of my ancestors! That's how she knew of my presence!" Desmond responds, hoping that the man doesn't think of him as insane. Much to his surprise, however, Aita didn't even laugh at him let along begin to bombard him with a series of questions (unlike a certain painter and one Assassin's uncle did earlier). Instead, he sees the man ponder before he nods.

"I see... her message got to you then?"

Desmond blinks and was about to ask 'what message' until he recalls the last time he was in the Animus (which was when Ezio was a little older than what he was right now)-

"You may not comprehend us. But you may comprehend our warning. You must..." He can feel Minerva's eyes pierce into his own- wait, was she talking to him? Not to Ezio?

Oh fuck. Desmond pales as he hears the Italian ask who Minerva was talking to as he now knows the message is not for him before saying that there is nobody behind him because... oh right.
Desmond was stuck in the FUCKING ANIMUS, reliving-

"Enough!" Minerva's eyes glare at Ezio, "I do not wish to speak to you... but **through** you."

Okay. So it was to **him** then. Desmond silently gulps, bracing himself for what she has to say as he continues to hear her say that Ezio was the prophet and how his role is done (for the time being).

"You anchor him, but please **be silent!** So that **we** may commune." He feels the warrior woman stare at Desmond again, this time her eyes filled with concern and worry before vanishing into the darkness of the Vault, "Listen... When we were still flesh and our homes were whole... your kind **betrayed** us. **We**, who made you. **We**, who gave you life."

Ah. That must have explained that video file he, Lucy, Shaun, Rebecca, Connor, and Clay uncovered... it was called "The Truth", right?

"We were strong. But you were many. And the both of us created war. So busy were we with Earthly concerns, we failed to notice the heavens. And by the time we did... The world burned until naught remained by ash. It should have been ended there and then."

Was she referring to the so-called Toba Catastrophe that Clay recently found articles on?

"But we built you in our own image; we built you to **survive.** And so... we did. Few were our numbers... your kind and mine. It took sacrifice... strength... compassion. **But** we rebuilt. And as life returned to the world... we endevered to make sure that the tragedy will **not** be repeated."

...crap. Desmond pales. Mentally, he hopes to GOD it isn't a stupid another warning about a repeat of the Toba Catastrophe-

"But now we are dying... time and part of mankind will work against us. Even some of our own betrayed us. Truth turned into myth and legend. What we built... misunderstood. Let my message preserve the message and make a record of our loss."

Shit.

"But... let my words also bring hope." Suddenly, "You must find the other Temples. **Built** by ones who knew to turn away from war. They worked to protect **us** - to save us from the new threat... as well as the false ones who claim to be followers of our kind."

Another set of orders? Hang on... are the others getting this?

"If **you** can find them... if their work can be saved... so too might this world."

Okay, Desmond grimaces, Find the other Temples that people used to help the First Civilization. This... should be excellent. He wants to say thank you, but the light begins to flash in front of both Ezio and Desmond-

"Be quick!" Minerva's voice is becoming urgent, "For time grows short. And guard against the cross... For there are many who will stand in your way and those who thirst to use it for their own gain."

...so she knows about Abstergo. He can feel Minerva's gaze on him while the Italn winces from the lights... and he firmly nods.

**Right.** He can feel her small smile before she materializes again.
"It is done... The message is delivered. We are gone now from this world. All of us. We can do no more."

Desmond was about to silently thank Minerva and tell the others to get him out of the Animus-

"The rest is up to you... Desmond."

And then he hears Ezio ask who Desmond was before feeling himself getting out of the Animus safely-

**WHAT. THE. FUCK.**

The next thing he sees when he wakes up from the Animus is seeing his comrades: Lucy is pale, horror written over her face; Rebecca, shaken as she places her hands over her open mouth; Shaun is dumfounded, hands frozen over the keyboard; Clay is gripping the edge of the table, wide-eyed as his mouth was also open in awe and fear; Connor remained stoic, but his eyes clearly read horror as they narrowed and his hands grip into fists. His father was the one who is silent; his arms crossed as his face remains the same: stoic, serious, and always thinking. He can see the other assassins either frozen or watching, remaining at their spots.

Desmond's steps must have alerted the others that he was awake once he sees them relax a bit.

"...how the hell did she know I was there?" He manages to croak out the first thing that was on his mind.

"Her warning about the Second Catastrophe," He snaps his head up to see Aita, clearly looking concerned, "From your thoughts, I can tell that you must have heard it."

Desmond numbly nods before hearing his mouth tumble, "One thing... She didn't mention you in her speech."

__________________________

There were a few moments in which Connor Kenway-Miles truly believed that his younger brother Desmond would just have someone (regardless if it was a guy or girl - actually, William doesn't know about Desmond's preferences at all) have a serious relationship with... had it not been for the fucking Abstergo keeping him as a hostage for so damn long. He thought Desmond was the one who would be the one to be strong and get someone in his life at least. When he heard about what he now dub as the 'Myrna incident', he had a feeling that his younger brother is a dense one.

Connor has seen and experienced unwelcome advances made to his younger brother. And he knows how horrendous Desmond is at flirting (constantly quipped by Shaun). Honestly, Connor wasn't sure whether to call it sad or pathetic (or maybe Desmond needs 101 in Flirting). Though for him, it didn't come out as a surprise that while Desmond was in the Animus or going through Jerusalem, Venice, Florence, or anywhere else in the time machine, the only reason people likes talking to Desmond because of how nice and helpful as well as brave he was (that, Connor has to admire; he knows Desmond wants to help those who were once hopeless).

He also thought that Desmond had a crush on Lucy; that theory crashed and burned when he accidentally overheard Lucy admit to Desmond that she has a no-so secret crush on Clay (and partially because he can tell Desmond viewed Lucy as her confidante and Desmond was perfectly fine with that).

But what he heard just now... Connor is **furious**.
Out of all the things that were not supposed to happen - actually, there was a long list of shit that wasn't supposed to happen to his younger brother in the first place - Desmond wasn't supposed to end up being trapped in the past in the first place. He wasn't supposed to get injured. He also wasn't supposed to be caught by any of his ancestors in time (the time paradox theory Shaun had to use in one of his arguments burned right off the bat). And he definitely was not supposed to experience the Bleeding Effect. However, now...

...to put it simply, Connor wasn't exactly keen on the idea that Altair Ibn-La'Ahad and Ezio Auditore da Firenze banged up Desmond.

"So. Do you two have anything to say?" He did calm down from his loud shout earlier; all he can hear now are stunned silence at the other end; they both must be mortified that he just realized what they did to Desmond. And probably trying to hide it.

Figures, he shakes his head, Well... it was their fault that they made it obvious.

It was a good thing he knew how to speak (and understand) Italian and Arabic pretty well. Clay, just barely to save his skin. Desmond was pretty fluent at it, especially from the Bleeding Effect. But how the hell did Altair manage to break the barrier between Italian and Arabic was something he didn't even understand. Not even Desmond can explain that one.

He can see the expressions on both Assassins' on the other side from the communicator right about now.

"Um..." That was Ezio; he can tell thanks to the obvious accent. Connor rolls his eyes.

"Don't even bother denying it or mention that whatever sex life the both of you previous had matters," Connor seethes, irritation seeping into his voice, "I want to know what the hell possessed you morons to think it was a good idea to do this to Desmond."

"WHAT!? Why would we try to deny such action?" Again, Ezio... just this time, getting irked of what Connor is asking, "Connor... was it?"

"Who else would you be talking to?"

"Why you-"

"Ezio." And that, Connor knew, was Altair; more serious and stoic, "You are making this worse than it already has."

"I already know that, stronzo! And you?"

"I tried to stop you, but you didn't even dare to listen!"

The Native-American stares at the communicator in surprise; he thought the two of them got along well. But it was clear that for some reason, Altair and Ezio don't exactly agree with each other on a lot of things; that, Connor can tell, could be a problem. But that was shoved back into his mind.

"Hey. Blockheads." He deadpans, "I asked earlier why you two thought banging up Desmond would be a good idea."

Silence met his question.

Connor frowns, "...you two had a little too much fun with him?"
"Mi scusi? 'Banging up' Desmond?"

"'A little too much'? ...please clarify."

His left eye twitches as he sighs, exasperated at their lack of idioms (okay, he can't blame them for that, but still), "...I'm asking why you two had sex with my brother."

That got both Assassins sputtering (much to Connor's amusement).

"I- We- Well...! How can I not!?" Ezio exclaims first, "Tesoro mio- argh, la mia lingua stupida-"

He can see Altair staring at the Italian exasperated, "Make a note to watch what you say in front of others."

"PERCHE STRONZO-"

"I can understand what you two are saying,"Connor rolls his eyes again, "Give me a good reason why I shouldn't cross over to your time and smack the ever living hell out of the both of you."

"All right, fine!" He blinks in surprise, hearing the Master Assassin of Masayf explode in irritation, "Desmond was... he is..." A pause. Then- "My habibi Desmond is someone I want to protect! I cannot bear to lose someone once more like I have for so many times!

Connor blinks in awe; he was expecting something about using his brother. Instead, what he got was something that sounded like...

...a declaration of love?

Okay. That was a surprise.

"Huh...you do care for him. ...even though you two..." Then he sighs, groaning; one of his worst fears being realized, "Goddamnit, Desmond! You stupid- you and- we swore not to- ARGGH! You screwed up! I thought I told you not to-"

"Mi scusi?" His rant was suddenly cut off by a certain angry Italian named Ezio,"What do you mean that Desmond 'screwed up'? He did not do anything wrong!"

Ah hell. Connor blanches; if he knew any better from the tapes and loops of the memories Desmond revisited, they all agreed to never anger Ezio... or Altair for whatever their lives were worth-

"Give me that, you brat!" A small protest before hearing a pissed off Altair, "What did Desmond do that you deem is wrong? The brat and I helped him and we aided him back to health after the guards attacked him two days ago. Desmond was the one who got hurt; not to mention that he is still untrained as a full fledged Assassin! I do not know what you are doing to help Desmond, your brother, but it is clearly obvious from the current state of your sorcery, you obviously cannot do anything to help him. So, answer me and Ezio this: What- do you deem then, Connor- did my habibi do wrong?"

"Oi! Elder! What do you mean by- Give me that!" Another fumble, some sort of loud exclamation, and then this time he hears a string of Italian curse words before hearing a seething Ezio, "Connor, is it? Like Altair said, we rescued Desmond from being killed. But there is one thing I want to know; why the hell did he suffer the way that he did? I do NOT WANT TO SEE DESMOND
LIKE THIS AGAIN!

That made the eldest Miles sibling sit still as he glances at the communicator. Earlier, he was this close to give a speech towards the two about his younger brother; now, it seems as if the tables have been turned and now he was the one being yelled at.

"...huh." He blinks, "...so you two really care for him."

"Yes." The two Assassin firmly replies.

Connor sighs, running his hand against his hair; he realizes that two of the greatest known Assassins really do care for Desmond more than as a brother of the Creed. If the others found out, what the hell would they say about this?

Well, that's just great, his lips were drawn in a thin line, ...but that's not why you wanted to talk to two, is it? You wanted to know about how Desmond's mind fucked up again. And if something like that happens again... He grimaces, making what he knows will be an idiotic decision on his part, "Altair, Ezio."

The Native-American knows he manages to catch their attention, "...look. Desmond's my younger brother. I have to protect him; he's one of the few people I call 'family.' While I plan to discuss about what you both did to him later-" Yes, he's not letting them off the hook, "-I should tell you two about the Bleeding Effect."

"Isn't that what the initial intention was in the first place?" Altair grumbles; Connor chooses to ignore that as he pushes on.

"Answer me this first before I get to the Bleeding Effect: Did Abstergo tell you anything about a group named Abstergo?"

Desmond can see the First Civilization individual nod, knowing pretty well something like that was going to happen.

"That was because something happened when we tried to save everyone," He sees Aita narrow his eyes before stretching his hand to reveal Earth (as it was before), "From when we tried to prevent the First Disaster... we attempted various solutions. I suppose you and your comrades have searched for them."

The American was about to say they didn't and instead went though the various hypothesis (that ended up in various debates regarding science, history, and whatever the fuck Shaun was spewing) until they decided on one thing: based on what the memory files the Animus gave them, it was official: It had to do with the Pieces of Eden. Only they can give the location to the various Temples Minerva mentioned; all they have to do is to find them, find the Temples, and prevent whatever disaster was heading their way (it didn't take them long for them to review the tapes again to realize she was telling them about a man-made disaster; not a repeat of the Toba Catastrophe).

Hence one of the reasons William wanted to convert the Animus into the time travel portal: to find the maps to the Pieces of Eden and find them before Abstergo gets their hands on them. Even if some of them were obtainable from other Assassins and Templars before, they need to find the actual locations of the said items first (And this was an insane reason as opposed to having Desmond going through another rounds of the Bleeding Effect... how?).

"I suppose not," Aita frowns, "I will explain that later."
"Why not now?"

"I do not have a lot of time, Desmond," Aita's eyes scan around, "I only have a certain amount before others wake you up."

"Then why the hell did you drag in here for?"

"There are already several Pieces of Eden found in the time you are in," The wolf-helmed man explains as the images of the Apples, a golden Ankh, a Golden Sword, various Crystal Skulls and orbs, a jade bracelet, a scepter, a ring-like object, the Shroud, and the Stave of Eden are shown to Desmond, "I'm pretty sure you have seen these items."

Desmond nods, not sure what to say.

"There are some that were claimed to be the Pieces of Eden, but they are not," Aita presents the images that Desmond saw: The Chalice, the Ark of the Covenant, the two stones that contain the Ten Commandments, the robes Jesus wore. From what he recalled, the supposed items that were associated with the prophet were not the Pieces of Eden (with the exception of the Shroud). Looking at the images again, he blinks, realizing that one other item wasn't present.

Wait, why wasn't the supposed lance in there? Desmond was about to ask, but he decided to keep his mouth quiet. He doesn't see Aita glancing at him before a small smile appears on his lips.

"Do you have something you want to ask?"

The time traveler hesitantly nods, "Yeah... what are you trying to say?"

Aita then projects the map that Desmond had before he gave to Leonardo to translate, "This. I presume you already know of its purpose?"

"Yes..."

"Then what I am here to tell you," The man from the First Civilization's eyes harden into a concerned one, "...is the Piece of Eden that is located in this area is one of those you mankind believe to be a legend."

"And that's in Venice?"

Aita falls silent before nodding, "It was hidden for a very good reason... it used to be in Jerusalem before someone used it; the potent effects on it were too much for a normal man. Only it chooses who can wield this particular item."

The time traveler frowns, "A few people can- wait, what the hell is the item then?"

He hears a floating chuckle, "Impatient, aren't you?"

"It's better than saying a riddle and running around in circles!" Desmond grows exasperated, "What the hell is it? And why tell it to me? Why not to... Altair or Ezio or anybody else?!""

"Why?" Aita's eyes change from amusement to concern in an instant, "Desmond... you are the key to saving the world from ruin."

_Oh GOD. Like I've never heard that one before_, He groans, "Not this 'save-the-world' bullcrap again-"

"I am not finished," He looks up to the First Civilization man again, _You_ are the only one who can
wield the Piece of Eden. Not even the member of the Cross can wield such artifact as powerful as this one."

"Give me one good reason why I should believe you." He was getting sick of the talk of him being 'the one': the one who Abstergo needs to use him for his DNA, the one who has been afflicted with the Bleeding Effect, the one who the First Civilization decides will be their puppet, the one who everyone in the Assassin Order is relying on to save the fucking world, and now the one who can wield this supposed powerful Piece of Eden-

"I was murdered at the hands of one of the Triumvirate. That same person aims to control the world through similar means." Then, "I seek your help to stop the Second Disaster from happening; the man-made disaster that is beginning to unferal in your time as we speak."

That caused Desmond to pale as the reality of the situation sinks in. And he can hear Clay's sarcastic voice in his mind (what he said before when they finally translated Minerva's message):

"Now that's a fucked up way to realize how much the world relies on you, isn't it?"

Abstergo.

If Ezio recalls correctly, wasn't that the group of Templars who masqueraded themselves to be a company? Weren't they also the same company that kidnapped Desmond and tortured him to relive their memories?

"Si," Ezio tightly replies, not liking where this is going, "Desmond told us about those Templars."

Altair glances at him warily; hoping to calm themselves down as they don't want to risk any other loud screams (and arguments) that will attract the other Assassins' attention (well... Leonardo knows from just the expression on his face. That, Ezio realizes, was something his good friend was talented at).

Connor grumbles, "Well, at least you two know about what cover the Templars use in our time." He then clears his throat, "Desmond was kidnapped by Abstergo and he must have mentioned why they took his hostage."

"To search and find the Pieces of Eden," Altair quietly replies, "That idea is not different from what I have experienced in Jerusalem."

"That's the basic idea," They can hear Desmond's brother's voice grow bitter, "...you don't know how they manage to get the memories from him, do you?"

Desmond did mention about a memory-reading machine... Ezio's eyes narrow; something in his mind tells him whatever method must have triggered Desmond's breakdown, "Did they use some sort of sorcery to make his mind break down like that?"

"Sorcery? ...oh right, you two aren't from this time," He can hear Connor sigh, "Initially, Desmond would not cooperate, so they had to find out ways to make him agree. While... I can't say much as to how they forced him to cooperate, all I can say is that it forced Desmond to lose a lot of strength. They forced him to undergo sessions in the Animus in order to relive Altair's memories at first and then a bit of Ezio's memories-"

"The ...Animus?" That catches both Altair and Ezio's attention. Could it be that machine my tesoro mentioned before?
"The Animus is a machine that is supposed to read into a person's genetic memory," Connor explains to them, "It was used for the Animus Project just to get information on subjects living in our time. ...Because the Templars are the ones who are using it," A pause, "...they also use it to track our movements and our strategies just to destroy our various headquarters."

Ezio's yes widen before narrowing, a small 'tch' escaping his mouth at the mentioning of the new way the Templars can ambush their own, the various Orders that were spare to begin with (as Desmond mentioned before).

"Have you received similar technology to combat them?" He can hear Altair's stoic voice ask Connor.

"We actually have," The modern Assassin replies, "When we rescued Desmond from Abstergo a while back, we manage to get the memory core and the technology needed to make sure the Templars don't look over the tapes and ideas when they begin searching for the Pieces of Eden. That means we just didn't grab and adapt the technology they were using. We manage to see the memories Abstergo manages to tape before we got in."

"Meaning you understand the risks of wielding the Piece of Eden," Altair mutters, "What else have you learned?"

"And how does this have to do with Desmond?" Ezio was the one who was more concerned about his tesoro's current condition. Yes, he knows that the threat of the Templars is critical and the Pieces of Eden. But what about the Bleeding Effect?

"Oh right... the Pieces of Eden... oh God, where should I start?" Connor sounds a bit tired, "Well, on the bright side, since we began this time travel thing, we realize that we manage to get some of the Pieces of Eden away from Abstergo; after reading and reviewing the memories Desmond went through..." The fact that is trailed away signaled both Altair and Ezio that Connor wasn't telling them something else, "We saw what happened when others wield the Piece of Eden. The consequences varied from person to person... especially when it came to some of us wielding it. I honestly can't say anything else."

Perhaps it is a good thing we didn't tell him that we have the Apple of Eden here, Ezio grimaces before looking at a serious Altair, And the elder knows a little more about the Apple... does he know something about it too? Perhaps he has wielded it before?

He doesn't ask.

"The other reason why I am worried about grabbing a Piece of Eden here..." The man on the other line trails off again before sighing, "While the Animus did force Desmond to relieve the memories of both of you, it caused him to become prone to mental instability."

"What?" That made Ezio worried, "Is that it?"

"The Bleeding Effect, in full detail, basically results when one stays in the Animus for too long. It has the effects of someone breaking down... only he experiences whatever happened to the both of you from your lives. His mind... is not in the right place. He suffers from it whenever there seems to be some trigger, some amount of stress formulating in his mind, or from something that seems to anger him..." Connor replies, "We usually know when it happens since he give a warning when he is bleeding. But this time... I guess he never mentioned this to you both."
And possibly to prevent us from worrying too much, The Italian realizes, gripping his fists, He has an idea as to how the elder treats him as well as me...

"And those Templars know about this?" Altair asks in fury, "Do they even care?"

That made the man on the other side pause before... "...no. All they did was torture him more. They manage to sedate him with something that forced my younger brother to silently suffer. All they wanted was whether or not Desmond can agree to their demands and if he can point the way to the Pieces of Eden."

"THOSE BASTARDOS!" Ezio finally seethes in anger, "They will regret what they have done!" He knows in the back of mind to calm down, but this... was too much! How dare did the Templars do this to his tesoro!

"I was thinking the same thing when I heard what happened," Connor replies in exhaustion, "But we can't compromise the Brotherhood."

A part of the creed both Altair and Ezio know too well.

"When we rescued him, we made sure Desmond remains hidden so they will never track him down and capture him like they did before. It was bad enough to see him weak, but..." He then trails off before, "Altair, Ezio. Can I ask you two something?"

"What is it?" Altair tightly asks, his question coming out more like a command.

"Are you two in love with Desmond? Is this why you want to help him?"

Ezio blinks in surprise at the unexpected question. Even he can see Altair looking alarmed at such thing, "What... wait, why did you ask?"

Connor's calmer voice replies, "You two care for him more than him than I gave credit for and with the names you two gave him-"

And that was when a series of pounding was heard from the other side on the communicator, jolting Ezio a bit while Altair blinks and frowns in surprise.

"Hey, what the- hang on a sec..." They hear Connor's muttering as they hear rustling and footsteps from the door. It wasn't until when they hear the metallic door open and hearing Connor faintly asking something... and the frantic replies did the two realize something was wrong in their side as well. There were three frantic voices that they manage to recognize earlier (if Ezio recalls correctly, Desmond was talking with them on the same communicator as he calls them his 'friends'... If they were his friends, why weren't they doing anything to help him? The Italian bitterly thinks, I can do more to help him here than you all can!); then they hear Desmond's older brother let out a string of angry curses.

"Something must have happened over there," Ezio glances over to Altair, who was still listening ot the communicator, "They said something about someone entering inside their system."

Ezio doesn't say anything; his fists still in a tight grip as he glances over at Desmond again. His tesoro did suffer at the Templars' hands; his body and mind paid the price. And now... it seems as if Desmond's nightmares were not over.

I want to protect him, his mind reminds Ezio, Protect and shielding him away from those who harm
"Hey! You two still there?" The Italian hears Connor's voice... except it sounds a little frantic than before.

"We are still here, Connor," Altair replies, "The novice over here is still thinking about something." Even to his own surprise, Ezio doesn't snap back at his elder.

"Something came up from... look, do me a favor. When Desmond wakes up, let me know. Tell him it's something urgent." And then his voice become clearer again as they hear some shifting, "I'll keep the communicator open at this end."

"We will," Altair swiftly replies placing the communicator back into the bag (Ezio realizes his voice sounds a little too tight). Silence enveloped the room as the Italian follows the Master Assassin; he too was worried for Desmond, especially from after what they heard. Ezio's heart pains with a small pang of jealousy when he sees the Master Assassin whisper something in Arabic to Desmond, gently squeezing one of his hands before standing up and hanging his head, muttering something that Ezio was pretty sure came out as a prayer. Even as Altair's indifferent mask places itself back on as he faces Ezio, the Italian wasn't fooled, seeing the dark amber eyes blaze with various emotions.

"I will go out there to see if the healer has arrived," The Syrian's voice breaks the tense silence as he strides over to the door before stopping, "...Ezio, when Desmond is healed, we have to talk about what we just learned."

"I know," The Italian nods; he hears the Syrian pause, facing Desmond one last time before shutting the door. It wasn't until he lets out a shaky sigh did Ezio finally acts; he brushes off his eyes since they were gathering with tears (he doesn't want people to know he was affected from the way Desmond has been tortured for that long... not even to the elder). He walks over to Desmond before sitting at the bed where the young man was resting from his mental breakdown.

"Voglio proteggerti dai tuoi incubi, tesoro mio..." Ezio sighs, worry crossing his face as he gently brushes Desmond's face with his fingers before whispering in a shaky breath, "Desmond. Please wake up. Please..."

"You were murdered?" Desmond squawks in alarm; yes, he has heard of the tales from mythology about other gods and various other deities suffering under the hands of their brethren (At the moment he discovered the First Civilizations were those supposed 'gods', that got the others researching about Minerva, which eventually lead to Tinia and Uni, which them lead them to wonder if these were the actual people that represented the heavenly beings in general).

Aita (or Hades) was supposed to be the ruler of the Underworld; the one who keeps accords of wealth. He was supposed to be married to Phersipnai (or Persephone). How the hell was he dead?

Oh right. They're all dead. Remember? He mentally kicks himself for being a stupid git, I thought it was just those three that manages to live though... how the hell did Aita manage to get there?

The time traveler decides that since the man was staring at him oddly (because Desmond was mentally rambling again), he would ask Aita himself how he manages to get himself in the Nexus in the first place, "Sorry," he mumbles before making his voice clearer, "How... exactly were you killed?"

Aita's eyes flash in anguish as he glances at the darkness of the Nexus, "I'd rather not revisit that until the time is right, Desmond," The man quietly replies before looking at him again, "Now... do you
understand the weight of your responsibility?"

*On the fact that I have to save the fucking world? I already know how much everything been given to me,* he slightly slumps, knowing the amount of stress that were mounted on his shoulders, "What about the people that are helping me?"

"Only those who you are close to understand the extremity of your situation," Aita replies, "If I recall correct... you are in a different time than your own. You crossed the lives of two men and intertwined them with yours," A smile, "...perhaps something different may result from such action than what you once experienced."

Desmond frowns, "But... wouldn't that mean that time will change thanks to my actions?"

"It depends," The wolf-helmed man strides to present a few sets of images the time traveler recognizes at moments from Altair's memories, Ezio's memories... even his own, "After all, it has been done before. The repercussions vary; a branch has grown for a future that can be determined by one person." With a wave of his hand, they vanished.

The American stares at Aita, "...to put it simply, whatever the hell happens in the end depends on me."

"Yes."

*Chances of my life getting back to normal? ...at this rate, it might as well be zero.* He heavily sighs before facing the First Civilization man, "Okay. So let's say I manage to get this Piece of Eden. What happens then?"

"It depends on you."

"...wait. That's it?"

Aita chuckles, "Yes... and it will give you a chance to save the future this world needs." Then he pauses, "Do you understand what I am saying?"

Desmond nods, even if there was a slight hesitation in his response, "What can you expect? I'm the one who the Templars want... and the Assassins- my comrades- we need to save the world from them."

And then that was when the Nexus begins to shake.

"What the-!" The time traveler stumbles to keep his balance as Aita looks around to see some areas flicker to white and back to back, "Hey... what's going on?"

"It seems that my time is up for now," The man replies, looking up at the sky, "At least I manage to get to you before you retrieved the Piece of Eden."

"Hang on!" Aita faces Desmond, who looks alarmed, "What the hell am I supposed to say to Altair and Ezio? To Connor and the others?" At this point, he really doesn't care what he is thinking.

"For the two Assassins... do not tell them anything," The First Civilization man sees the young man nod in agreement, "As for your comrades in the modern times... tell them the wolf has returned," Aita's eyes were filled with hate, regret, and revenge, "I have returned to avenge my death against the one who killed me."

"What kind of message is-?" Desmond balks before he feels his head swimming as he hears noises,
"My head-!"

"Be careful, Desmond," He can hear Aita say as he begins to black out once more; he can barely see the worry on the man's eyes, "The next time we meet, make sure to prepare for what is ahead of you. I will get you back to your body safe and sound without that pain returning to you." With that, the braces on Aita's right arm glow a soft blue, allowing a glowing stream of blue light to surround Desmond as if something warm and soft was surrounding him.

The time traveler manages to look up at the wolf-helmed man in surprise (Is he... actually trying to help me instead of whatever the crap the others didn't do?), "A-Aita!"

"I am not like Minerva in which she brings about arms and request on them a task as a warrior should," The man gives a small smile, "I am not like Tinia in which he enforce mankind and rule over them as he punishes them with lightening for wrongdoing."

Then his eyes hardens into one of anger and regret, "I am not like Uni in which she betrays all of what we desire, create... and twist them to make it her own." Then he glances at Desmond, genuine worry evident in his eyes, "Desmond. I beg of you, pass my message to your comrades. Never let Tinia, Minerva, and Uni know of my return."

"Wait, why!?" The young man manages to ask in alarm; shouldn't they have the right to know about his return?

"Be safe, Desmond. My guidance will be with you from this point on."

The last thing he sees before he blacks out is Aita vanishing as the Nexus reverts to the endless white...

The room was deathly silent when the doctor left; he left them with warnings that Desmond should be healing from the reopened wound and apply the medication that he has given them. As for his coma, however, he simply states that the young man has simply collapsed from enormous amounts of stress (the Assassins don't even bother trying to explain about what really happened to Desmond; it was too complex and frankly, it will draw large amounts of suspicion).

The other members of the Italian Assassin's Order need to finish a few missions, but Mario has suggested they meet at the same location within seven days to execute the mission to retrieve the new Piece of Eden. Not surprisingly, everyone agreed to help; La Volpe and Paola will keep monitor of the guards that are around the general area the map indicates where the Piece of Eden could be located. Antonio and Bartolomeo will see about the activities of the Templars (if there were any to begin with). Niccolo will see if there is anything happening that day that involves the area and will try to divert Borgia's attention away from their recent discovery.

Leonardo, much to everyone else's surprise (well, not Ezio), said that he will find a way to help them with the map (since while he was translating the Arabic inscription and waiting for Desmond to recover, something made him realize the inscription were a series of riddles) and will aid them to find the Piece of Eden. Teodora offers to stop by every day to make sure Desmond is fully-healed (much to both Altair and Ezio's ire; they can tell she's up to something).

At least they manage to grab their equipment and clothing to move to another area; Mario allows them to stay in this home for the time being until their mission is over.

Speaking of Desmond...
"Mario has said he wants to see Desmond's potential," Ezio sighs, shaking his head as he looks down at the unconscious young man, "When Desmond wakes up, he says, he wants to see how much he has learned from his mentors and leaders."

Altair nods, his lips in a thin line as he recalls the conversation earlier; especially Connor's question:

"Are you two in love with Desmond? Is this why you want to help him?"

He can tell Ezio is staring at him before his amber eyes fill with inquiry.

"You have a question; say it," The Master Assassin says, causing Ezio to hang his head, muttering something about being too obvious before looking at Altair.

"... earlier, when you were talking to that man... Connor," The Italian pauses, "Did you truly mean it?"

Altair blinks before he rubs his temples, a resigned sigh escaping from him. Initially, he thought that he would be in competition with Ezio (with his ridiculous looks and all). However, after realizing that Desmond does care for both of them in his own way, the Master Assassin had to realize that it wasn't going to change that the time traveler cares for both of them to the point where he wanted them to get along. The young man knew enough about the two of them to understand what each of them were going through.

After that incident, whatever murderous thoughts he had for the Italian were immediately shut off from his mind; Altair and Ezio had gotten through some mutual understanding that no matter how much they abhor each other, the one thing that matters to them was in the end, they just want Desmond to be safe.

...perhaps to the point in which they were in love with the young man (Connor was correct in his deduction).

He can feel it within himself; he thought he could never feel the same for anyone else aside Adha. But for Desmond, it returned, only with the deep sense of caring and protection as well as the thought of making sure he never leaves the young man's side. He sees the same emotion in Ezio; despite the way the brat of an Italian acts and flirts around, the Italian Assassin is in love with Desmond.

"...yes, it was the truth. I... have never... cared for someone like Desmond," Altair nods before glancing at him, "I care for him a lot. You too; I can see it in your eyes."

It didn't take long for Ezio to sigh and sit at the chair next to the Syrian, a sad smile present in the Italian's face.

"Cristina was the first woman I loved," Light amber was filled with regret, "There were other women before... even Caterina. When Cristina married someone else and broke my heart, I... thought I lost my chance to love someone again." He glances over at Desmond, "However, I never expected it to return... in the form of Desmond."

So he lost someone precious to him too, it seems. Altair realizes that Ezio was telling the truth; his feelings for the time traveler were actually genuine (the same for Altair).

"That is not stopping me from saying he is my tesoro," Ezio faces Altair with a look of determination, "...yes, Desmond is right; we should try to get along. But I plan to only for his sake."
"Hmph. I already know," The Syrian shakes his head, *The same for me, brat; Desmond is my habibi.*

"So what do you plan to explain to his brother Connor?"

Altair stares at Ezio before sighing, *Let us hope that day does not happen... I would rather avoid that confrontation again, if possible."

A snicker of amusement, *My, is the great Altair Ibn-La'Ahad frightened of a wrath of a single man?*"

"Shut it, brat. You were also afraid of him," He smirks as he sees the Italin sputters before recalling the map and the orders Mario gave them "Brat. What do you plan to do afterwards when we get the Piece of Eden?"

"Trying to stop the Templars from taking over," The Italian replies, quickly unsheathing his hidden blade before letting it back down again, *And you, old man?"

Dark amber glare at light amber, "...what do you think? Try to return to my time... and to stop the Templars back in Masyaf."

The only one question that lingers in their mind was about Desmond: what about him when they retrieve the Piece of Eden?

A tense silence fills the room again; instead of hearing the barbs and shooting off with his own, Altair can tell what the Italian was thinking (as he was thinking the same thoughts): the amounts of torture, suffering, and ruin Desmond went though at the hands of the Templar with the cursed machine called the Animus. Yes, those were the same thoughts as two nights ago when Desmond reveals what happened to him. But that doesn't mean his nightmares went away; the Bleeding Effect (as what Connor called it and Desmond mentioned at one point) was the living proof.

"Those... MERDA! Bastardos!" He can hear Ezio hiss in anger, *"I can't believe they would force him to go through..."*

Altair grips his fists; a part of him wants to track down the Templars who tortured his habibi, his Desmond and kill them with a single shine of his blade. On the other hand, he knows part of his Creed is to 'Never compromise the brotherhood'... something Altair did once before.

Not to mention the group was in a much drastic different time than whatever Ezio and Altair have been; Italy for Altair was bad enough.

"We need to train him to be better, sharper," The Master Assassin glances over at the blade sitting on the desk next to Desmond's bag, "...his skills can barely make him survive an onslaught."

"And his agility?" Ezio asks before a small smirk raises to his lips, "Say...elder."

"What?" Altair frowns, not liking the look on the Italian's face.

"How about we take turns helping Desmond improve?" Ezio's light amber eyes glance towards Desmond's sleeping form, "You have skills that perhaps I do not have or possess; the same for me to you. You have asked a few nights before if we are ready to take on what the Templars are up to."

"I recall that, yes," Altair nods, "What of it?"

"I am ready to tackle on whatever those stronzos give me," Ezio replies with determination,
"...whatever it takes to aid you, me, and Desmond. I plan to help him before we retrieve the Piece of Eden from Venice."

The Master Assassin glances at the Italian before a small chuckle escapes from him, amusement in his eyes, "...so you are brave enough, despite your preening and your antics." He smirks, knowing Ezio takes offense to it, "I am also willing to train the young fledgling... and perhaps to take care of the Templars."

"Heh." Ezio can clearly see the competition reading on Altair's eyes, "So you want to also see whom Desmond sees as the better Assassin, no?"

"We'll see," Altair can't help but agree with Ezio... even though he has a feeling that the American will not change the way he views the two assassins, "...though, if he does leave, what will you do then?"

The Italian sighs, trying to think of an answer when they hear a small groan escape from the young man. Shoving that thought away for the time being, both Assassins rush over the bed as they can see Desmond's body slightly turn at his current surroundings.

One thought was for certain on both Altair and Ezio's minds as they see Desmond's brown eyes slowly open.

*Desmond must never leave my side.*

**End Part 8**

What's next: What happened to the modern Assassins while Desmond was talking with Aita and Connor was dealing with both Altair and Ezio? (Hint: Remember those emails?)
Disclaimer: Nope, not mine.

A small break from 15th Century Italy to modern times and what happens now that they have discovered the emails. If you don't recall the emails that are about to be mentioned here, look at Part 6.

...am I the only one who thinks he should be tortured by enduring through the halls in that manor with a fleshy creep OKAY SHUTTING UP. I've been watching too many Amnesia: The Dark Descent; please forgive me for the amusement of imagining Vidic screaming as one of those creeps comes after him while the Benny Hill chase song runs on.

Warning: This take is for this story only; I don't own the game series (nor have I played them since I do not have one). Spoilers are ahead.

normal = English

*italics* = thoughts

**bold**= emails and screams(depend on how it's used).

Part 9: Analyzed

Rebecca drums her fingers against her desk, quietly humming a tune she just heard from Youtube from one of the fellow Assassins (who just so happens to be a K-Pop fan) as she waits for the Animus scan to finish. She purses her lips, wanting it to finish so they can find a way to get rid of the glitch that is stuck in her Baby (it looks like Desmond won't be back within the next twelve hours since he's obviously stuck in 15th Century Italy... still).

In other words, she just wants to tinker a little with the Animus 2.0 for a bit, fix up some minor bugs that she also encountered with the sweeps, and then reboot it back up for Desmond to come home so they can finish their mission.

*I wonder how he's doing in there?* The black-haired girl frowns, glancing over at Shaun's monitor where the headsets were monitored. His computer is still on to make sure the communicators are open in case Desmond does find some way to fix some stuff happening from his end... aka returning the great Altair Ibn-La’Ahad back to 12th Century Jerusalem after getting Desmond and him away from 15th Century Italy where Ezio Auditore da Firenze is residing.

That is, if the glitch decides not to show its nasty little bugger face again.

*Having the glitch there... That's obviously not good,* Rebecca lets out a frustrated sign before
glancing over at the screen that reads how much of the Animus the scanning has done. After Lucy, Clay, and Connor told Shaun and Lucy (after they brought in the ‘amplifier’ (AKA the mini Animus program that Rebecca created herself) to see if that helps Desmond return home) that Desmond was captured Altair and Ezio, her first reaction was just a big ‘What the fuck’ moment. ...it was actually verbally echoed by Clay, but the others were just as alarmed.

Rebecca thought something went wrong with the Animus and wanted to fix Baby to make sure that it was all right and working before William comes back. She knew it wasn't a virus (had it been, then the Animus would have been screwed over a loooong time ago); there was no way in hell did anybody hack into it (unlike Abstergo's programming, Rebecca made sure this programming was different and difficult for anyone to get into... unlike the email programs); and there was no way in heck did any stupid spyware or malware enter inside the Animus whatsoever (since when did the Animus have any sort of connection to the internet, anyway?).

So... well, it was ridiculous, but her reasoning was valid; perhaps the Animus must have developed some sort of AI into it, especially when Desmond comes into the program and goes back between here, Jerusalem, Venice, Florence, Constantinople, and back.

It wasn't strong before and it wasn't that noticeable in the first place... so why did it decide to get into a glitch, out of all times? She purses her lips in wonder. She can't help but give a silent giggle over the thought of what happened a couple of hours earlier; they realized that Desmond was taken care of really well by both Altair and Ezio. After all, who calls someone their ‘darling’ even after they know each other for a few days? She was wondering why Desmond sounded embarrassed when they all teased him about his practically non-existent love life...

...well, she can get the juicy details out of him later. Right now, she sees the scan is almost done, Finding out about the AI is important so we can find out about the source of the glitch. As well as... She glances over to Lucy, who is still busy as usual, typing away as she is also lost in her own busy world.

I can't believe that... do those emails really sound like her? Rebecca can't help but wonder if she... wrote emails to imposter William, If that's the case, then why did she mention about Minerva and the First Civilization?

Her mind wondered back to the other emails that she managed to save on her iPad. Maybe... she can reread those again to make sure she wasn't imagining things.

Quietly, she takes off her headphone, grabs her tablet, and gets out from her seat as she glances once more over at Lucy (who was still listening to her music and typing while looking up stuff over God knows what). Sighing, Rebecca taps on Lucy's shoulder. She can't help but force herself to grin once she sees the blonde yelp in surprise and look at her.

"W-What's up?" Lucy asks Rebecca in surprise.

"I'm going to take a break from the scan," The black-haired tech indicates to the computer, "Would you mind watching over it?" And not do anything like hack into my stuff since they're all password protected, she mentally adds, knowing pretty well that out of all the people in the group, Connor has trusted Rebecca to keep the videos of the previous Animus sessions safe (which for her, involves inventing a passcode only she knows; if Shaun, Connor, Clay, or anyone wants access to the tapes, all they have to do is to ask her). Nobody but her has also made the backups to the videos in case they do get erased; she knows how it feels like to get a computer hacked in with various virus (she fully blames Clay for downloading a movie).

And to be honest, as much as she values Lucy as a friend... she can't trust her like she used to.
It really sucks.

"Sure," Lucy nods before resuming whatever she was doing. Mentally sighing in relief that Lucy didn't ask any questions, Rebecca walks over towards the kitchen to brew herself some coffee and reheat some leftovers from the lunch earlier. After making sure nobody else was in the room, she opens her iPad and punches a few buttons before revealing the emails Asano gave.

Frowning, she glances over at all the emails that 'William' sent to Lucy. The first one she begins to read again...

**Hello Lucy,**

*Your last email troubled me, more for your sake than the fate of the project. I have no idea what has gotten into you, but you're going to come down with an ulcer if you don't relax a little. You're doing excellent work, there is nothing for you to worry about. In terms of how Desmond is doing, however, I need you to keep eye on him. Report anything that you observe that might be relevant.*

*When you do get back here, we'll run several tests on him to see what you are saying is accurate. Take care of yourself and get some sleep!*

-William

The test part obviously bothered Connor and Clay earlier. And why does Lucy, out of all people, have to keep an eye on Desmond?

Frowning, she goes to the email Lucy has sent him that prompted the response:

**To William,**

*It already sounds unusual using your first name. But regardless, I just want to let you know what's been going on since our escape. I am worried that we might be caught if I am doing this; shouldn't these reports be in a more private setting? I am wondering if all the hard work we placed into this would be for nothing.*

*Desmond's been acting more unusual as of yet; he has been screaming and shouting in his dreams, saying some words in Arabic and Italian. I am honestly really worried about him. He keeps on saying a few things that I do catch from time to time- something about an Apple and how somethings were never meant to be touched or seen. I am not sure what all of these mean; but I will let you know when I manage to return.*

-Lucy.

...huh. Okay. So... this was the email that prompted 'William' to mention there needs to be more testing? Rebecca frowns, but clicks on the next email that Lucy wrote:

**William-**

*I was just wondering; is it possible for one to incorporate themselves into the Animus from the results of the Bleeding Effect? Or possibly learn from these side effects? I believe it would be possible from the rate Desmond is going.*

*In case you want to know, Desmond is improving greatly; he has been gaining more strength*
and his mind is that of an Assassins'. You were correct; he is of great potential. Perhaps like someone that we know. Even his brother Connor is aiding him in combat; I am surprised to see how fast and swiftly these two can learn.

I have also learned more about the Pieces of Eden, but my suspicions have not been confirmed yet. I will get back to you soon; I will learn more about what Desmond has to say.

-Lucy

Rebecca blinks before frowning, looking at it next to the responded email from 'William':

Hello Lucy-

Sorry about the slow reply, just got back from lunch. Good question! I'm not sure if we can do that, but ask again once you're back here.

From your previous report, Desmond seems to be progressing perfectly. It seems as you are all accomplishing something as of now. Just make sure your friendship doesn't jeopardize our goals. Great work as always and hang in there!

-William

"Huh." She blinks, frowning as she rereads the emails Lucy wrote to 'William'. Something about these two... well, obviously, the one to William doesn't even sound like their mentor in the first place, but the emails Lucy gave...

...why does her emails sound off?

She opens the third one:

William-

Desmond is not all right at the moment- he just woke up from the last Animus session and we have just learned about the Piece of Eden we have been searching for: the Apple of Eden.

It apparently houses Minerva, the warrior goddess, the one called Athena; she is part of Those Who Came Before. I dare not think that she would even mention about the abilities of the technologies they have built; they are the key to our answers. But now's not the best time to address it; Desmond is still exhausted from the Animus session and we called it a night.

Perhaps this is the key we need; the last piece to the plan that we desire. But, if we are willing to sacrifice the ones that we helped our lives to, especially to the others, Desmond, and Connor...

...I want them to realize that their way is wrong; our way is right. Our way is the truth; their way is that of a foolish boy's fragile dream. I want things to be set right through us.

Forgive me. I have said a little too much of my feelings at the moment.

-Lucy

"...ooooookay, what the hell was all of that about?"
Rebecca blinks and rereads the email about three to four times. She quickly pulls up the corresponding email 'William' sent as she scans over it:

**Lucy,**

The issues you raised in your last email have taken me by surprise, to say the least. Think of all the work, all the stress and planning we've all put into this. We had our suspicions for years about Minerva, about that particular Piece of Eden. What you heard could be correct; find out more and see if you can get your hands on the files and discover the truth.

If this works, you've been waiting nearly a decade for this day; don't put Desmond and all the assassins in danger just because of feelings you may or may not have. If you do somehow fail, there are going to be severe consequences ahead for you.

- William

The black-haired technician frowns. It wasn't until she hears the sputtering of the coffee that she decides to quickly pour herself a cup, pour in a little creamer, and begins to stir it as she turns off the microwave to pull out the leftovers. Setting them both aside to cool, she rereads all three of the emails that were supposed to be for 'William'.

Lucy doesn't say things in a formal fashion... or give reports in that tone. She was present at some of Desmond’s training session... but not for their rest of the time since Rebecca clearly knows she was with Rebecca. And the emails don't mention a single bit about Clay at all (well... he did escape from Abstergo), but about Connor (which was also odd). And never in her life did she hear Lucy call Desmond foolish. Ever.

Rebecca skims over the emails again before setting her iPad down in confusion, "No way in hell she say anything about-"

"Say what?"

Rebecca freezes, nearly about to jump ten feet in the air before turning around to see-

"Shaun?" she exclaims in surprise, causing the sleepy British man to wince.

"There's my wake-up call," The red-haired mutters before stretching, "Thanks for that."

"Shut up!" Rebecca glares at him, "What the hell are you doing up? You could've given me a warning or something!"

"Thought this way might be better," Shaun shakes his head before placing his head on Rebecca's shoulders, "Are you reading those emails again?"

The black-haired Assassin blinks before grumbling, "Yes, Shaun. I am. Why are you asking?" She can feel two arms wrapping around her shoulders before feeling his lips gently kiss the outside of her ear. And she knows he can see her gently blush over at this rare action.

"You're not your usual chirpy self," Shaun murmurs, "I miss the optimistic Rebecca who finds a way to annoy me whenever she gets the chance to see me in my cynic mood." Another kiss against her cheek this time, "Not to mention point out the obvious and I get the chance to tease her about it."

"Only you Shaun..." Rebecca sighs, leaning against the British historian, "...only you can be cranky about my negative side."
"Because I have to be the one who brings it up and see you a little depressed... it honestly worries me," The red-haired man gives a small chuckle, "...or whenever I have a big sleep deprevation and didn't get my usual cup of tea."

The black-haired woman softly giggles, "When has anybody ever seen you like this?"

"Well," His voice drops into one of irritation, "Earlier was a close call."

"It was," Rebecca frowns, "What are we going to do about it?"

"I'll take care of those bloody eejits," Shaun grumbles, shaking his head, "...Clay, being the smart-ass that he is, must've known about it." He pauses, glancing down at the iPad, "Why are you looking at the emails again?"

"I'm honestly worried and I'm making sure it's really Lucy that wrote those emails," the black-haired girl sighs, "Not to mention that I am worried about Desmond and how to fix the glitch... why are our lives difficult?"

Shaun sighs, shaking his head as he leans forward to place his head on her shoulder, "The life of an Assassin isn't easy; we see people die, betray, and kill each other. Rarely in life do we see people help each other unless it is necessary or for their own reasons." He sighs, "I am not sure whether to say we are any better than the Templars."

"I know."

"What about the emails, though? You said something doesn't sound like something..."

"About that," Rebecca pauses, "...I need to eat, but take a look at the emails Lucy sent to... you know."

"I get it," Shaun nods as he releases Rebecca, who happily goes over and begins to chow down on her cooled meal and coffee while he reads over the emails. It wasn't until a couple of minutes later did she see the Brit's eyebrows knit into one of confusion before he taps the screen again (Possibly to reread it, she muses as she finishes her pasta before gently placing the plate into the sink to wash it). At the same time, she begins to prepare Shaun's tea (the usual English Breakfast with a teaspoon of honey and a splash of milk) by heating up the water and measuring out the loose tea before placing it over the tea strainer.

After another five minutes, she places the now clean plate on the drying rack and sets Shaun's tea next to him (she can barely here his thanks) when she hears Shaun say something. She blinks, looking up at him, "Come again?"

"These emails..." Shaun faces her in disbelief, "...they don't sound like Lucy. Not a single word sounds like her."

"So you saw it too?" Rebecca's suspicions were confirmed then; it wasn't just her, "...do you want to ask Clay and Connor to read over them before we tell them?"

She sees the other technical assassin nods, "When we get the chance and Lucy is not around; I don't want to cause any suspicion casted on Lucy."

"I know." she pauses, "Out of curiosity... who wrote those emails and why from Lucy's email account?"

Shaun opens his mouth to answer-
-to hear a loud shout before hearing a crash.

They both glance at each other, realizing it came from the room with the Animus.

"Someone better not break anything or they are dead," Shaun grumbles as both he and Rebecca scramble out from the kitchen towards the room.

Lucy was the type that can be surprised easily.

Since after the escape from Abstergo (and she knows pretty well Vidic is livid and wants to find ways to not only get Desmond back, but to also kill the rest of the Assassins), Lucy has been uneasy about being caught; she is also trying to be more careful when going out in public.

*Life of an assassins in a day,* she recalls Desmond grudgingly complain, *It sucks to know people will always try to find you.*

She agreed with him about it; but at the same time, she finds the Assassin life... thrilling.

In one of those stupid predictable suspense films kind of way.

Not to mention that she'd rather not return to Abstergo, *especially* after she found out what really happened to her friend and the circumstances that lead up to her death. Compared to the Assassins and what they want, she decides that between the lesser of two evils, Lucy would rather be practical and risk her life to save the world as opposed to controlling it.

Even if she knows what powers the Pieces of Eden were capable of, that wasn't why she was determined to stick with the Assassins...

She was doing this to make sure her friends come out safe and sound after all of their ordeal, including the ones she is partnered up with.

She sighs, continuing to type out her thoughts in a journal... before feeling a light tap on her shoulders, causing her to yelp in surprise as she swiftly turns her head and punches the person she supposed was behind her. A loud groan of pain was heard as the person lands against the table from-

"Clay!" Lucy looks alarmed and horrified as she sees the grimacing blonde Assassin, "Oh my gosh! Are you okay?"

"No, I'm not fine!" Clay groans, rubbing his stomach where Lucy had punched him as she frantically ran over to gently rub the back of his head (where he nearly crashed on the table, of course) "Lucy Don't you think that was a bit of an overkill?"

"I'm sorry!" She gasps, really worried, "You scared me! I thought you were still sleeping! Why are you still up?"

"'s okay," Clay groans, "I think I need an ice pack..."

"Oh. So *that's* what it was."

Both Lucy and Clay look up to see Rebecca and Shaun, whose shoulders visibly sagged (the former was blinking in surprise and still clutching onto her iPad).

"What... happened exactly?" The black-haired girl ask in confusion, "I thought something crashed."
"Nothing crashed," Lucy blushes a light red at her blunder, "I... I just jabbed Clay in the stomach-

"You 'jabbed' me?" The blonde stares at her in surprise, "Luc, you **punched** me! And it hurt!"

"I'm sorry!" She exclaims in panic, "I was too concentrated in something, I didn't know that you were behind me!" She sees the slight disbelief in Clay's eyes before the blonde man sighs, patting Lucy on the head.

"You're forgiven," Clay sighs, shaking his head, "But seriously... how the hell can you punch that hard?"

"Oh yeah, about that..." Rebecca's voice cuts in to cause Lucy and Clay to look at her (even Shaun), 
"...I might have taught her a few self-defense moves a while back after that creep and his friend tried to hit on us when we were on a grocery run about a few weeks back."

Lucy gives a small smile to Clay, who was looking at her in surprise, "...it was either that or we had to get a taser."

A few minutes later (after Lucy gets an ice-pack from the first aid kit for Clay to nurse his head wound on), the four Assassins were all gathered around the metallic table Connor usually sits and looks over the plans on the laptop. Said guy is still sleeping in the break room, leaving the four Assassins to look over the task of trying to fix the stupid glitch.

It didn't quite help that while Lucy was getting the ice-pack (and had to look for it), Rebecca and Shaun told Clay about their newest discovery in the emails. After reading over them, Clay realized that there was no way in hell did Lucy ever write the emails sent to the imposter William... even after looking at the time and the way the emails were written.

There was something off about the emails...

And by the time Lucy got back, the three have decided to discuss about it with Connor and William is given the chance.

...if she doesn't find out about it first.

"So. How was the sweep?" That caught Lucy's mind back into focus as she hears Clay gently asking them.

It has been a good couple of minutes with them either catching up or just drinking coffee or tea; Clay and Shaun did get a good amount of sleep, but the fact that Desmond was still stuck in the Animus worried them. It even worried Rebecca and Lucy too; there was no way they can leave a comrade behind, even if this meant compromising the Brotherhood.

**So much for following the three basic codes for the Order,** Lucy thinks with irritation, **That's been the hardest one anybody can follow ever since...**

"Nothing showed up in the sweep. Again." She hears that Rebecca's usually cheerful voice is deadpan with irritation, "Shaun..."

"What?" The asked subject arches an eyebrow, taking off his glasses. Lucy can swear the black-haired girl blush lightly at seeing Shaun's eyes without the glasses for once before she frowns.

"Can we **please** stop these stupid sweeps so we can find out where the hell Desmond is at the
moment? We might have lost track of him a while back! I think we might have conducted about ten sweeps already!"

"Not until we find out whatever the living fuck is causing that glitch in the Animus," Shaun sighs, rubbing his glasses lenses with a lenses cloth, "Are you positive that there was nothing in the Animus that-"

"I can support Rebecca's theory," Lucy frowns, "At this point, we found nothing that has caused the Animus to mess up. And yes, Shaun, I know. There is no such this as an AI. But, seeing as how we can't even get Desmond out of the Animus and all of our methods were moot, I now fully believe there is an AI inside the Animus."

The historian was about to open his mouth-

"Sorry," Clay sits at his seat, placing on his headphones, "You're outnumbered, Shaun. Connor even admits there is something wrong in the Animus that doesn't have to do with the program itself, so-"

The red-haired Brit gapes before groaning, lifting his arms in irritation, "Argh! Fuck it. Fine! So let's say there is an Artificial Intelligence inside the Animus-"

"Why not call it an 'AI'?" Clay smirks. Lucy mentally groans as Rebecca stares at the blonde man; Shaun looks like he was about to snap a pencil at someone. Desmond must have rubbed Clay off on fueling Shaun's ire for such a long time. And their fourth member got the idea as he give a small sheepish grin, "...sorry about that. Go on, Shaun."

Shaun was grumbling curses under his breath before resuming, "...All right, let's say there **is** an AI-" He shoots Clay a glare, in which the latter is snickering, "-inside the Animus. And that it **somehow** decided for some odd reason, to trap Desmond here with that bloody glitch. Why... do you think the AI decided to open a bloody portal from 12th Century Jerusalem to 15th Century Italy?"

The four glance at each other in silence before Rebecca speaks.

"Dunno. Maybe it was meant to be... or something. Whatever the case is, it might have been done on purpose."

"Or on accident and it's the stupid Animus' fault or something it caught," Clay grumbles before preventing the black-haired technical from smacking him, "Hey! I do **not** want another head injury!"

"You insult my Baby, you ask for it," Rebecca glares at him. Lucy can't help but giggle; Shaun lets out a smirking laugh. They both know how protective the inventor/engineer is of her technology.

"Tech freak otaku," Clay grumbles, adjusting his ice pack.

"Stupid FPS jock, which by the way, you owe me a duel in Halo 3," Rebecca shoots back before shrugging (ignoring Clay's yelp of indignation), "Hey, at least we rule out that guy Erudito-"

"Erudito?" Lucy can't help but ask; she heard that name before. She knew whenever some hack attack happened back at Abstergo's base, she can hear some employees complain about Erudito before finding away to restrain him. Personally, for those attacks, Lucy was mentally glad to be let off work until they get the systems back on. It happened more frequently while Clay was undercover (and that was when Lucy helped Clay escape)... and when Desmond was in the Animus (that was when she mentally thanked whoever the hell was hacking and ruining Vidic's day since that meant Desmond can finally clear his head and rest from the amount of torture he has been receiving).
But the chances of the guy knowing the Animus and his following the Assassins' activities...

...nope. No way. The four had the same thought.

"I don't think he has the capabilities to hack into the Animus out of all things." Clay frowns, "Let alone

A small beep was heard from Shaun's computer as Rebecca decides to find out who is messaging him, but the Brit ignores it. "...moving on, I'd rather see for myself if this AI-"

"Umm. Shaun?" The black-haired woman's voice was heard, but Clay cuts her off to talk to Shaun.

"Oh Good god! Do you seriously need some physical proof to see every single fucking thing?"

"Shaun-

The historian glares at the other two, "Well, if it turns out this 'AI' thing is actually a virus that winds up containing the entire database-

"It's not that!" Lucy glares at the man, "We checked through all the systems and Connor even supports the theory!"

"And I am not going to waste anymore time looking through another bloody sweep!" Clay glares, "Don't we have better things to do- oh, I don't know- FINDING A WAY TO RESCUE DESMOND!"

Shaun groans, pinching the bridge of his nose, "Yes, I know how bloody important it is to-"

"Shaun!"

"WHAT!" The Brit turns around to see a slightly pale-faced Rebecca, "Rebecca, can't you see I'm trying to find way to help with your theory?"

"That's sweet, but save it for later," Rebecca's face looks a little pale for someone who is usually chirpy, "Shaun. Someone's messaging you."

"And why do you look like you've seen a ghost?" Lucy asks, worried at her friend's concerned look, "...hey, are you okay?"

"Just... shut up and look. I'm not joking." Rebecca turns back to the screen.

Shaun glances at the other two warily before waking over to where his computer is... before blanching himself, balking, "W-What the fuck!"

What is going on? The blonde woman and Clay share a look of confusion before they walk towards Shaun's station. There was nothing else except for a few books and files littering on the metallic desk as well as a few monitors that present a few programs (one of them being a monitor for Desmond), the other being the Animi program along with the internet.

...wait.

Why was the messenger up? They have shut theirs down about a few hours ago...

"Hey. Shaun, your messenger-" Her mouth then gapes at the message that blares out before them.

Well, this is surprisingly disappointing. I thought your technology was better than what those
at Abstergo can give.

Even she can hear Clay croak out a sound of disbelief. Then they hear a beep, presenting another message.

**I know you can see this. You might as well respond.**

Clay, Shaun, Lucy, and Rebecca blanch at the screen before facing to see if it was from anybody else; all of the technical Assassins were too busy on their missions or taking a break (or sleeping, for the matter) and Connor was still in the break room (still napping, probably). They glance at each other before focusing back on Shaun's screen.

"What the hell..." Shaun grumbles before typing another message, **Oi. Fucker. You're HACKING into our email and messaging system. Get the fuck out.**

A few seconds later and a small bleep comes on and Clay stares at it... it was from the mysterious hacker.

**Hey. I'm just trying to talk to everybody in the room. Wait, Connor's not here, am I correct?**

The room goes silent at this new message. Lucy freezes before realizing something:

Someone has hacked into Shaun’s video camera from his computer monitor.

"Guys..." She gestures towards the others (they did look at her to see what was wrong) before seeing the light blue dot shining from the computer camera.

**This... can not be good,** She pales. If it was Abstergo, they were definitely screwed.

Clay Kazmareck knew he had a long day; first, his brother Desmond was stuck in the stupid time machine (well, it was under the Animus program, still...). Then they discovered a stupid glitch that prevents said trapped guy from leaving 15th Century Italy. And then they realized they needed to hurry and find out how to get Desmond out before William comes back (well... about that, since William is now over at the new HQ over at God-knows where, there really wasn't exactly a deadline)

At first, he was a bit annoyed at seeing the new guy coming on (well, he was sleeping from a few hours ago from a much-needed break) Shaun's computer.

And now his mouth is open in shock.

*Holy Fucking- WHAT THE HELL?!* His mind can't comprehend at the new message at the moment. And he knows what the others were feeling; Lucy is just horrified (he just heard her gasp). Rebecca was still, gaping as if she saw one of her experimental creations crash and burn (in a not so good way). And Shaun looks like he is ready to kill something (or better yet, how about him throwing his own computer into the hard floor where everyone can see?).

Immediately, he rapidly walks over to the computer, racking his brain for a plan, a solution, anything to get this **hacker** out of this computer before breaking the silence with his rapid typing:

**Okay, fucker. You had your fun. But GTFO FROM THIS COMPUTER AND TURN OFF THE SCREEN. NOW. OR ELSE I'M CALLING THE COPS.**
And after he sent his livid message, a couple of seconds pass (the only sound in the room at this point was him breathing a bit more than usual) before hearing another beep.

Oops. Did I do something wrong? :D

Clay can feel a vein popping from his head. Is this guy an idiot?

He types, You fucking, annoying troll-

A bleep stops him from typing anything else.

Hey, look. We have a common enemy. It's Abstergo. You want to stop them, I want them to expose themselves for who they really are. We are on the same page.

"...Jesus fucking Christ.." Clay hisses, turning around to see whether or not there is someone else that isn't an Assassin. He knows none of the other Assassins are up on messenger; none of them signed in. Connor is... well, he might as well be sleeping in the damn break room.

I can tell you're trying to look for me, but I'm not here.

"Okay, this is getting creepy," Rebecca mutters glancing around them, "How the hell does he know what we're doing?"

"Don't know, don't fucking care," The blonde man mutters in ire, rolling his sleeves up as he cracks his knuckles before typing again.

That's fine and all but we don't know who the hell you are. So your chances of us trusting you is nil.

Clay gives a small smirk, a small well of victory inside of him-

A small bleep got his attention.

Oh? That's too bad. I'm pretty sure William's told you who I am.

Scratch that. Clay's smirk vanishes into a frown, "What? Is this guy... hang on." He gestures Shaun to move (which he already did) before rapidly typing. You. WTF. How the hell do you know William? Are you one of us? As he enters the message, he stares at the others, "Okay. We have to tell Connor about this--"

"But then that will attract the others' attention!" Shaun hisses, "Do you want us to get into deeper shit as we are in now?"

The blonde was about to retort when they heard another bleep.

No. Abstergo hates the ever living hell out of me for emailing their subjects, so I'm not surprised.

Silence fell upon the trio as they now realize who they are dealing with.

"Fuck." Clay gapes, "Are you an ally?"

Beep.

Not that either. But I can hear you.
Beep.

Don't bother tracking me down. I know William wanted to know who I am.

Beep.

Did I forget to mention I know what you did to the Animus programs? Genius, by the way.

Beep.

Even I wasn't expecting that; was it to help one of you try to get over those memory farming at Abstergo?

Another round of silence fell upon them...

Beep.

I also need to say this: Don't try to bother to hide my presence from Desmond.

...And that was when Shaun, Rebecca, Lucy, and Clay madly sprint down upstairs (the break room with the beds is upstairs) before Clay begins pounding on the break room door.

"Connor!" Clay shouts through the door as he madly pounds on it, "Connor, you sleepy blockhead! Wake up!"

No response. This time, he and Shaun glance at each other before pounding on the door again, this time, more so than usual (it was a string of BAMBAMBAMBAMBAMBAMBAM that the other Assassins can hear about a mile away).

"Connor! You sleepy asshole!" Clay shouts again, earning a wary stare from Shaun, "Wake up or else I'll dump ice water on you again!"

"You idiot!" Lucy stares, "You actually did that?"

"Yeah, so?" The blonde blinks, frowning, "What's wrong with that?"

"You managed to get away with that without having Connor going in a murderous rampage?" Shaun exclaims incredulously, "How the hell did you do that?"

The door instantly opens, immediately jerking Clay into landing on the floor.

"Said moron decided to sprint as if the hill was set on fire," A slightly irritated Connor deadpans as he stares at him, "I already heard you the first time-"

"No time, we have a serious problem," Lucy was the one who cuts him off. Clay groans, rubbing where his right cheek smacked on the floor as he stands up. Connor blinks before he frowns.

"Did you guys get the glitch fixed?"

"Ha! We wish," Shaun rolls his eyes, "What Lucy is trying to say is:"

"Someone hacked into our messaging system and is talking to us directly!" Rebecca cuts in, obviously impatient and frantic, "And it's not anybody from Abstergo either!"

Connor blinks before he frowns, "...there's no way that anybody can hack into our systems without-"
"This guy says that he knows what we did with the Animus and how we changed our systems," Clay decides to get to the point. And that's when he sees Connor pales.

"What the-" He mutters, his dark amber eyes widen in horror, "...Shit! How long ago did this happen?"

"Say, oh, I don't know," Shaun frowns before glaring at him, "About two minutes ago while we were slacking off!"

"Hey! Shut up!" Clay glares at the Brit, annoyed, "We were talking about the AI!"

"Guys." Connor's voice cuts through any possible chances of an argument; he looks and sounds serious, but his eyes read panic, "Get down there and find out where this hacker came from now. I'll be down there in about a second."

"Got it!" The others nod and dash off towards the computers where the Animus is.

Clay turns around, wanting to ask what is taking Connor long before he sees Connor talking to the communicator before placing it on his right ear before joining them. The blonde man frowns as his older brother joins Clay at the top of the stairs.

"What?" Connor asks, frowning.

"Was that Dad?" Clay asks, worried. He was surprised when Connor shakes his head, "Who was it?"

"I was talking to Altair and Ezio," Connor mutters, causing Clay to stare at him in surprise.

"Wha... why?" The blonde hisses, his voice low enough for Connor to hear as the two descend the stairs, "What happened to Desmond?"

He sees his brother pause in his steps, hesitant to respond. Clay blinks... before paling, thinking of the worst possible moment, "Ohhh no. No no no. No way in hell did Desmond fuck up-"

"He got into a Bleeding Moment," That snaps Clay's mouth shut; his wide grey-blue eyes meeting Connor's worried amber-brown.

"I thought we-"

"Yeah. I know." Connor grimly nods.

"But Desmond-" Clay was still gaping.

"Something triggered it," He can tell Connor was not happy about these new developments, "...and those two are not telling me something."

"And what's that?" The blonde Assassin asks, "...and dude, you okay?"

"Not only are they not telling the trigger for Desmond's bleed..." Connor runs his hand through his hair, irritated, "...they actually-"

"Connor! Clay!" It was Lucy, who looks panicked, "Over here!

"Tell me later," Clay mutters as he sprints over to the computer; Connor follows him as the two arrive over where the three Assassins are; they were gathered over Shaun's computer. When they
arrived at the computer, Clay freezes as he sees what seems to be a small paragraph that appeared while they were gone. Glancing over at the messenger with Connor (who glances at Clay as to mentally note that he will read the entire conversation later), he begins to read the message:

I suppose I can tell you why I am doing this aside trying to bring Abstergo what they truly deserve. They don't even know what you did to the Animus, which makes you a couple of steps away from them. That, however, is one concern I have.

"One... concern?" Clay can hear Connor echo in confusion, "Wait, what the hell..."

"Don't even bother typing," Shaun grumbles, "He can already see us through the video camera and hear us."

"Great," The Native-American man mutters in disdain, "...all right, this sounds odd, but... whoever the heck you are, what is your other concern?"

A couple of seconds later, a beep.

There are a lot of things Abstergo doesn't even know about the items they are getting their hands on. When they farmed memories, they block out certain ones only they can have access to. But some are even hidden to the higher ranks. You already know about the First Civilization, right?

"Yeah, we do," Rebecca nods. Lucy looks worried, Clay can tell. He gently takes her cold hand in his warm ones. He can tell she is looking at him in surprise, but he is more worried about... whatever the hell this guy wants to say.

Make sure you stay in the loop.

"Why?" Clay asks, bewildered, "What the hell do you mean, 'Stay in the loop'? We already know about the fucking First Civilization, what else is there?"

Beep.

You seriously need me to show you this? All right, might as well...

The five fall silent as they see a file transfer loading onto the messenger. Then a beep.

Tell Desmond what I am showing you.

"What!" Connor cries out in alarm, "How can we do that!?"

Beep.

Didn't you know?

"Know... what?"

Beep.

That Piece of Eden you were searching for, the one in the map you asked Desmond to collect... Abstergo mentions it as a false Piece of Eden.

Beep.
It's not. In fact, open the file and tell me the first picture you see.

It was Clay that moves towards Shaun's computer and clicks at the uploaded file the unknown messenger gives them; it was also Clay who scrolls down through the various classified documents to find another folder with images in it. He can feel the others looking through his shoulder, wondering about the files as well. As soon as he opens the picture file, his mouth opens... and his eyes nearly bug out in surprise. The others are just as shocked as he.

This... is what we were searching for? His mind screams in alarm.

Nobody hears the beep and sees the new message.

:)
Disclaimer: I obviously have nothing that states I own anything Ubisoft related.

Anybody want to take a guess as to who they were talking to last chapter? I will also offer the chances for you guys to try and guess what artifact I am trying to allude as a possible Piece of Eden (well, possibly. There were already some hints two chapters ago...).

On another note, it's freezing as hell in here and we had that stupid fiasco about the possibility of rain/snow/wind... after it was warm for the last few weeks. Yaayyy for bipolar weather. (Why is it that we're one of those cities that freaks out when ONE CENTIMETER of snow is on the ground?)

And now I've caught up on updating both this and ff.net! Awesome!

Thanks to those who have been reading this story! Enjoy the chapter!

WARNING: Once again, spoiler warning (again, from ACS 2 and the other games) and lots of angsty/sappy moments in here. Not to mention out of character moments from a lot of people.

"italics" = Italian, Arabic, any other language OR a flashback (depending on how it is used)

"bold italics" = over the mic and phone

"normal" = English

bold sentences = emails, screams, or Bleeding Effect (depends on how it's used).

Part 10: Brought Back

Normally, when Desmond recovers from his Bleeding Effect, he usually wakes up with a seering pain and someone next to him (either Lucy, Clay, or Connor) before having the strange urge to throw up (he does this by indicating with a weak gesture and a comment that he needs to go the restroom now). After he empties the contents of his stomach, he usually gets the chance to wash out the terrible taste and drink a few gulps of water (along with an Advil or two) before asking them what happened before drowsing back to a deserved sleep (before waking up with a lot of energy the next day).

That was back when Desmond was rescued from Abstergo. When he endured the Bleeding Effect while he was stuck in Abstergo, all the scientists had to do was to restrain him and inject him with a sedative.
He'd much prefer the way his friends and family handled the Bleeding Effect (that also meant he was off from the Animus sessions for a whole three to four days to recover (unlike Vidic, who cared less and just wants him in the Animus the next day), but that didn't mean he was off from work, which he knows pretty well).

This time, however...

When Desmond opens his eyes to see the dimly lighted ceiling in what looks to be in an Renaissance Italian home, the pounding headache he gets from the Bleeding Effect is not there. He blinks to look up to see a different looking ceiling; okay, where the hell is he? And why the hell did he not get the horrendous headache and that stupid urge to throw up when he does recover from his usual bleeds?

...Oh right. Aita. The American gave himself a mental whack to the head, He did swear that he was able to help my body transition better to the bleeds.

Desmond gives a groan before feeling a small sear of pain... well, okay. There is something pressed against where one of his wounds should be. He sits up and figure out what caused the small jab of pain-

"Desmond!"

He didn't even get the chance to be prepared to feel a pair of arms wrap around him in an instant, giving him a slightly tighter than usual hug from-

"E-Ezio?!" Desmond can't help but choke out (he did wake up from a heavy sleep/coma/whatever the fuck he was under) from the tackle the Italian Assassin gave him just a second ago, "W-What the fuck?"

"You... foolish sparrow!" Ezio whispers in slight anger, "Do you know how worried I was?"

"I-Uh-" The time traveler can't help but form incoherent words (and minds) from this, "...Ezio? Are you... okay?"

Because from what I understand, you are never this affectionate whenever anybody gets hurt. Instead, you just wind up trying to kill anything that stands in your way- His mind rambles on until he feels a small (and gentle) tap on his shoulder, causing him to look up to see the worried look on the Syrian's face, "...Altair?"

"For the love of Allah, novice," Altair sounds a bit annoyed even though the concern is on his face, "You are suffocating him from his need of air."

"I don't care," was Ezio's muffled response as he buries his face in Desmond's left shoulder (and still not letting go, it seems), "I'm glad you're okay, tesoro mio..."

He can see the Syrian Assassin glare at the Italian's back (and apparently, the latter not caring a single bit as he is hugging the American).

"Can you... Ezio, Altair's... ummm... great," Desmond blinks before sighing, resigned to the fact that Ezio won't let go from him anytime soon; he can see Altair shaking his head before turning his concerned eyes over to the American, "Um. Hi?" And then he can see that despite the stoic look on Altair's face, the Syrian himself must have been worried for his sake.

"Altair?" He can see the Master Assassin walking towards him; Ezio's hold on Desmond has loosened (he can feel the Italian's gentle breathing as one of Desmond's hands manages to grab onto Ezio's shirt).
"Are you feeling any better?" The Syrian sits in the seat next to Desmond, concern written on his face, "The healer came by and placed your wounds to prevent healing."

"Yeah, I'm fine- Wait..." Desmond slowly asks, wondering if it had to do with the patched up wound from earlier, "...did something happen?"

"One of your old wounds reopened," Ezio replies, his head still on the American's shoulders (and his arms still wrapped around the young man's waist), "While the others had to pin you down to prevent you from thrashing about."

The American frowns as his right hand brushes over the bandages, "...did anything else happen?"

"You were screaming in pain," Altair's frown deepens a bit, "You were also writhing as if something has stabbed you."

"I... oh shit." So. He did bleed... badly. And after it took all those mental practices and moments (as well as medication) to make sure his mind was safe for the mission, that burnt up and went to hell in a hand-basket, "...anything else?"

"The doctor had to make sure you were safe," The Syrian continues, this time, looking down at his hands that were on his lap, "...he said that it will take about a few days for your wound to heal before you can take the bandages out."

"And the others?" Desmond asks, worried about how they took to his Bleeding Effect. He noticed that Leonardo wasn't around; neither were Mario, Niccolo, and the other Italian Assassins, "Did they... leave in a hurry? Were they frightened of me?" And then he takes a gulp, "Do... they think I'm someone that they shouldn't trust?"

"No!" Ezio exclaims, looking up to meet Desmond's eyes with a frantic expression. His arms were , "They don't hate you, tesoro mio. It's just the idea that you are from another time surprised them; even Niccolo mentions that he wants to learn more about your time."

And they weren't scared after while I was screaming and shouting a bunch of crap they don't know? The American stares at the Italian, not believing a single word, Yeah. That's a great way to impress the Italian Order in the Renaissance times. Not to mention I have to figure out a great way to explain to a politician that his legacy and his books are a pillar for what is going to be a long time of philosophical debates and government influences...

He lets out a heavy sigh, looking away from the Italian's gaze (and away from Altair's worried ones), "...Sure, I... guess." ...Shaun's going to kill me.

He can hear Ezio chuckle (a bitter one at that, he realizes as he can see how Ezio is trying to keep himself in a better moods), "Worried again?"

Desmond was about to lie and say 'No, I'm not worried', but Altair stops him, "You are worried about what their real reactions are from your Bleeding Effect, aren't you, habibi?" After nodding, a sigh before feeling someone grab his left hand and gently running his thumb over the American's knuckles. When he sees the missing ring finger, he knows the Syrian Master Assassin is behind him, one arm around the young man's chest. He also knows Ezio is worried; his lips were tightened into a thin line, thinking about something.

"The others are going to help us retrieve the Piece of Eden here in Venice. That artist... Leonardo... just needs more time to decipher the riddle and figure out what it is trying to lead us to. And the brat's uncle... Mario, was it?" Desmond can tell Altair is trying to adjust to pronounce the Italian names
well (he did manage to get Desmond's right after the first few tries...), "He wants to see your potential."

The American blinks, confused, "...huh?"

Altair mutters (causing Desmond to lightly blush at his reaction- he is ticklish on the back of his neck), "He wants to see how much you have learned as an Assassin, habibi."

Oh.

...Well, he can manage with the skills he already has (thanks to Connor, Clay, and the others and from what he experiences from their memories), but he was still pretty bad in terms of coordinating and disguising his Assassin attacks as a normal person.

"When's... that going to be?" Desmond can hear himself ask hesitantly. ...figures. He silently groans, Of course. Everywhere you do, there has to be someone who wants to see how good you are at the physical skills, the training... oh fuck. I am going to pass all that all on one swoop. Yeah right, like that's going to happen!

"It's after you recover," Ezio replies, sounding more serious, his eyes looking at the floor before facing Desmond, "Were... you expecting something like this to happen?"

Desmond nods, closing his eyes, "I'll be honest. What I did to those guards back in Jerusalem and when I came here before I got stuck... that was by luck. I had training from my brothers a while back on just the basics, but not on... well," He pauses, opening his eyes, "...not like..." And then he blushes before muttering the last part in embarrassment, "Just... Well... Not like the badass techniques you both use."

"Then tell us," Altair frowns, "Aside training from the basics, how did you manage to kill the guards that day?"

The time traveler opens his mouth before frowning, "It... do I really have to explain?"

"For my uncle and the order to appreciate you as one of us," The Italian's expression was grim, "It might be the best for me and... that stronzo behind you," Desmond can tell Ezio is glaring at Altair, who is probably rolling his eyes in turn, "To train you- to hone your skills to be like the ones of a true Assassin."

The American stares at Ezio, then to Altair, "...so I'm still technically a novice."

The Italian Assassin sighs, nodding, "Mi dispiace.... mio piccolo passerotto."

Desmond flares, his face turning a light red, about to snap that he actually doesn't like that stupid 'sparrow' nickname-

The Syrian sighs, murmuring into his ear, "A fledgling suits you better."

"That doesn't make it any better!" Desmond grumbles, his face growing a bit darker, "I am not... I'd rather be called a student or apprentice! Or... or... dammit." He slumps his shoulders in slight defeat, "...I'm not going to get any better in terms of being treated like an actual Assassin, aren't I?"

"Not exactly," He can feel Altair chuckle before pressing a gentle kiss on the back of the young man's ear, "All you need is more practice."

"...right," The American mutters before feeling someone grab his chin and giving him a small chaste
kiss on his lips. He can see a wash of relief on Ezio's face as the said Italian Assassin gives a small chuckle.

"We'll help you, tesoro mio," The Italian murmurs, pressing another kiss to Desmond's scarred lips, "Don't worry, si?"

"I'll try not to," He grumbles, lightly blushing before feeling his head tilted up and feeling Altair's lips brush against his- OKAY, YOU TWO CAN STOP THE MUSHY STUFF NOW! Desmond's mind screams in embarrassment (yes, he is still not used to the amount of affection the two gives him) as he blushes more, "A-Altair?"

"That brat still annoys me," The Syrian murmurs before giving Desmond another kiss. He can hear Ezio snap at Altair again ("What was that, calling me a brat!? And stop taking him for yourself, dammit!") before hearing the Master Assassin ask, "It seems with experience, age is also a factor."

"...eh?"

What?

Altair chuckle, giving the American some room to breathe, "You are pretty young, Desmond. I'm just saying that perhaps... that preening brat and I will have to teach you what we know."

The time traveler blinks before groaning, hanging his head (his back hitting the Italian's body- not that Desmond noticed), "Not my fault I'm twenty-five! I'm just not as experienced in the training and-"

"Twenty-five?" Ezio's curiosity returns to him, a smirk appearing at the Italian's face, "How old are your brothers anyway?"

Desmond blushes, glaring at him, "None of your business!" But from the look on Ezio's face and the slightly surprised and amused look on Altair's face, he can tell they already know he's the youngest out of him, Connor, and Clay.

Well, they know about my age now. THANKS A LOT, YOU STUPID CRAPPY MACHINE. Now I'm being made fun by the two great Assassins. Desmond just wants to stick his middle finger out to whoever decided to screw him over in the first place, What else do you have to bombard me with? He then freezes, recalling why he was stuck in the mess; and no, the map he had (that Leonardo has in his possession) before landing in Venice wasn't the cause. Stupid fucking glitch- wait. The glitch. Desmond's eyes widen slightly, Wait a second. How long did the guys said it took to fix the Animus?

"Rebecca has to look into the Animus system again, and it'll take her a while to fix it... even with all of our help," Shaun replies, irritation seeping in through, "It'll take about- how long was the last time we fixed it?"

"About forty-eight hours," Clay mutters, "...non-stop."

...crap, I have to ask the guys if they fixed the glitch yet! Desmond mentally panics, recalling that particular conversation, Not to mention I really do have to ask Leonardo for the map-

"You'll have to be in Italy and stay in the general area until I fix the glitch in my baby." Rebecca had quietly mentioned to him in the previous day.
Fuck. Desmond gives a silent groan, closing his eyes, _How could I forget about that? That stupid glitch-

"Desmond?! ...Desmond!"

His (slightly) worried thoughts stop when he immediately opens his eyes to see a panic-stricken Ezio (wait... Ezio is panicking? Over _him_?) and hearing Altair bark at the Italian, "Stop worrying! I don't see his eyes dilating!"

"I know, but-" Light amber clashes with wide, alarmed brown before sighing, "Cazzo! I can't stop thinking about-"

The Syrian sighs, shaking his head; while his face holds the mask of a nonchalant individual, his dark amber eyes are filled with concern, worry, and fear, "You brat. He's... fine-

"Not after all of what Connor told us!" Ezio snaps back.

_Wait. WHAT?_ Desmond squawks in alarm, "Connor told you guys!?” Desmond begins to loosen himself from the two Assassins' hold on him, "Wait wait... My brother talked to you both about the Bleeding Effect!?”

Altair nods, a grimace on his face, "He was asking for you... and your condition when we told him what just happened."

"How!?"

Ezio heavily sighs (to calm himself down) before indicating towards the backpack. Desmond blinks, not getting it, "What does my-"

_Crap! My communicator!_ The American pales, knowing the dreaded feeling that is beginning to grow into his stomach, _Oh hell. Oh fucking hell... Connor tried to contact me and I was bleeding. Great._

He knows his oldest brother is not going to let this one go. But what did he tell Altair and Ezio? Rather yet, how much? He takes a deep breath, trying to calm his panicking mind down (or there might be a good chance that he will bleed again, which he doesn't want). The fact that Connor tried to call him wasn't his main concern; oh no.

It was that when Desmond first revealed to the two Assassins about the reason he was in Venice, he didn't exactly reveal everything about his experiences while he was in Abstergo. He didn't mention to them about the Bleeding Effect for the fear that the two will wonder they won't understand what in the world he is talking about; he did mention about the Animus (just barely for both Altair and Ezio to understand why Desmond knows about them and how he can talk in their language), but not in depth to let them know what it did to him.

_Too late to change all of that... even if I could._ The time traveler mentally grunts, _I can't escape from it all, can't I?

"Altair, Ezio. Can I ask..." Desmond licks his dry lips as he adjusts himself to have his back against the cool wall to get a better view at both Assassins, "...May I ask what my brother told the both of you about my condition and what happened while I was in Abstergo?"

He sees both Assassins giving each other a hesitant glance.

Then Ezio quietly asks, "Are you sure you want to talk about this, tesoro mio?”
Desmond nods.

Altair nods, this time, his eyes sharp (like they do when he asks for information... except it isn't that threatening), "Very well. In turn, can you answer some of our questions?"

All the time traveler can do is nod, his full attention on them, Might as well give them the answers they deserve...

Altair did not enjoy talking about his enemies' actions and what they have done to others, including innocents. Had he been in Jerusalem, he would probably hear it as rumors before encountering some of them first-hand.

But comparing to what the Templars were back then as opposed to the ones Desmond has to deal with, the Syrian Master Assassin realizes how much of a larger threat they pose in the future as opposed to what he had to deal with in Jerusalem and here in this city that was built from the supposed 'ruins' of Rome.

He and the brat Ezio told Desmond right off what Connor has explained to them that the young man didn't want to talk about; the way the Templars forced Desmond to experience their lives and the reason why (even though they know Desmond told them initially), more about the contraption called the 'Animus' (to Altair, it sounds malicious already and just from the way his habibi mentioned about it, the Master Assassin already has to keep his actions at bay to prevent himself to lash out that he doesn't want Desmond to go near that horrendous machine again), and more about the Bleeding Effect.

They didn't even mention how Connor was furious at how both Assassins manage to get close to Desmond (in fact, it was even better since the two have mentally agreed to never mention about it to the young man for fear that they might have to be interrogated by Connor). But knowing how Desmond was more persistent on how the two know more about the Bleeding Effect, Abstergo, and the Animus, they know that asking the time traveler on his feelings about them would be a tangent as opposed to their main focus.

As soon as the two finish telling the young man on what Connor told them, slightly worried brown eyes met their concerned gazes before he tightens his hold on his knees. The room was suffocating with silence, Altair realizes and he knows that his habibi is not all right.

And why would he be, after what he has been though? He knows all too well the effects of suffering for his own mistakes, his own faults. And that is, what Altair presumes, Desmond is thinking about right now.

The questions I should ask must be careful, the Master Assassin glances to see that the Italian Assassin is thinking of a similar thoughts, only he can see there are some emotions showing through Ezio's eyes: one of worry, panic, and fear over the young man's current state.

It honestly makes Altair a bit envious that someone as rash and irritating as Ezio can present his emotions more to his habibi as opposed to him. His eyes narrow as he hears the Italian ask (in his native tongue), "Are... all of these things Connor told us true?"

Of course they are, you brat! He wants to reply in ire, Shouldn't you understand never to state the obvious?

The young man nods, "Every one of those things... are true."
Ezio grunts, but it doesn't satisfy Altair one bit.

"I understand the secrecy, habibi." The Syrian glances over, his arms crossed over his chest to see the time traveler look up at him, "Did you tell your allies back in your time when you escaped?"

He was also sure Desmond was prepared for such question.

"They..." Desmond sighs, looking a bit tired, "I told them about the Bleeding Effect after they rescued me. They didn't take it well, even after I told them how I managed to get it, but I still managed to convince them to let me use the Animus anyway."

"And things didn't go well?" Altair asks, getting straight to the point as he had a feeling something like this would happen.

The time traveler nods, "The first time I entered into the Animus... it went well. But then a couple of times into the Animus sessions later, the others told me I was screaming in my sleep. Then-" He glances over at Ezio, "-we were trying something different at the time; it was an idea one of my friends had. It was after I saw you trying to aid Leonardo fend off the bandits."

The Syrian glances over at the Italian, who stiffens before his light amber eyes narrows, "I did indeed feel someone that day; someone who was helping me fend off the bandits. I presume that was you?"

To Altair's somewhat surprise, he can see the guilt vibing from the fledgling; Desmond gathers his knees and hugs them close to his chest as he nods. The Master Assassin knows why Ezio acts like this; there is a part of Altair that felt like his life has been invaded without his knowing even though he knew Desmond was watching over him from the Animus).

Then there are times in which he is grateful to have a silent invisible witness to see first-hand the true events of what happened in his life. In a way, Desmond is his silent guardian; in the end, he does get what he wants.

"As soon as I defeated the bandits, I asked them to pull me out since I can feel the Bleeding Effect coming in... and then I tried to see if I can reenact some of the movements you managed to pull off from defending Leonardo." The Master Assassin glances to see Ezio gaping in alarm; he glares at the Italian to be quiet (which he did), "It worked, but it forced me to go through a Bleeding Effect that knocked me out for about three days."

Three days!? The Syrian was baffled to hear this-

The young man sighs, running his hand through his short hair, "It did give the others a lot to worry about and they were even considering to let me in the Animus for a shorter amount of time than what I've gotten used to. I did manage to recover from the..."

Desmond trails off to see the expression on their faces (Altair can tell his was one of pure concern and anger (for why couldn't the others-those who call themselves Desmond's companions-have foreseen this!). Ezio's on the other hand, his was one painted with horror and silent fury).

Then the young man sighs, shaking his head before muttering something that the Syrian couldn't quite pick up until he glances at them, weariness present, "Look. I don't know what else to say except it wasn't done by my choice. I honestly didn't want the Bleeding Effect to happen to me and I didn't want Abstergo to kidnap me and forcing me to endure through the torture and crap with them." Another shaky sigh, this time he doesn't look up at them, but Altair manages to pick it up anyway (his hearing was acute), "...I just wanted to have my own life. I didn't ask for this..."
Altair can’t find anything to say at the moment, but he knows how much fate has dealt a terrible blow to the fledgling. He clenches his fists, but gently lets it go, knowing his anger will make him irrational. When his eyes move to see how the Italian Assassin is handling it, the emotions were obvious on the younger man. Ezio looks like he is ready to kill something (most likely the ones who have taken his habibi and made him suffer for a long time); his mouth clamping tight. He can tell Desmond is more distraught at the assault of memories that probably has returned to him.

*Perhaps that explains a few more parts of his personality,* The Syrian narrows his eyes in thought. He has wondered why Desmond was a little more awkward around other people and not trusted a few more than others. When it came to the Assassins, it seemed as if the young man only wants to get in, get out, and finish things rather than planning it all out. He gives a certain amount of trust to someone before finding a way to vanish; that's what Altair presumed Desmond had taught to learn for himself (with the exception of his family and friends back at the young man's time... was it 2012?). He can also tell that his habibi was not keen on being a part of a greater plan for something involving the Pieces of Eden, a part of the fight between the Templars and the Assassins...

...and from the recent 'Bleeding Effect', he can tell he was wary of the others' motives for wanting to involve him.

"*Desmond,*" Altair slowly asks, hoping this question doesn't force Desmond to panic, "*Can you answer me this last question?*

"Go ahead. What else can you two want?"

He was alarmed at how hollow his habibi sounded just now. Altair can see the emptiness and fear gnawing in Desmond's eyes; he wants to push it away, telling him that he is no longer alone. That will come later (as long as the Italian brat isn't listening).

He sees how shocked Ezio's face was when he hears what Desmond just asked from the two of them.

"*Desmond... Why would you think of that from us?*" He can hear the Italian ask.

The foreigner is hesitant to respond to the Italian's question as he looks down and buries his face against his arms, "...I don't want to answer that right now."

"Desmond-" Altair places his hand on Ezio's shoulder, causing the other man to look up at him, "What, bastardo?"

"Give him time to answer that," He can hear himself reply, "You and I need to talk again."

"Is it regarding what to do about his training again?" The Italian's voice drops into one of a serious tone (a bit hushed too), "

The Master Assassin nods, for once, wanting some form of cooperation with the other Assassin. As he pulls Ezio aside to where his habibi can't hear him, his mind rings of the unspoken question he wanted to ask before Ezio interrupted him:

"*What is it that you truly desire for yourself?*"

There was one other thing that was worrying Desmond, it was not about his mind's state at all (he doesn't even want to know what happens when his mind returns to what it was before his capture at Abstergo).
It was more about the message that Aita asks Desmond to relay to him.

"As for your comrades in the modern times... tell them the wolf has returned," Aita's eyes were filled with hate, regret, and revenge, "I have returned to avenge my death against the one who killed me."

He did mention any of the three First Civilization- what was it? The Triumvirate? The group that has Tinia, Uni, and Minerva? The American places his elbows on his knees before placing his forehead against it, What the hell prompted someone to murder one of their kind?

He doesn't hear Altair talking to Ezio (possibly in his native tongue or his hash attempt at Italian) and Desmond knows they were talking about him after the talk they just occurred. And yes, he can pick up on the words training, mentality, stronger, sharper.

He knows that the same thing has happened after the first time Desmond bled in front of the others back in his own time (in the end, it was decided that he was to stay out of the Animus until he fully recovers).

Out of all of them, though, Lucy was the one who told and gave the suggestion that perhaps the Bleeding Effect can be used to their advantage (since at this point, Desmond did pick up on talking Italian, Arabic, and English fluently (well, the first two he is still rusty on, there's no denying it) and he is beginning to show some form of attacks that he instinctively picked up from Altair's memories and some he is beginning to get from Ezio's).

Connor and Shaun were the ones who were for it (through some gibberish logic that spewed from Shaun's brain about how the mind and body can act out even if the person doesn't want it). Clay and Rebecca were the ones that were wary and were against it (after all, Clay was the one who was in the Animus himself). It didn't take long for Lucy to realize the mounting negative sides about it; William was wondering if it works itself. His mother Heather is the one who manages to say that it depends on her son (even though she did express a degree of worry about it).

Desmond was the one who had the final say in the end; yes, he knows his mind was in a messed-up place. And yes... he knows pretty well the more exposure to the Animus, he will bleed more and more (at least Rebecca's programming was better and the way they have to allow the young man to recover). He knows his decision...

"Dad. If we continue to do the resting thing when I have too much exposure to the Animus," he asks William, "It will help me better than what Abstergo did to me." He can see William looking surprised about this; his mother, he knows, looks worried.

"And besides," he lets a small smirk, "I know the urgency of retrieving the Pieces of Eden from Abstergo. I'm not thick-headed to know what they want."

"Of course you must know," Shaun rolls his eyes, "Otherwise, you wouldn't have escaped from Abstergo, now would you?"

Desmond rolls his eyes, "I'm going back into the Animus. And I will use those stupid bleeds to some advantage."

"Are you sure about this?" Clay asks worried, taking a step forward, "Think about it; this is after one experience. You absolutely sure you can do this?"

Right after what he experienced? He wants to get his hands on Vidic and make him pay for the months and years of misery and torture.
The ex-bartender nods, confident, "I'll be fine." He can see some relax through everyone... and he sees his father looking sternly proud for his son, "...might as well pick up where I left, huh?"

Desmond realizes it was much better than running away and being seen as a coward.

He sighs, placing his head against his arms-

-before he realized what he should be doing and not sitting around.

"Shit," he mutters to himself, untangling himself from the position he was in as he begins to get off from the bed he was placed in a while ago. Both Altair and Ezio were still talking about something, but Desmond mentally brushes it off. He needs to talk to someone back at home FAST. And soon. Silently walking towards the desk where his bag is placed, he was just about to grab the communicator when his hand comes up empty.

The communicator was not in the usual space where he places it.

"If you are looking for that device, I placed it in the front pocket," he nearly jumps to see Altair hovering over him, one of his arms placed against the desk. Ezio wasn't there, Desmond realized, but the Syrian was.

"A-Altair! Don't scare me like that!" Desmond wheezes before glancing around,

"Did Ezio go somewhere?"

"He went to get more supplies for us," Altair replies, "For the night. We're returning to the place we were at before tomorrow."

"Great," The American sighs, shaking his head before turning around to continue for his (frantic) search for the communicator before feeling one of Altair's hands wrap around his wrist, "Hey-"

"Not for now," He can see the Master Assassin shake his head, "You are still recovering, aren't you?"

"But I'm feeling fine," Desmond scowls, glaring at the Assassin, "What makes you think I still need to- Ow!" He hisses, feeling the pain from the right side. He sees a ghost of a smile appear in the Master Assassin's lips (his hood was thankfully down) before Desmond scowls, feeling his face blush in irritation, "...I hate you so much."

He can hear a soft chuckle before hearing, "Ana Ahebak, ha-" And then he hears the Syrian catch himself before staying silent.

"Eh?" Desmond blinks, looking at Altair in surprise, "Come again?"

This time, he sees Altair sigh, gently releasing his hold on Desmond's wrist, "It is nothing. Just... nothing."

If he said that it was nothing, then why is his face lightly blushing?

"Altair..." Desmond slowly asks, not wanting to let this go as a bit of curiosity creeps into his voice,

"What does 'Ana Ahebak' mean?"

All he got instead was a gentle kiss from the Master Assassin before hearing him murmur,

"Something that only I should tell you."
"...huh?" He can barely squeak.

The Syrian chuckles again before giving the flustered American another peck on the lips, "There is a reason I have a soft spot for you, my habibi. You are truly an innocent one, aren't you, fledgling?"

"H-Hey!" Desmond was about to squawk out since he doesn't like being called a baby bird out of all things-

His train of mind was stopped by a pair of footsteps walking towards them.

They managed to straighten themselves as the door to the room opens to reveal Ezio, who is carrying a small bundle in his hands before setting it down on the table.

"So you've retrieved what we needed?" The elder asks, his voice straightening back to business. Desmond makes a mental note to talk to Connor when he gets the chance (most likely when the two Assassins were sleeping deeply) and to ask Altair what the hell he just said.

"What do you think?" He can hear Ezio grumble, "There are other missions I have to take care of... mostly trivial ones."

"Hmn, possibly to build your reputation back up as the one who helps others," The Syrian mutters, knowing too well about the life as an Assassin, "Brat. Is there any way I can get some bomb-making materials in the city?"

"Leonardo should help you along with some materials," The Italian sighs, running his hand through his hair as he takes his hood off, "Do you require of some?"

"...I'll get them myself then," Altair glances over at the materials, before pulling on his hood to shadow his eyes, "I will be back; do not make any indication that we are here."

Desmond can see how Ezio didn't give a small barb or anything to frazzle the Master Assassin as he grunts and nods. It wasn't until the footsteps fade away and hearing a door faintly shut the time traveler can see Ezio lean against the wall, his eyes closed as if he is in deep meditation. It wasn't until a small while later that he decided that now might be the best time to talk to the Italian Assassin.

"...Ezio?" he manages to ask, walking a bit closer (and still keeping his distance), "Are... you all right?"

He doesn't get a reply; instead, he sees the brown-haired man's eyes still closed and hearing him whisper something that sounded like a... prayer?

He decided it was the best idea not to bother the Italian as he begins to walk away towards the bundle to grab one of the pears he sees on the desk before biting into it as he sits down against the table and looking outside. It was beginning to become dark as he can see the sun's ray fading away to make way for the pale moon as it begins to dimly shine through the city of Venice.

*How long was I out from the Bleed? About half a day or so?* Desmond frowns, slowly munching on the pear as he leans against the window to continue seeing the night scenery unfold in the city of water. He can see other people coming out from the streets as there are some streams of lights. A festival, maybe?

Desmond sadly smiles, recalling going into a fair when he was a child back in South Dakota; the same goes for when he viewed New York City from a far away place when he decided to ride up on a helicopter with a co-worker as a small birthday gift.
It was beautiful.

"God, I miss home," he murmurs to himself, feeling the gentle breeze against his warm face.

He was halfway through the fruit that he feels a warm, hard body against his chest and a pair of arms wrap around his waist.

"Forgive me, tesoro mio," he hears Ezio whisper, feeling a gentle caress of lips against his right ear, "I'm not feeling my usual self today."

"I know," Desmond manages to finish the pear before tossing it out to the streets for the dogs to feed on, "...at least I know you're fine."

A soft chuckle was heard before the two lapse into silence again.

"Hey Ezio," he can sense Ezio's eyes look at him, inquisitive of his request, "Do you think I can talk to my brother for a bit? In private? The American pauses, needing to talk to the group back at home immediately-

"No." Was the immediate reply he got from other man.

Huh?

"Wait. I can't even talk to Connor about something?" He asks again, turning around to face the Italian, wanting some sort of reason, hoping that this was a joke-

"No." This time, Ezio's amber eyes were boring at him with some emotion that Desmond can't pinpoint.

...seriously? The American stares at the Italian Assassin, baffled that even he can't let him to talk to his brother, "Hang on, why the hell not!? I'm feeling fine and I really have to-

"No! I just..." A shaky sigh comes from Ezio as he runs his hands over his hair, looking distraught, "...no. Not today."

Desmond was about to persist and say that he is fine when he realizes that he had just woken up from one of his more (painful) bleeds. And he just worried the living hell out of the two people who care for him (more than Desmond realizes) and the allies he was going to be with.

Perhaps Ezio more than Altair; even if the Syrian did mention any sort of concern, it was hidden pretty well.

"Oh," The time traveler slumps back, "I know why... sorry. I didn't know that it affected that badly." He gives them a weak reassuring grin, "I understand." I... guess.

"...good," Ezio grunts, wrapping his arms around Desmond again, "We will train tomorrow... as your wounds get inspected."

"And about Leonardo?" Desmond asks, more worried about that and trying to find a way to get the inscription since he didn't get a good chance to hear about it earlier.

"He will come by this place tomorrow," The Italian replies, his hug on Desmond a bit tighter, "Along with Teodora."

And hopefully with some answers about the map, The time traveler places his forehead against the
other man's shoulder, feeling a bit tired-

"Desmond, are you attracted to anybody else?"

That makes him look at the Italian in alarm- out of all things that Ezio could have asked, it was about women!?

"Why... why did you ask?" Desmond asks, baffled before realizing what Ezio is asking... making him shaking his head, "No, I'm not in a relationship with anyone else aside you and Altair." And that made him realize what he just said as he blushes red, instantly snapping his mouth shut when he saw the Italian's surprised reaction. "Oh- Ohhhh God- Sorry about- shitshitshit-"

Fuck! Thank you again, verbal diarrheha! The American mentally curses, I swear, when I get back, I need to ask anybody if I can borrow some duct tape to keep my mouth shut-

And then he feels Ezio's hold on him grow tighter rather than letting him go, "'Oh, grazie a Dio! ...A parte doverti condividere con Altair, pensavo che sarei stato costretto a lottare per te, amore mio."

"H-Huh!?!" Desmond croaks in alarm at the sudden assult of Italian as he looks up to see relieved (and strangely happy) amber, "W-What the hell was all of that just now?"

Ezio blinks before facing him, shaking his head, "It's... nothing, tesoro mio. Just relieved that you are fine, that is all."

"Okay..." He didn't buy that one bit; had he known Italian a bit better, he would have known what he just said aside that statement Altair just said, "Hey, Ezio?"

"Hm?"

"You can understand a bit of Arabic... right?"

"Of course I do," Ezio answers, a bit proud of his skills, "Mario taught some to me along with Leonardo. Why?"

"What does 'Ana Ahebak' mean?"

And that's when he can feel the Italian tense... forcing the American to stammer, "Y-You don't have to answer it if you don't want to-"

"No, it doesn't mean something bad," The Italian sighs, "It's just..."

Desmond sighs, hanging his head, "Damn it, this makes me want to take language classes over again- mmph!"

His mouth was covered by the Italian's scarred lips in sudden kiss before feeling a slight release to catch his breath.

"W-What the heck was that!" He gawks for the second time today; first Altair and now Ezio!? Are they that worried about him all of the sudden?

"Ti amo, Desmond," Ezio murmurs before taking Desmond's lips again in a passionate fueled kiss, "Tu sei mia, tesoro mio."

Amo? He has heard of this before, but he doesn't say anything, even after he feels his face blushing
red before glaring at the Italian Assassin (who looks a bit satisfied), "What... was that for?"

"Let's just say it's my gratitude for seeing you alive." His face blushes a bit darker before hearing a gentle laugh, "Tesoro mio, are you going to continue that whenever I kiss you?"

"...I'm not used to it," The American mutters in embarrassment before hearing the front door shut, "H-Hey, Altair's-"

"I know," Ezio chuckles before stealing one last kiss from the young man, "...for my luck before I go on my missions."

The time traveler can't speak; only squawking as the Italian Assassin pulls his hood on and checking to see if he has the equipment. When Altair opens the door, the materials to make a couple of smoke bombs at his hand, Desmond can feel eyes staring at him (he was still feeling his face beet red) before glaring at Ezio, who seems to be smirking.

"What the hell were you doing?" He can hear the Master Assassin ask the Italian, who seems to smugly reply with something, causing the other man to snap (in his usual tone) in irritation...

\textit{At least I can take assurance that those two will never change their mood towards each other}, Desmond can't help but crack a small smile (at the transition back to the selves he first saw them as) before he feels himself hugging the two Assassins (one arm wrapped around the shoulders of each Assassin) while he can hear them ask what he was doing.

"I'm glad you two are here with me," He murmurs, happy to know that he has some form of support from his bleed.

He can hear a soft sigh from Altair before feeling a small peck on his head as Ezio chuckles and brushes his lips against his ear.

"You're going to make me soft," He hears Altair whisper, but Desmond doesn't care. He's just glad to have two people care a lot for him.

...now, to only find out what those words 'Ana Ahebak' and 'Ti amo' mean...

Desmond can see the tiny stars shining through the darkness when he opens his eyes.

Blinking and glancing down, he can see that he has taken the bed and Ezio has taken the other side... with his arms around his waist, of course. Sighing as a light blush blooms over his cheeks as he gently brushes his hand over the Italian's arms (thankfully, the Italian was deep in his sleep to even try to do anything) before carefully prying himself from the man's hug and quickly replacing it with some blankets. He looks to see Altair sleeping on the floor, comfortable with the assorted blankets and pillows Desmond managed to find while those two Assassins were on errands earlier - well, more like one of them decided to stay in the house and watch Desmond while the other had decided to help a few people around Venice.

It was also surprising; he also sees a mood change from the both Assassins. Altair was more silent and he seemed to be thinking more about something (most likely planning something about that training thing he was talking to Ezio about earlier) while occasionally asking Desmond if he was okay and he was also being soft and gentle. Ezio, on the other hand, was more silent, keeping his emotions in check (aside that one time in which he said something while the two were talking earlier), but he was quiet about it. The time traveler knows the Italian wants to talk to him about \textit{something}; he is guessing it's because from the bleeding and they just heard (from Desmond and Connor) about his torturous experience while he was in Abstergo (and the results that came from it).
Speaking of Connor... he needs to talk to the others.

*Good; they're knocked out,* the time traveler glances over to see how they didn't even stir when he slowly walks towards the desk where the bag is. He now knows where Altair has placed his communicator (it was somewhere in the main pocket area) as he carefully opens the bag before trying to feel for the small cool metallic equipment.

As soon as his eyes adjusts to the darkness in the room, he finally finds the communicator. He turns it on before lowering the volume (knowing the last time it happened, he thinks the volume is to blame for how Altair and Ezio manages to find out Desmond was trying to leave to find a portal) and placing it on his ear. Tapping it gently to get some static electricity out, he can barely hear someone talking from the other side.

Desmond gently clears his throat, "Hey, can anyone hear me?"

As if on cue, he can hear someone exclaim something before hearing a loud crash, a yelp, and some cursing-

"
*JESUS FUCKING CHRIST DESMOND!*" He can hear Clay groan, "*You scared the crap out of me and Lucy!*"

"*Desmond!*" He can hear Lucy gasp, trying to catch her breath. If he is there in person, he can tell Lucy is glaring at him.

"*Sorry!*" The time traveler, however, is chuckling at how easily surprised his older brother and the blonde woman can get, "*I just want let you guys know I'm not dead.*"

"*Yeah, thanks for the intro, by the way,*" Shaun dryly deadpans, "*You made Rebecca scream, you git!*"

"*Wasn't that you, Shaun?*" A snicker comes from Rebecca before cooing, "*Awwww... Shaun scared of a simple greeting?*

"*Shut up!*" He can hear the Brit sputter, now causing the others to laugh; he can hear a chuckle come from Connor.

"*So now I know what to put on for Halloween this year,*" Connor snorts, "*Hey Desmond. Are you feeling better?*

Desmond subdues his chuckle to respond, "Yeah, I'm back in the world of living."

"*Good... that's good,*" The Native-American sighs in relief, but Desmond can tell something is bothering his older brother.

"*Wait, did something happen?*" He asks, hearing the slight worry in his older brother's voice, "*I know you heard about my Bleeding Effect from Altair and Ezio-*"

"*Yeah, about that... you had me worried when you got into... I'll talk to you about that later.*" Connor sighs, "*God, this is exhausting... we only had a few hours of sleep too.*"

"*You guys didn't get enough sleep? What about the others?*" Desmond panics, "*Wait, what else happened while I was gone?*

"*Relax, dammit!*" His brother groans, "*...and here I thought you are the one we worried about*
more."

...true, The time traveler mentally grunts in irritation, scowling over at how much they baby him a lot, especially after he and the others escaped from Abstergo.

"Let's just say we found something interesting," Connor continues, "They're awake and trying to fix that glitch that has been bugging us for a while... why? What's up?"

"I need to tell them something," The time traveler hopes to God Ezio and Altair don't wake up (knowing his luck). It wasn't until he can hear a few more voices flooding into the headset; wanting to be more cautious, Desmond gently turns the volume of the communicator down. It wasn't until a minute later that he can finally hear one of them talk to him (clearly).

"Desmond!" It was Clay (he sounds a bit relieved to hear his younger brother, "Hey! How's... it going?")

Desmond frowns, knowing how hesitant he sounds, "...Clay, what the hell's bothering you?"

"Connor told me that you got into a Bleeding Effect."

And then the next he knows-

"You bled again!?" Lucy exclaims, horrified, "Are you okay!?"

"Calm down, Luc!" Clay's voice, this time, he is groaning, "He's okay now."

"But what about his headache?" Shaun's voice asks, "He usually has some and then throws up later."

"Okaaay, that's too much info, thanks!" Lucy groans.

Desmond chuckles, hearing the complaints that comes from the group. Even he can hear Connor grumble about how that wasn't really necessary.

"You don't hear him complaining about that; he's fine now!" That, he can tell, is Rebecca's cheerful voice. He can't help but give a small smile at her cheerful optimism.

"Guys," He can't help but cut in calmly, "I'm feeling fine. I actually don't have a headache or anything."

"...wait, really?" Connor asks in surprise, "You didn't get a headache?"

"No-" Then he recalls why, "Hang on! I know why-"

"Just so you know," Shaun flatly states, stopping the American from saying anything, "Your luck just so happens to be the worst one of of all of us."

"Shaun... shut up. Please." Desmond groans, now tempted to slam his head against the wall, "I need to tell you guys something important."

"Hopefully something that is better than hearing that you got into a major Bleeding Effect," Connor mutters before clearing his voice up, "What is it?"

Desmond pauses before closing his eyes, "...Remember the First Civilization that we... well, okay.
Remember that lady Minerva that contacted me when I was back in the-

"That First Civilization lady who told you about the new disaster?" Lucy asks, worried, "What about her?"

The time traveler drops his voice into a whisper, "If I mention this to you, will you please not make fun of me for it?"

"After what happened the last time?" Shaun mutters, typing coming from his end, "I highly doubt anything from the First Civilization is anything to be made fun of."

The American blinks, hearing how genuine concerned Shaun sounds... before he frowns, his voice into a hiss, "...okay. What the hell happened while I was gone?"

"I told you, nothing happened," Connor deadpans, "What made you think something went-"


He can hear the others begin whispering until finally, he can hear someone exclaim something that went like, "That's it! I can't stay silent about this-!" before hearing someone place on the headset, "Desmond, can you hear me?"

It was Rebecca. For once- wait, was she the voice of reason? Normally, it was Lucy or Connor...

"Yeah, I'm here- Rebecca," Desmond frowns, "Did something happen while I was gone?"

"Despite what you think, it isn't an attack on us or an invasion or anything," He can hear the technician reply, "Our messaging system got hacked by some moron who thinks we can't trace him-"

"Someone traced us!?" The American balks in horror, "I thought the systems we got were built to prevent that from happening!!"

Shaun's added voice comes in, "Ha, bloody, HA! Those bloody bastards did a fantastic job of rendering us invisible on the computer grid! I'm gonna wring their necks for the half-ass job next time we see them."

"Just how long ago did this happen?" Desmond was worried about this new problem, "And did this person know what we did to the Animus?"

"He knows," Clay's voice grits in irritation, "And he knows that you managed to escape from Abstergo."

"But... how!?"

"That's the thing," Rebecca's voice comes back in with a frown, "Unless our hacker was employed from Abstergo or something-"

"That hacker said that he wants to get even with Abstergo," Lucy cuts in, taking her headphones in, "There's no way it was him."

Desmond’s lips draw into a thin line, narrowing his brown eyes. While he can hear the two Assassins
soundly sleeping, he can barely hear the activity going on in the background. But that's not what was worrying him.

"And let me guess, the glitch hasn't been fixed?"

"That's the thing," Rebecca mutters, "We ran a bunch of scans on the Animus program and several on the machine itself... we got NIL."

The time traveler blinks before frowning, "...wait, come again? It wasn't anything like a malware or something like it?"

"And if that really did happen," Shaun replies, "You would have seen some glyphs appear on some of the ceilings and doors by now. No virus, no malware, no spyware, no coding errors. Nothing."

So. Something isn't right about the glitch, Desmond purses his lips, What the hell caused that glitch to show up then?

"I'm starting to think that the glitch in the Animus wasn't from a virus or any problems with the Animus when we grabbed it from Abstergo," Lucy muses, "I mean... it definitely didn't come from that hacker guy we were talking to earlier-"

"You mean that stupid hack attack- Oh yeah!" The American can hear Clay snap his fingers as if he just realized something, "Dude, Becca, tell him your theory!"

"The theory comes later," Connor says to Clay before directing his voice towards Desmond, "Desmond. What were you trying to tell us earlier before you panicked over a hack attack?"

"Riiiiight, a hack attack," Desmond grumbles before sighing, taking a deep breath, "Okay. Like I asked earlier... the First Civilization?"

"What about them?" The oldest person in the small group asks before asking, "Did you somehow get into contact with Minerva?"

"Ehhh..." The American pauses, "Not... really, but you are pretty close. I got into contact with someone else from the First Civilization named... hey, are you guys really listening?"

He can hear the silence on the other side; all activities were ceasing into a halt. Then from Clay-

"...come again?" He hears his older brother ask, his voice dropping from happiness into one of alarm, "You... somehow got into contact with a First Civilization member."

"Yeah," Desmond replies, a bit annoyed, "I am not going to say it again-"

"Wait. You don't even have a Piece of Eden... yet," Shaun's voice cuts in, "The last time we encountered one of them, it was when Ezio had the Apple and Stave of Eden inside the Vatican Vault!"

The time traveler is now impatient; maybe there was a chink in what Shaun just mentioned, "Okay, I don't know how I managed to meet Aita-" Then his eyes widen, "...wait. WAIT. Shaun, did you say it have to with a Piece of Eden?"

The historian groans in ire, "Is your hearing THIS terrible!? Of course I said it! The last time one
of them talked to you, it was when that Italian Assassin of yours had that Apple of Eden in his hands!"

"Wait a minute," Connor manages to calm Shaun down, "Desmond. Can you say that again?"

"You mean... Aita?" The American frowns, his eyes turning cautious, "Oh. Yeah... he told me to tell you guys something."

"No, not that," Connor was about to continue when he gets cut off by the technician.

"Hang on. Is it some sort of unusual, ambiguous message that we're supposed to decipher?"
Rebecca's voice asks, a little bit happier (and curious) like her usual self, "Awesome! What is it?"

"...you know, for someone who sounded a bit depressed earlier today," Lucy mentions, a giggle beginning to form in her voice, "There's a degree to your optimism that we really need."

"Really?"

"Oh great... another one of those puzzling, mysterious messages," Clay announces, his sarcasm evident to get the others back on attention before he chuckles, "All right, Des. Out with it. What did this... 'Aita' guy say to you?"

Desmond blinks before chuckling, "Wow. I really miss you idiots say that in person."

"I am not sure whether to be offended or happy to hear you say that," Lucy grumbles before she returns to business-like mode, "What did he say to you?"

The time traveler pauses, "He said to let you guys know 'the wolf has returned'. He also said that he has returned to avenge his death against the one who killed me."

A round of silence was heard until he hears Connor ask, "...say that again?"

Desmond rolls his eyes in annoyance, "He said to tell you that 'the wolf has returned' and that he's 'returned to avenge his death against the one who killed me'. There. Happy now?"

He can hear another round of silence until-

"Yeah... just one thing."

"What?"

"Was that message meant for us..." Connor pauses, "...or was we supposed to be conduits so the message is passed to someone else?"

The time traveler was about to respond before he freezes.

Oh.

...Oh FUCK.

Desmond's eyes widen in somewhat panic before hearing Rebecca mutter, "Guys?"

"...Yeah?"
She takes another deep breath, "I'm beginning to think that the Animus is beginning to act on its own." Another pause, "You know the glitch we found?"

"What about it?" Desmond had a bad feeling about this...

"I'm starting to think that the glitch is connected to the First Civilization, which I hope to God isn't," The technician mutters before hearing her stop... and murmur, "...oh my fucking God."

"It's not about one of your stupid theories on what happened to your Baby, I hope," Shaun grumbles in his usual snide tone.

"Shaun, stop being a dick to your girlfriend and let her think," Clay quips, which can explain why the American can hear some quiet laughter from Lucy, an unsuccessful snicker from Clay, and some stifling snickers from Connor. Rebecca was still muttering something in thought. Shaun, on the other hand...

"Shut up, you git!" The Brit seethes, "I swear, mention that subject one more time-"

"Hey Desmond," Rebecca's voice (which is surprisingly serious for once) cuts the team off into another (if not amusing as hell) banter, "If I tell you something, will you swear you won't laugh or think I'm insane for suggesting this?"

Desmond frowns, a bit curious to know more about the technician's theory on the Animus' glitch-what caused it in the first place, anyway, "what about it?"

"Am I the only one who's thinking that the glitch is done on purpose just to get Desmond to sent a message to us or to someone else?" She asks, "...or do you think it's done for another reason?"

**End Part 10**

I deliberately made Desmond a bit clueless on what those two mean: 'Ana Ahebak' and 'Tio Amo' even though they should be obvious (to you guys). ...I'm a sucker for romances. Sue me. I just wanted a single, sappy moment with the three of them without the two fighting over a slightly clueless Desmond.

What's next: Desmond continues the entire conversation, only to realize that maybe Rebecca is onto something about the glitch... and about the map he was sent to retrieve. Not to mention he realizes just how worried the two Assassins were for his sake...
Part 11: Concerned

Desmond frowns; even if this was supposed to be news that was supposed to be shocking, it really didn't affect him in a way regular people should react. But...

...if what Rebecca said was true...

That could at least explain a couple of things that Desmond has been wondering about.

One, how the hell did the portal suddenly open from Jerusalem to Venice in a vast time jump by about 300 to 400 years?

Two, why Altair came with him and there was nothing about the time paradox happening (There went that theory up in its glory, take that Shaun! Desmond can't help but wanting to tell Shaun off to his face about it)?

Three, why the map that was not supposed to show Renaissance Venice exact to its form (instead of some ambiguous pictures that are supposed to represent the streets of 12th century Italy)?

And the last one being why Aita manages to get in contact with Desmond (and why through the stupid Bleeding Effect, out of all things? Why not just approach him like Minerva did to Ezio?)...

...oh wait. Desmond mentally kicks himself; he realized that the First Civilization did not want his presence to be known to anybody else but him and the others back home (All because he was murdered? Why would anyone from his own group... he frowns, confused about that).
...that didn't explain about broken language barrier though. What the hell caused it to make Desmond understand them (and the others in turn)?

He decides he'll figure that out later. Glitch, map, Piece of Eden, and stuff happening at home? That goes first.

"Okay... let's run with that," He mentally makes a note to ask Rebecca about her glitch theory later in full detail sometime later, "And say that the message has been delivered to whoever the hell was supposed to listen to it. Why am I still here in Venice?" He takes a quick glance over at the sleeping Altair and Ezio before looking back out from the window, "...and why are these two here with me?"

"We know you were sent to get the map because William ordered you to," Lucy slowly replies, "But as for why you wound up in Venice and as for those two... okay, that I don't know."

"Figures," Desmond grumbles, irritated as he shakes his head.

"So whoever thought about trapping you here and planting the glitch to distract us," Connor asks, "...didn't expect Altair and Ezio to be a part of this too."

"It seems to be the case, but I'm starting to think the glitch is meant for another reason," Rebecca frowns, "I mean, think about it! It first comes up when Desmond got the map and was chased around by big, tall, and scary-"

"You mean Altair," Desmond deadpans, but he can tell Rebecca is not listening.

"-and that portal opens up; the second time it activated again was when we tried getting Desmond out from Venice after he went through that portal-"

"Maybe we can send Desmond back to Jerusalem and see what happens?" Clay suggests, but that received a lot of negative responses, "Sheesh, it was Just a suggestion..."

"Let's take care of that when we finally get that map again and fix this bloody mess," Shaun grumbles, "...go on, Rebecca."

"...I'm surprised you didn't call me out on 'acting like a child'," Rebecca mutters (and Desmond is pretty sure the British man can hear that), "The third time was when we tried again after a couple of hours, only it won't open up anywhere in Venice."

"Did it appear again anytime after that?" Desmond quietly asks, absorbing all of this, "Or did anything in the Animus indicate any sort of changes?"

He blinks, hearing the silence at the other end until "Oh fuck!" The sudden outburst was heard from Connor, "I forgot all about that!" He cringes as he hears his older brother say something about moving aside and hearing a flurry of typing.

"Clay...?" Desmond feebly asks.

"From the way Con's panicking," Clay sighs, "-which, by the way, is the first time in a while I ever saw him panic like that- I'm taking a guess and say that he forgot about your stats report... and the report about the Animus database."

"Con just...oh, great. Thanks." Desmond wants to gently smack his head against the wall, "Anything off about it?"
"...this is interesting," Lucy murmurs, "The Animus report database says there's nothing wrong with it, especially when we tried to get you home and all..." Connor must have grunted in agreement before hearing another click, "For your stats report, Desmond, aside the normal regulations with you sleeping and waking up and walking around and the last one with your Bleeding Effect, there are some indications of you having a faster heartbeat and quickening of breath, along with... hang on, why are some of these brainwaves readings off?"

"Ah, what?" The time traveler blinks, confused, "What do you mean by that?"

"Well, it says here that a few days ago- wait, the first night you were trapped in Venice, the next day... huh. I don't know how to ask this, but have you been exercising?"

"I was-" And then Desmond gawks, realizing that times Clay was asking about before his face flushes red with embarrassment, Oh FUUUUUCK- It shows on the reading that I had-!? Shit shit shit-

"And I think we're done for now," Connor quickly cuts in, "All we wanted to see was if the Animus did anything weird. I'll take a look at your stats report myself."

"You sure?" Clay asks, "...okay, if you say so..."

"In the meantime," Connor grumbles, "Shaun, look up anything about Aita. Rebecca, Clay, Lucy, find out if anybody ELSE aside us know anything about the First Civilization." And then with a grumble, "Desmond... you and I need to talk about something later."

The American blinks, "About what?"

"It's about-

Fortunately for Desmond, Shaun instantly cuts him off, "Well well. Look what I got here when I searched for Aita."

"What? What? What?" Desmond asks, his curiosity getting the better of him, "What is it?"

"Well, according to what documents we have-"

"That guy Aita you just mentioned," He hears Clay cut him off (it sounds like he is looking over Shaun's shoulder since he can hear the historian exclaim something about not interrupting him), "He was a volunteer for one of the solutions proposed by the First Civilization members in order to preserve their souls and bodies from being annihilated from the First Disaster."

The American gapes before closing his mouth in anger, "Wait, so he was lying to me just to-

"Dude! I'm not finished!" Clay snaps, "The article says that Aita was FORCED to volunteer because he discovered something about one of the members of the Triumvirate and their involvement in another solution." A pause, "He was a close acquaintance with a few other First Civilization members like Hermes Trismegistus, Isis, and Osiris. At the time... wait a sec... Shaun, go down for a bit..." Desmond can hear clicking and some muttering before he hears Clay continue, "It says here that he was working on... Oh waaaaaaait."

Desmond blinks, What? Tell me more, dammit, Clay!
"...Oh my fucking God you have GOT to be fucking kidding me," He can hear Shaun curse,
"Holy shit... THAT'S what they were working- Desmond! Are you still here?"

"I still am, Clay," Desmond hisses, getting a bit tired of being out of the dark now (seeing as how he was stuck in the past out of all things- that doesn't help his situation one bit), "You were saying that he was working on something?"

"Remember that map William asked for you to get?" He blinks at that question.

"What about it?" The American grumbles, "All I know is that it's supposed to be a map to the Piece of Eden hidden in Venice- where I am now-"

"It's hidden in Venice?" His voice beings to sounds incredulous.

"Did you not just hear me a second ago!"

"Hang on a sec," That voice wasn't Clay; it was Lucy, "The map is telling you the location of the Piece of Eden is where you are?"

"Yeah. I looked at the map contents myself."

He can hear another round of silence-

"Okay. Well. Things just got a bit more interesting," Connor's voice was wavering between awe and irritation, "So... anything else you can tell about the map?"

"Ah... about that," Desmond pauses, "Umm..." The time traveler sighs, running his hand thorugh his hair. He knows the others were expecting a response; might as well give them one, "Right. About that... it's written in a differen language. Leonardo da Vinci's translating it right now."

Rebecca was the first to ask, "Leonardo... da Vinci's translating it. What language is it written in?"

"Arabic."

"Let me guess. Ezio's idea?"

Desmond nods, "Altair agreed with it."

"How... what the..." He can hear Rebecca gape in surprise, "I thought those two hate each other to eternity."

"And so did I," The time traveler lightly blushes, knowing pretty well how those two can get along when it comes to him-

"Why am I not surprised?" He can hear his oldest brother grumble in irritation, "Okay, Des... new plan. Until that map is fully translated, you're stuck here. As soon as the map's translated, let me know and we'll find a way to get you out of here."

"No shit, Sherlock. But what about you guys?" Desmond doesn't want to let the subject go about what the fucking hell has bothered the guys earlier, "And I can't sleep until I get an answer as to what is going on back home."

"Worried about us, huh?" Lucy sighs, "Well, since you did wind up passing something
interesting about the First Civilization and you know about the hacker, might as well mention to you the short version of what happened."

The American can't help but frown, "...come again?"

"Oh, Lucy!" He hears Rebecca ask (in the worst time, Desmond's eye twitches), "Do you want to go into the kitchen with me? I think I have a craving for yogurt..."

"Oh really? ...oh yeah!" The blonde woman mutters before groaning, "I'll show you where I hid it this time thanks to a certain idiot who couldn't keep his hands off it! Come on..." Desmond can hear some scuffling and someone taking off the communicator (it was Lucy; he can hear her going farther away. And he can hear Shaun grumble something about craving some dairy at the time as Connor chuckles. Clay was strangely quiet for some reason).

"...what the hell's going on?"

Clay swiftly replies, "Des, there's a reason we had to do that. All you need to know is Dad moved to another location since there is a good chance we've been compromised. How, I'm not sure... yet. But once you come back or other orders come in, we need to move to the new HQ."

That was not the thing Desmond wanted to hear. What the fuck!? Who the hell compromised us! We were supposed to be declared dead-

"You already know about the stupid hacker who went into Shaun's messaging system and showed us what Piece of Eden we were searching for." That catches the young man's attention, "Don't know how the hell this idiot managed to get into our system."

"So...wait," Desmond frowns, "Did this moron compromise our current-"

"No, I know this guy mentioned that he wanted to expose Abstergo for their crimes. For what crimes they've committed, I am not sure, but whoever is... 'helping' us, I'm not sure to regard the hacker as an ally or an enemy."

"Let me get this straight," The American wants to sit down to soak this all in, "...aside me being stuck here thanks to a stupid glitch in the Animus, me getting a freaking Bleed, and being stuck here with Altair and Ezio... Dad's gone to a new HQ because someone is a mole and we got a hack attack on our system."

"Right on the dot," Connor groans, "It doesn't help your predicament one single bit, you know."

"Thanks for letting me know how shitty our luck is at the moment," The young man dryly comments, "And what else is new?"

"It's actually about Lucy's emails," Shaun takes over next, "While you were stuck in the Animus, we found a few emails implicating Lucy to have sent emails to 'William'... about you and your condition, the Pieces of Eden, and the Animus."

"W-wait, what?" That surprised him a lot- Lucy Stillman? One of his trusted comrades? "Lucy doesn't know my father's email!"

"That's what we're trying to figure out," The historian mutters, "Asano, you remember him, right? He got an order from William a while back to look through the email systems since he has been
getting suspicious emails. What he found were a few emails that 'she' sent to an imposter who claims to be William."

Desmond freezes, his mind absorbing this. There was no way that... oh no. Oh no no... He was afraid to ask what the emails contained, but he gulps before whispering, "...what do they say?"

"They mention about how you needed to be tested for more information, about Minerva, the Pieces of Eden, and sadly, your Bleeding Effect," Shaun continues, "But I realized something else... these emails were not written by Lucy at all."

"I- wait, what?" Desmond blinks rapidly, his mind doing a mental double-take, "...Shaun, come again?"

"I didn't hear that correctly," Clay is also alarmed, "What?"

"I said Lucy did not write these emails." Shaun calmly replies. Desmond's mouth slightly opens in surprise at this new information. Clay was also alarmed at the other end.

Connor was the one to break their stupefied silence, "...so Lucy didn't write these emails? NONE of them?"

"No," The British man says again, "Rebecca took another look at them; the emails sound like someone else wrote them and used Lucy as an alias."

"...what the hell's different about them, exactly?" Connor calmly asks, his silent angry growing by the second. Desmond doesn't even want to step into this, but he can't help but wonder if Shaun was correct about this-

"The emails that were sent to the imposter William? The tone in the emails sounds much TOO formal to be her, and there is a mention in the last email about having us understand about how our way is wrong and how this idiot's perspective is right."

And this time, after a full minute of silence, Desmond was the one who hisses, "WHAT! Why would- Wait, who the hell says this stuff?!"

"I don't know, I'm just glad Lucy wasn't the one who sent them... oh shit. Shit. SHIT! Are you fucking kidding me!?" Clay growls in irritation, "Fuuuuuuuck, fuck fuck fuck, Connor, where did Rebecca go... need to look for her iPad again..." And then he can hear a couple more fumbling before hearing footsteps run off towards... somewhere.

Then he can hear a flustered sigh and then it shifts to Shaun's voice, "Desmond? Clay just decided to panic and went to check something else."

"Meaning I get no sort of answer whatsoever until you guys find out what is going on?"

He can hear the wince in Shaun's voice, "Yeah. Sadly for you- wait, Clay- What the buggering hell are you- Desmond, we'll keep in touch-!"

"Please do," Desmond mutters as he lets out a frustrated sigh, not bothering to hear the rest of the conversation as he begins to turn down the volume.

"Oi. Desmond. It's me." Connor's voice comes on, sounding a bit exhausted, "Sorry about that. I
"had to turn the others' communicators off since I need to ask you a few things."

"It's okay," The American mutters, "...though do you think it's a good idea to do that?"

He can hear his older brother sigh, "I'll reconnect them once I get the chance. Can I ask something?"

"What?"

"You mentioned that the only time you were able to see any member of the First Civilization was when a Piece of Eden was nearby," Connor's voice is now turned into a low whisper (so that the others don't know? Desmond was baffled at this), "Can you tell me when you met Aita, was there a Piece of Eden nearby?"

"A Piece of Eden...?" The time traveler frowns, "Look, I don't know if-" And then he freezes, his eyes widening, realizing that indeed-

And that was then they noticed the lip forcing itself open, revealing the metallic orb with the grooves into it before it began to activate-

Desmond's mouth gapes open in alarm, the pieces of how his Bleeding Effect comes to be coming together, "...fuck. Connor?"

"Yeah?"

"There was an Apple of Eden near where I was."

He can hear Connor hitch in breath before cursing, "Shit. Desmond, remember how you met Minerva?"

"How can I forget that?" Desmond rolls his eyes, "What about it?"

"Ezio had a Piece of Eden with him within the Vatican Vaults."

"I know how I-" And Then Desmond realized, in Shaun's true words, how much of a git he was at the moment. He can barely say anything before he manages to squawk (out of either what Desmond was thinking to be either out of horror or just stupified), "...oh fuck. But that stupid thing activated on its own! I didn't even though it!"

"It... activated on its own?" Connor sounds flabbergasted, "Are you sure that nobody touched it when you were near it?"

"No." Not that Desmond can recall, at least. He knows that before he blacked out, they were talking about that said First Civilization Group, "Wait. What the hell does that have to do with-

His brother's voice cuts his question off, "Remember that stupid map Father asked you to get?"

"What about it?"

"You really need to find that map and find that other Piece of Eden before you get triggered into another Bleeding Effect within Venice," Connor swiftly replies, "Speaking of, are you feeling better?"

"Oh?" Desmond blinks... before realizing that his older brother was asking about his state from his
bleed earlier, "Oh yeah... I feel better, thanks,"

"I had to subdue calming down two worried-as-hell Assassins while you were out from the Bleeding Effect earlier." His brother deadpans, "Do you know how difficult it is trying to deal with them?"

"Oh." Then, "...I know from earlier, but while I was out... was they worried that bad?"

"Let me put it this way: do you recall being a stupid little kid once?"

"Hey! You were one too!" Desmond grumbles back, "What about it?"

"At least mine wasn't as chaotic compared to yours," Now his eyes were twitching as he can hear the slight smugness in Connor's voice, "Remember how there was that one time in the Farm where you and a few Assassin kids had some idiotic contest in which one of you guys climbed that tall tree Father warned you to never go near?"

The American groans, knowing pretty well what happened, "Yeah... while I managed to climb up a good distance, I fell from that tree and broke my left arm."

"And how worried William and Heather were? Clay was shouting for help and we had to take you to the hospital to make sure you weren't losing any blood that day," Connor finishes before a sigh, "Do you know how much you made all of us worry?"

Desmond nods, knowing that after that day, William and a few of the other Assassins were taking the tree down for good measure (it turned into a bar set that they used as practice for arm strength practice), "...yeah. Dad..." He then lets out a small chuckle, "Damn. I know how much Dad nearly threatened to never let me outside after that. Not to mention what Mom did to me..."

"She spoiled you a lot, even though you hated it," Connor's irritated voice changed into a soft voice, "...that's how worried those two were."

No wonder, The American knows that they were dead worried for him; both Altair and Ezio were. That explains why Ezio was not to keen on letting Desmond leave the room; for the fear that the same thing will happened again, "I'm... an idiot, aren't I?"

A chuckle, "Yeah. You are. But you're my brother; we're bound to make stupid mistakes."

"No shit," Desmond give a small sad smile, "I know. Are you and Clay going to do something about it?"

"It isn't just us; there's Lucy, Shaun, and Rebecca to deal with too."

"I'm not off the hook that easily, huh," Desmond sighs, feeling small stings in his eyes as he can feel tears threatening to fall out, "...fuck. I miss home. I even miss the stupid Farm..."

"Desmond..." He can tell Connor is worried for Desmond, "You know we're going to get you out of here. We just need to find out more about the glitch and what to do to get you back home. Just... give us more time."

I know, Desmond wants to say. He knows how much stress and toll this is having on his friends on the other side on trying to fix the Animus. But then again, comparing to where he is right now compared to where he is supposed to be...
...for some reason, he feels the security of having two Master Assassins keeping an eye on him and making sure he is safe. But then again, it feels a bit like suffocation and Desmond just wants to go out and...

He sighs, "...Dammit. I don't know what to do about Ezio and Altair."

"Huh?" Connor asks, confused.

"Those two... they care a lot about me," Desmond lightly blushes, knowing pretty well how much those two take care of Desmond (pretty well) and knowing how much damn affection they show him for the duration of his stay, "I hate to say this, but... they are helping me." And then a shaky breath, "...crap, I even worry about them and care for them too..."

"You do?" Connor's voice... wait, is his brother sounding okay? "...Oh."

The American blinks, the fluttering pang gone and his shaky voice is replaced with a deadpan, 
"...what?"

"Well. Ahem, about that..." Connor pauses before, "How am I going to address this..."

"Say what?" Desmond asks, frowning at the way his brother is reacting. Connor is obviously hiding something; Clay does the same thing whenever he gets nervous, "...dude, did someone decide to hack into my laptop while I was gone?"

"No, and even if Shaun really did, he would've done that for blackmail reasons," His brother grumbles, a quick switch from his terse answers earlier, "I was talking about Altair and Ezio and how those two can possibly have feelings for you."

"I'm- Wait, what!" Desmond bolts up from his bed, not caring about the wound having the chance to reopen, "Shaun did what!"

"...did you not hear what I just said?"

"Nono, I hear you-" Desmond wants to wrangle that stupid historian's neck, "If that stupid Brit really did break into my laptop, I swear to-"

"For the love of God, Desmond!" Connor cuts him off, irritated, "That was an example! Did you NOT hear me a while back about Altair and Ezio!"

"What about-" And then the time traveler blinks, his mouth open as the other part of Connor's previous statement finally, finally sunk in.

Altair. And Ezio. Two of the greatest Assassins ever herald in the history of the Assassin Order.

...those two have feelings for him?

As in... they were in love with him?

And then his eyes widen in alarm.

...FUCK! Is Connor serious!? 

"...from the sounds I'm hearing from here," Connor's flat voice comes in, "I can pretty much tell that you're either horrified or you just realized this is happening to you for the first time."
"Shut up!" Desmond seethes, "I just realized about this! Those two- Are you fucking serious!

He hears Connor groan (and lift up his arms in irritation), "For the- YES, YOU DENSE BLOCKHEAD! Can you not see that for a while!" (I had some idea, but still- Desmond's thoughts were rudely cut off by Connor), "Why do you think those two called you those nicknames? They care a lot about you. They don't seem to be keen on sharing you with them since they are possessive for their own good- for crying out loud, do I have to spell it out for you?"

The American groans, "Shut up, I get it! ...please tell me it's just you that know about it so far."

"Let me put it this way: I am keeping this quiet from Clay and the others. Not only because I know how easily embarrassed you get, but you're my younger brother... and I really want you to be happy."

Desmond blinks, surprised to hear this from the same brother who was adopted into Desmond's family at a fairly young age and had to earn his trust the hard way (well, what would a normal reaction from a nine-year old would have been when he found out that a thirteen year old unknown teen was going to live with his family?). The same brother who had to track Desmond down after the youngest (and only biological son of the Miles family) ran away from The Farm for nine years, who complained about the way Desmond behaved...

He was surprised. Things do change over time after all.

"Des. Blockhead. Are you even breathing?"

"Shut up, Con," The American can't help but grin, "...so does this mean you'd also forgive me for those times in which I made your life a misery when you first came in?"

"Ha, fucking ha. Don't push it." He can hear Connor chuckle before clearing his throat,"You do realize that we have to find a way to get Altair back to Jerusalem before you get home."

Desmond's face instantly turns back to the normal skin tone as a bit of reality comes back to him.

"After this, we do have to continue back to our missions and trying to find the other Pieces of Eden. We also have to conduct a huge sweep on the Animus hardware when you return home; we have to make sure there are no more loopholes inside the system for more glitches or mistakes."

Meaning... He looks over to see the two Assassins before feeling his heart tighten at the thought of leaving the two men (the ones who were helping him, taking care of him...) ...shit. I don't want to leave, but... Desmond tightens his jaw, ...just like when I was running away from home. He gulps to suppress his feelings before hearing his brother talk again, this time a bit quieter to prevent the others from knowing.

Does this mean he has to move on and forget again?

Before he got captured at Bad Weather, he has managed to find ways to travel from South Dakota all the way to New York without getting caught. He made sure his ID and alias were fake or had other people buy stuff for him that required a license; he always bought stuff with cash; he doesn't place his fingerprints on stuff people can easily take from him; he doesn't go anywhere that makes him take his fingerprints; and he always made sure to never get into any sort of trouble with the cops.

Back then, it was easy for him to get accustomed to people, but not get close to them. He was always
detached (at least, according to some people) and antisocial in public areas. Desmond knows far too well what happens when people get close to them- he had to break a potential relationship with a girl when he got the bartending job in New York. Life for him was easy... even if it meant that he had to get away from the people he cares for the most back at the Farm.

When he was captured in Abstergo and was kept hostage, all he wanted was to go back home, to fix his mistakes... he was able to do that, but the cost for him was to rebuild the bonds that he severed nine years ago- one that began with his family and eventually with his friends. He gets the feeling that he still isn't welcome because of his mistakes from other Assassins that have heard and survived The Great Purge that took place; Lucy, Rebecca, Shaun, Connor, and Clay were the ones that made him feel more than welcome to stay, to be with his family...

...but now...

...why does his heart sting with the fact that he has to leave Altair and Ezio? Granted, he wants things to return to normal once the glitch (or whatever was screwing the Animus over (and making him and the others irritated to no end about it) to prevent Desmond from returning) got fixed. But there is a part of him that wants to...

...no. No way. Then that means history will change if Desmond even dares...

The young man silently gulps, trying to prevent himself from being overly emotional about it. Think about it, he mentally chides himself, Those two will find their wives later. Just... don't think about it as much and once the time comes, leave. They'll forget eventually... That's what happens to everyone I know.

Oh how Desmond doesn't realize how truly wrong he is.

"Be careful." Then, "I'll let you know when we fix that stupid glitch-"

Desmond frowns, quickly recovering from that rush of emotion, "You've tried that twice already. Maybe you should find a way to override it since it only comes up when you guys try to open a portal from my side."

Connor sighs, "We'll try, but to be honest, I'm debating about coming in to get you myself as the last resort if we can't fix the glitch in the Animus one last time. I'll talk it out with the guys. The other reason being that we're on a time limit, remember?"

Oh... shit. The time traveler groans, "How much?"

"You entered in the Animus about... well, it's been about four days since Father left for the mission. You went in about a day or two ago."

"It's been... about two or three days for me here," Desmond frowns, "...remind me how it's possible again?"

"Ask the technician about her 'Baby' and the spec, not me," Connor grumbles before sighing, "...Des?"

"Yeah?"

"Please be careful. I don't want to lose my baby brother again. Not after what happened to you seven years ago."
The American blinks before a small soft smile appears on his lips, "...thanks, Connor."

"No problem. Be safe, okay?"

"I will. Don't worry... I'll be safe."

Okay, so the message got to them. Desmond sighs, relieved that the two sleeping Assassins didn't pay a single attention to his conversation; he turns off the communicator when Connor wasn't responding (probably busy). But there was a part of him that was wondering about what Clay and Shaun mentioned about Lucy; she was in Abstergo for a while.

Desmond looks at the small blinking red light that came from the communicator before going through his bag to search for the spare batteries set Rebecca gave him a while back after one mission went bad from a loss of communications. Opening one of the smaller pockets, he feels a small plastic pouch that contains the battery and the tools needed. Sighing, he manages to take it out (while trying to make sure Altair and Ezio were still sleeping) before quickly unscrewing the battery compartment in the communicator with the Swiss Army knife (that has the laser and USB in it... why did Rebecca get that for him again?) and taking out the spent battery.

Gently setting the army knife and spent battery down (and quietly) at the floor (at least there was moonlight) while holding onto the two tiny screws and cover, Desmond takes the new battery and places it inside the communicator before replacing the cover and re-screwed it back on.

Good, he smiles, seeing the green light flicker the communicator back to life before turning it off to preserve battery life, Got that fixed. He silently walks back towards the bag before placing the small pouch and the communicator back in its rightful place.

Desmond heaves in relief, standing up to return to sleep as he turns around... to see two pairs of eyes staring at him, fully awake.

"Desmond, what are you doing?" He can hear Ezio quietly ask.

The American mentally curses his impeccable timing as he sees Altair eye the bag before feeling the Master Assassin glare at him.

"So. Do you care to explain why you decided to disobey me even after I told you not to talk to him?" Altair calmly inquires, despite his eyes saying a completely different emotion as it blazes with irritation.

...Goddamnit, Shaun. You just had to remind me how lucky I am, didn't you? Desmond's relieved expression quickly washes away, paling from being caught in the act.

Thanks to his training and the unfortunate amounts of shooting, yelling, and obnoxious talking, Altair is a light sleeper (and it is always a good thing, considering that he has to be alert for most of the time). He thought he was hearing a conversation in his slumber, but when he manages to barely open his eyes, the elder realizes that it was Desmond talking to the small device... and it was to his allies back in his own time.

Even though I thought I told him not to for we explained to him what Connor said and to allow Desmond to recover... what could possibly be important back there? Altair can't help but ask himself.

He did catch the words Desmond have used to talk to the others; while he does not know what most
of the words mean, he can tell that from the way Desmond is talking, something must have happened to them. But it was also wasn't that caught Altair's attention.

The name "Aita" seemed to come up often throughout the conversation along with "Minerva"; they were mostly in conjunction with the First Civilization - a subject La Volpe and Leonardo were discussing earlier; the very same subject that made his habibi more provoked than usual.

"We used to call them gods," They turn to see Desmond walking up towards them, wearing a solemn (if not bitter) expression, "...those who came once before. Heavenly being from above."

I have more to ask of him on that, The Syrian's eyes narrow, now fully awake as he hears Desmond finishing his talk with whom Altair now presumes to be Connor before hearing soft walking towards the bag, ...wait, what is he doing?

He hears something rustling from the bag and then something that sounded like clanking (What was he doing over there?) before hearing the young man walking back over to the bag and placing something in one of the pockets. And that was when Altair sees the Italian awake as well before hearing the Italian ask, "Desmond, what are you doing?"

The young time traveler doesn't even reply as he pales.

"So. Do you care to explain why you decided to disobey me even after I told you not to talk to him?"

Altair can't help but glare at Desmond before glaring at the bag. Maybe he should've hidden it before Desmond woke up.

A slightly uncomfortable silence fills the room until Desmond replies, "I... I was trying to find out what happened back at home. I didn't get the chance to talk to them about anything today since we were..." His face is then filled with tension, "...with the Order and all."

Ezio frowns and the other Assassin knows what he was about to say when Altair beats him to it.

"You should be recovering, not walking about while one of your wounds are still healing," He shakes his head, "You would have more time to do that in the next day."

Desmond warily looks over at him, at Ezio, and then nodding before walking over towards his side of the bed and sitting down, "Sorry."

Altair sighs, seeing how pitiful his habibi looks before standing up and patting him on the head, "It's fine. Just do not repeat this action again."

"I'll try not to."

But that still doesn't ease the worriness that is still there on Desmond's face, Altair notes as he glances over at Ezio, who frowns in concern.

"All right, out with it, tesoro," Ezio finally speaks in a serious tone, "You are still worried and it seems like there are some concerns you want to address. What are they?"

The young man looks surprised and was about to ask-

"You are too easy to read," Altair replies, "Ezio and I notice this too often. I believe we're told this before."
Desmond gives a silent groan of defeat, "Seems like I can't hide everything from you two." Altair notices how at this time, his habibi does not even bother trying to talk in either language, "Okay, fine. I just realized that something is going on in my own time that I should be worried about, but at the same time, I am worried about how to show that I am not the person who is messing up and trying to make a better impression on the other members of the Order-

...so that was what Desmond's mind was filled about?! Altair and Ezio glance at each other, knowing that they have talked about this earlier with him. *How insecure is he to think the same thoughts over and over again? Even after we told him not to worry about it?*

"Are you still worried about my uncle?" Ezio finally asks.

From the look on the young man's face, Altair can pretty much tell how worried (and scared) Desmond is of the man who is the leader of the Italian Assassin Order and how accurate Ezio is in his deduction (this time). It doesn't exactly help that his habibi has experienced the brat's memories - meaning that he understands how sharp and skilled all members of the Order are compared to Desmond.

"...yeah, I am," The young man nods after a little moment of hesitation, looking down at the covers before looking back up to them, "It's like that for most Assassins, isn't it?"

Altair frowns, confused, "What do you mean by that?"

"I'm still new, I feel like I honestly don't bring any help to the Order at all," Desmond grips his fists into the fabric of the pants that he is wearing for the night, "I don't think the others appreciate me being back home because I..." He pauses, taking a deep breath before resuming (a little slower this time), "...because I'm a coward."

It wasn't until they hear Desmond look at them worriedly before sighing, looking down at the covers again, this time shame vibbing from him.

"I ran away before," The young man quietly responds, not looking up at them, "...I thought my parents were conspiracy freaks, maniacs for thinking that there was an enemy after us. Nothing happened where I lived; I just ran away from everything I lived with nine years ago. I abandoned my mother and two brothers, ran away from a father who I thought didn't care for me at all... I thought living in the Farm was useless and kept me trapped for so long." He closes his eyes, "I didn't even try to contact them. I didn't know what to do when I was captured by Abstergo..."

Altair was surprised; Ezio as well as the two exchange alarmed looks as they finally realize what the time traveler wanted for so long. Freedom. Desmond just wants to be free.

That's what his habibi truly desired; to be away from all of the problems that binds him.

"...that wasn't the case with you both, was it?" He hears Desmond quietly asking them, looking at them as if he was expecting the both of them to critique him for running away. Granted, Altair would normally do for a novice who is frightened at the training of the Order and what they live by, what they had to sacrifice. But Desmond... there was a part of him that wants to admonish the young man for abandoning his brethren when they need him the most so he can become a better Assassin.

But another part of him sympathizes with him; Altair was once reckless, but he ruined it all for the sake of his immaturity and arrogant pride just to get what he wants.

A soft, bitter chuckle comes from the American as Desmond glances over at the Syrian, "I didn't
know what to expect when I experienced your memories, Altair. But the more I experienced... I'll be honest, I'm envious of what you have done to help the Order. You managed to be a leader - a mentor and then Master Assassin! And then..." Amber-brown orbs shift to Ezio, "You, Ezio... oh man, you were amazing. You managed to climb up and help the Order, even while you were still in training... even if it was for the sake of your...

The American trails away, pausing before resuming, running his hand through his hair with a shaky, strained laugh as he shifts the subject into a different direction, "...I don't honestly feel like I'm even supposed to be one of the Order; I know how strained I am with my father, even if we don't show it; my mother worried about me more than usual, which I know, but I think she hates me for abandoning her; Connor's a better field Assassin than me - I think he's getting tired of protecting me all the time; Clay got through Abstergo with no hitches at all- he even escaped after one use from the Animus with the help of other Assassins. Even Lucy gets respect for giving information from Abstergo while Shaun and Rebecca support..."

Does he truly compare himself to the other Assassins in this harsh manner?

"...the point is, compared to you two, I've accomplished nothing except being used around for the sake of others. You know why and you realize how much... it depends on me in the end," Desmond's tired voice can barely reach Altair's ears, "It's exhausting."

"Stop saying that."

Desmond's eyes snap to look up at the Syrian; Ezio looks at Altair in surprise, but his dark amber eyes lock onto Desmond's surprised look.

"Huh?"

Altair stands up before sitting down next to Desmond, "Desmond. Stop judging yourself based on the actions of others and what they have done. Yes, we do get judged on our abilities, skills, and what we can truly bring to the Order. Yes, we demand that we should train ourselves to stop being a coward at the moment danger is close. But that gives you no excuse to believe that you are incompetent with your skills... because you are not."

The Syrian suddenly feels like he is back in Jerusalem again, talking to the future Assassins and to the ones who have doubts about being in the Order (like he once was with Al Mualim when he was a child and again when he was an adult). But he knows his surroundings; it isn't just to his habibi he is talking to. He sees Ezio glancing a curious glance at him, wondering what Altair is going to say next, as if this time, unlike before in which he was judging the Italian about his skills and loyalties, it was him who was being judged.

"You said so yourself when we first met - you are an Assassin; one of us- one of the Brotherhood. You aim to save your future from the Templars; that is a common goal, but you have to understand that we will do whatever it takes to help the innocents in need, to prove our worth. But you do understand..."

Then Altair feels as if he is no longer in Jerusalem with the novices, the other mentors, but in a room with his habibi and Ezio. He sighs, trying his best to say whatever he is going to say next without blurting too much about his emotions; he was glad that his feelings were said in two simple words in his native language: Ana Ahebak.

He was just relieved that Desmond does not know what it meant in English.

"...I care for you, habibi. And..." Altair will regret this later, he just knows it, "...that idiot over there
cares a lot for you.” He can tell Ezio looks surprised, but Altair shifts the subject, “Do you remember what we told you earlier about your skills and training? All you need is more practice, to hone your abilities with precision and accuracy. You can pass for a novice still, but in this case, we are making you into a true Assassin- who you are born to be.”

After all... His mind reminds the Syrian, It is infused in Desmond’s blood. Our bloodline.

Desmond nods, trying to absorb all of what the Syrian just said... before looking up at them in surprise, ”...come again? You two are... but I already got some training done - I told you this earlier! Do you both not remember? I just need help with coordinating and trying to make my attacks more discreet!”

"I know,” Altair sighs, ”I just want you to understand how serious we are about this.”

"It wasn’t good though, whoever your teachers were,” Ezio shakes his head, his arms weaving from behind to embrace the young man, ”Their methods were... how to place this? While their methods are quick and discreet to get the job done, it does not help that you tend to leave the other Templars alive as witnesses.”

Altair stares at Ezio in slight confusion, ”...your words are something I did not manage to comprehend.”

"I'm trying to say that the way Desmond has been taught are still flawed.”

"You stated the obvious brat." Then, ”Say something that we don't know and that does not confuse us like it did earlier, brat. You're making my habibi confused.”

Altair smirks, seeing a flare of jealousy appear in Ezio's eyes once again. Desmond sighs, shaking his head as his face darkens with a light red.

"Your... forget it, I don't even have enough energy for a fight, idiota.” The Italian sighs, placing his forehead against Desmond's back while Altair shakes his head.

The chances of me getting along with Ezio for Desmond's safe? I'm afraid that is not likely unless something happens like earlier.

"Desmond?" Altair quietly asks.

"Hm?"

"You do understand that we are trying to help you improve, not to make you learn everything over again,” The Master Assassin gently brushes over Desmond's right knuckles to calm the young man's nerves, ”You can show us how much you have learned before; then the Italian novice and I will take care of you from here. You do understand the basics, you know how to fight... you need to improve on the areas that hinder you and make sure you are fully aware of your surroundings more than what you already know. Even if you do not win the favor of the leader of this Order, you still have a chance to prove yourself in the Order back in my time."

Desmond give a small smiles of relief, meeting Altair's dark amber eyes, ”Thank you. That... really means a lot to me. I'll take you up on that... if we can fix everything that happens in our end."

Hopefully then, The Syrian nods, closing his eyes as he wonders how much of Jerusalem his habibi knows, You will become one of us.

"You’ll impress my uncle, tesoro mio,” Ezio gently replies, causing the young man to turn around to
see the Italian's determinant expression, "That, I will make sure of. I'll teach you everything he taught me- yes, while you excel in certain areas, there are new techniques and methods that we use here that are foregin to you. Don't worry about my uncle or the thoughts of others- this is about you improving. Not about trying to impress anyone- proving your loyalty to the Order is what matters to us."

Altair can't help but smile slightly; he was impressed at the way Ezio handled this (instead of approaching it in an arrogant way).

"Of course... if you do well," The Italian chuckles before kissing the young man (and Desmond was blushing red as the result), "...well, you understand where I am getting at."

Altair resists the urge to slap his hand against his face, I take back whatever small respect I had for that preening moron.

"I... I guess?" Desmond manages to squeak in response, causing the Italian to chuckle.

Altair glares daggers at Ezio, but the other Assassin manages to avoid it, "What, elder? Jealous that I already have Desmond's attention?" There was a certain smugness to the Italian's voice that Altair loathes (whenever the brat has his eyes on whatever Altair deems as his).

"Shut it, fool."

The young man sighs, shaking his head as he grumbles something about a 'really unusual three-way relationship', but that still doesn't quell Altair's ire.

"Desmond,"The Syrian finally decides that it was getting late as he sees the moon through the open window, "Get some sleep. We must not afford to waste any more time." He can tell his habibi was about to protest and wanting to stay up a bit more, but Altair doesn't waver from his glare; finally, he sees Desmond slumping his shoulders, defeated.

"Fine..." The young man grumbles, getting into his side of the bed and pulling the covers, "You'll see how much training I got from those idiots back at home. Just watch, I'll mess up a lot."

You won't, habibi, Altair can't help but give an amused smile as he shifts to make room on the makeshift sleeping area where Desmond and Ezio were (he can feel the brat glaring at him, but he brushes it off like usual), "Do not worry. I have confidence that you will improve in a matter of few days." He manages to respond in the English language Desmond speaks in, "We have mentioned to you what you need to work on.

"A few- how!?" Desmond exclaims incredulous, "How the hell will I- That's just not possible!"

"Trust me," He brushes his lips against the young man's lips (he can't but smile when he feels the American's face heats up from the small gesture of affection), "You will be fine, habibi."

"Do not worry, all right?" He hears Ezio murmur, letting go of his embrace on Desmond (which Altair is secretly glad for) before giving him a small peck on the back of Desmond's neck, "Promettimi, tesoro mio?"

Altair sighs, shaking his head, his eye twitching in sheer irritation when Desmond's blush grows a bit darker over at the other display of affection, Maybe I should learn how to tolerate being with this idiot more since I do not see him leaving my habibi anytime soon.

"Y-Yeah," The young man manages to nod, the blush still painted there, "Got it."
"Bene. Do not worry then. The elder and I will not let anything terrible happen to you again. Isn't that right...?" The Syrian rolls his eyes as Ezio smirks, the last part bluntly stated with a little irritation, but said with enough emphasis.

"I know it already, you preening baboon," Altair deadpans, "But if you do not mind, I would rather conserve enough energy for tomorrow... so that one of us does not try to sleep in later than usual."

"Hey! Che fa male, è vecchio!"

"Deal with it," The Master Assassin flatly shoots back, irritated before he sees Desmond's eyes droop from exhaustion, "...tired, are you, fledgling?"

He silently chuckles, seeing the glare (and light blush) on Desmond's face at that nickname, "I am... can I get some decent rest now?"

"Fine, fine."

Altair sighs of relief before joining the other two by grabbing the blanket that he was using earlier (that was on the floor) and covers him with it; he can tell the other two have their own sets.

It was quiet for a few minutes-

"Desmond?"

Oh for the love of- what the hell does the feathered brat want now? Altair mentally groans, trying to keep his eyes shut to try and ignore the annoying Italian.

"Desmond, I-" And then he hears nothing come out as quick as it came.

Altair blinks, opening his eyes before staring up at Ezio, who looks away. The elder frowns, seeing as the Italian attempts to cover up his previous emotions pretty badly. If Desmond say it, it wasn't expressed through the young man's face.

"...Is something wrong, Ezio?" Desmond worriedly asks.

Instead of a response, the Italian gives a small smile with fake reassurance, "...nothing, tesoro mio. Nothing at all."

Really. Altair glares at Ezio, not buying the excuse for even a second, So why do your eyes say something else?

For some reason, there is a part of him that understands what feelings Ezio is going through; that he can't deny. But for the sake of what is important at the moment, Altair would rather focus on the primary objective: to find the new Piece of Eden before any Templars get their hands on it while making sure his habibi becomes a more focused Assassin than what he already is. Sighing, he drapes his arms around the young man's chest at least give Desmond comfort so he can sleep calmly. The Syrian hears Desmond sigh of relief as the young man relaxes against his arms.

A small smile twitches in his lips, seeing how calm and serene the time traveler looks, as if the world's problems were gone in one sweep...

No nightmares shall come in your dreams tonight, my habibi, Altair sighs, closing his eyes as he feels sleep washing over him, That, I will make sure of. I-

"Desmond... Non lasciarmi, amore mio...!"
Altair blinks, frowning as he hears a **choked** whisper from Ezio.

*Did I hear that right?*

He grunts in irritation as he feels two arms wrap around Desmond's waist, but he didn't release his arm from the young man's shoulder. Altair knew perfectly well what the idiot Assassin wants from Desmond.

*He just asked Desmond not to leave him. Why would he... that selfish brat! How dare he say that to-*

The Master Assassin stops himself from having a mental rant, rethinking about what he was going to say, on the way the Italian said those very words, the thought he had when his *habibi* woke up from the nightmare called the Bleeding Effect, the question about what if Desmond does leave...

But more importantly, even though he is responsible for the duties he has back in his own time in Masyaf and his loyalty to uphold the Order with Malik and his companions; even after they do manage to fix the time problem and he returns to Jerusalem...

*I... suppose I should ask what I want for myself instead asking that question to Desmond, Altair bitterly thinks before closing his eyes in an attempt to sleep, *Is it selfish for me to ask to be with the one I care about the most, to be with my *habibi*?*

Even if it means I give up everything that I have rebuilt to uphold my reputation in my time just to be with Desmond in the future?*

His eyes close to sleep, leaving him with that thought before gently tightening his hold on Desmond as the fear returns again in a different form.

*I don't want Desmond to leave.*

"Desmond, I-"

Ezio's breath hitches, stopping himself as his mind registers what he was about to say to him.

Desmond's brown eyes meets hesitant light amber, a confused look crossing his face, "...Is something wrong, Ezio?" Even the elder is slightly glaring at him to get whatever he was about to say over with. Ezio sighs, shaking his head as he give a small smile.

"*nothing, tesoro mio. Nothing at all."

He sees the young American blink before sighing, "Okay, if you say so..." Then he goes back into the covers, trying to get ample amounts of rest.

The Italian doesn't want to tell **his** Desmond, his *tesoro, amore mio...* not yet. He can't help but glare at the arm Altair draped around the young man before letting a silent sigh; his hands running through his unwound hair.

It was unexpected and yes, despite knowing the time traveler for about a few days, Ezio can't help but admit that he is truly attracted to Desmond. Yes, it came from the fact that Desmond was present with him at certain times of his life up until now through that cursed device- the Animus, was it? And he had a feeling that the young man understand more about the lives the two were going to have; he had a feeling on the day of his father and brothers' execution, Desmond was there with him, a silent comfort to him when Ezio was wracked with anger and guilt; when Ezio killed the bastard responsible for betraying his family; when Ezio aided his companions and his best friend.
Ezio can't help but wonder if Desmond was there when the Florence man flirted with various women, his conquests, when he was with Cristina and Caterina...

Now that his *angelo custode* is here in person, in the living flesh (and through the most unusual way—after all, the little sparrow had crashed on him by accident), Ezio had a feeling that he is more attached to the foreigner than he initially thought.

Unlike the other women, Desmond is more than his eyewitness, his guide, his silent companion. He was someone that filled a part of Ezio that was empty, that will remain there forever.

Ezio's heart tightened from Altair's question about what he would do if the time traveler leaves them; after what just happened...

It wasn't until he feels his body quaking in that fear that he knows his answer to the elder's question.

"*Desmond... Non lasciarmi, amore mio...!*" He thickly whispers (to himself), burying his head against the crook of Desmond's neck as he silently cries, his tears coming out from his eyes for the first time since he last saw his father and brothers die; since he last saw his mother and sister grieve along with Mario, who is saddened and angered by the unjustful deaths.

He's now upset at the possibility of someone that he mentally swears to protect leaving him, someone that Ezio deems as special... if the young man did indeed gets captured by Abstergo once again, the chances of his death will be very high (since Desmond did mention if the Templars do get what they want, Desmond will be killed).

He has heard from two accounts; one from a close family- someone that has seen it from the outside; the other being from his *tesoro* himself. Indeed, the young novice Assassin finally realized that he needs to help other like him, bring down the Templars, and make the cause of the Order prevail. But the cost of all of this was too high for even Ezio to realize: Desmond's body was not up to par with the strength of the Assassins' themselves, but it was through years of running away and torture he had to endure from the Templars; Desmond's mind from the psychological scars that embedded itself from the moment he was forced into that ugly contraption- the Animus- and relive the memories of not only him, but Altair's as well.

As much as Ezio hates to admit it... Connor is right.

Ezio wants to help the young man because he is in love with the young man named Desmond Miles. He truly doesn't want Desmond to leave... ever. Not when he has a lot at stake for him.

Even if it costs what he has worked for up until now to follow the time traveler, to be the one to protect him.

*My promise to you earlier about driving away your nightmares...* The Italian lets out a shaky sigh before feeling his eyes water. Squeezing his eyes shut to stop himself from brekaing down, he suddenly shifts closer and hugs the young man's body closer to him, hearing a sleepy grunt of protest from the other man, but Ezio doesn't care; he just wants to have his *amore* with him right now.

*Even if you do leave,* Ezio buries his face against Desmond's shoulders while slightly tightening his hug, *I... don't know what to do.*

He finally hears the other two Assassins sleeping before he sits up to get a better look. Altair, Ezio realizes, looks a bit disgruntled at the new position, but he seems to relax. As much as he hates to admit it, the older man would be helpful in teaching Desmond in ways Ezio cannot in terms of
combat and possibly aid Ezio in other missions and weapon techniques. But he's still irritated that Desmond cares for the Master Assassin and that Ezio has to... share... with Altair for Desmond's attention.

At least we agree on a few things, he grudgingly admits, We do have a common goal; to fix this mess and to stop the Templars before they find the Piece of Eden in the map. Not to mention he does appreciate my allies...

Then Ezio looks to see his tesoro finally relaxed, the young man's features softened from sleep as if the dangers of the world did not harm him before. Gently caressing Desmond's cheek, the Italian softly smiles before returning to his sleeping position, pressing a gentle kiss against the young man's shoulder (which, Ezio can tell, has been marked by him and the elder).

He sighs, closing his eyes as he wraps his arm around Desmond's waist, Desmond, I will do everything I can to aid you, to stop your nightmares from returning.

Anything to help you, amore mio. Anything to have you by my side.

End Part 11

...again, another reason why I am a huge sucker for romances. Action will be up next chapter...

What's next: Training and sparring with two Master Assassins was something Desmond knew was going to happen. Leonardo finally translated the map was also fine. They should have gotten more warnings about what the inscription on the map said...
Trained

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I'm having way too much fun writing these and saying that the series is NOT MINE.

So... a few things to note on here:

The Piece of Eden is a weapon, but it can either manipulate anything/anyone or kill people. It's not the Apple, Stave, Shard, Sword... any of the ones mentioned in the AC Series. The message Aita gave to the modern Assassins is not for the hacker. he modern Assassins think there is an AI in the Animus, but remember a little thing in AC3 with the emails? In Part 2, I mentioned that there was another time traveler before Desmond. Keep that person in mind for future chapters; also, Altair can understand English and Italian (and the others can understand Desmond) despite the language barrier. Figure out why; this one will be answered within a couple of chapters.

Someone asked me about how the this relationship is going to work considering that these three are from a different timeline. I've read a few and I know what I plan to do with it; I just hope it goes well and makes sense to people.

And I've been pretty busy. That explains for the delay.

To those who have been patient for this... Enjoy!

Warning: Aside the way I describe action and the usual stuff I warn about in every chapter? I know they use guards as target practice. I placed in dummies for sword practices. Sorry folks; no bloodshed yet. Oh, and this is just mostly action stuff. Not a lot of fluff. ...well, maybe.

Part 12: Trained

"Desmond."

Desmond groans, trying to bury himself into the bed and into the warmth of someone was holding him in the bed. He was also trying to block out the sounds of whoever was trying trying to wake him up...

"Desmond, wake up."

"Five more minutes..." The American was tempted to pull the covers back and curl back to the sweet lulling of sleep. He can also hear a small grunt from the other person next to him (he can feel the arms tighten a bit), "I'll be more awake then..."

"For the love of..." A sigh, "Guess I have no choice then."
It was instant, but Desmond immediately feels the covers being yanked from him before feeling lifted up by-

"A-Altair!?" He exclaims in alarm, his eyes open as his body instantly jolts in contact from the chilly wind while being lifted up by the Syrian, "W-What the-"

"This is what happens when you refuse to wake up," Altair mutters low enough not to bother Ezio as sharp eyes meet slightly hazy brown, "Do you always complain about this?"

"I don't wake up at - is it still dark outside?" The time traveler exclaims in alarm as he looks over at the window to see the sun barely coming out, "You wake up this early just to do a simple training routine!? Are you-"

The Syrian instantly cuts him off, "Quiet, habibi. We're going to train so you can learn how to be alert at certain times. Even if you don't enjoy what time the Templars begin their attack."

Desmond blinks before he lets out a tired groan, "...great. Usually Abstergo somehow shows up at the worst of all times and not when we sleep."

"Trust me," He looks to see alert dark amber eyes shifting to meet him, "We have to prepare for even the most unexpected of times."

The American opens his mouth when he realizes the validity of the Master Assassin's statement... especially more so since he isn't back at home; he's in a much different time in which technology doesn't alert him of an incoming Templar attack. He sighs, closing his eyes as he slowly replies in Arabic, "...okay, I get it. Now will you let me go so we can..." Desmond trails off, frowning as his eyes open, "...Wait, what are we doing?"

"Oh..." Was it just him, or was that a small evil smirk that was present on the Master Assassin's face at the moment Desmond asked that? "Running."

...wait, what? That's my training?

"Running... as in jogging?" The time traveler hisses, struggling to lift himself from his position (the other man is not letting him go, that was for sure).

"Not quite," Altair pauses as he lets the young man go, "You will see. Get dressed."

"Seriously...?" Desmond grumbles as he walks around to find the clothing that he has been wearing from the day before, "...for training? Just what do you have in mind, anyway?"

It was worse than Desmond originally thought.

"This is... exhausting!" The said young man was beginning to become weary at the moment he and the Master Assassin turn another corner from the running 'course'. Altair, of course, wasn't saying anything like usual; rather, he kept his concentration and was calm throughout the entire run. Desmond had to try and keep up, of course; he thought it was just a regular run, but it somehow turned into a mini obstacle course that involved climbing (okay, he was expecting that), jumping from roof to roof without making any sort of indication to anyone inside the home (at least Desmond barely managed to grab the tenants' attention... and it was only once that he nearly fell from the roof when Altair grabbed him), and sprinting at some point throughout the run along with a few leaps of faith (and that was when Desmond realized that this was too much for a 'simple' obstacle/morning jog).
It turned out to be running through a part of Venice while trying their best not to attract any of the Templars’ attentions was a lot simpler with another Assassin at his side (since the American saw that Altair has been using his Eagle Vision while pulling his hood back). But knowing that this is something that Desmond would have to deal with one day would be harder than it looks. After all, he doesn't even want to tell the Syrian Assassin that he has Eagle Vision (thanks to the stupid Bleeding Effect). But he doesn't think it was particular important...

...especially since Desmond was beginning to lose a little bit of his energy just trying to keep up with the Master Assassin.

"Are you not used to these conditions?" Altair asks, arching an eyebrow in question as he saw Desmond's flushed face, "Your body is probably not used to the surroundings-

"Oh? No, I'm fine... it's just I wasn't expecting to sprint more than actual running," Desmond quickly replies, wiping his brow as they take a look at their surroundings.

For Desmond, it was usually Connor and Clay trying (and failing) to improve on Desmond’s with his weapons, his 'choppy' movements, and his endurance- being a captive in Abstergo for what he felt was eternity (in reality, it was about a month and a half). The fact that both brothers did try their best was something Desmond did take a good note of; despite his attempts of trying to replicate the movements from the Bleeding Effect, they were successful in attempting to let Desmond learn the basics.

...somewhat.

Compared to the training he got with his brothers and the others - this was torture!

They were almost at the place where the three were staying at when the young time traveler notices a wanted poster near them. Sighing in irritation, Desmond walks over and rips the poster before crumpling and stuffing it into his pocket; Altair looks with a small amount of interest as the young man walks back,

"May I see that?" The Syrian holds out his hand for the poster. The young man hands over the crumpled poster before seeing the Assassin unwrap it before sighing, shaking his head as he stuffs the poster into his bag, "...what?"

"That novice needs to be more careful if he wants to make his whereabouts secretive to the Templars. Already his clothing seems to stand out from those before him; his actions are something he should be aware of as well."

"Critical of me again, old man?"

That catches both Desmond and Altair's attentions as they see a blurred figure jump down the empty alleyway... to reveal Ezio; fully dressed in his Assassin's garb. He was walking towards them, a scowl on his face as he meets the other two.

"You're finally awake, brat," Altair asks, crossing his arms, "About time; if this was a real mission, it would have been over by now."

"Ha," Ezio rolls his eyes before glancing over to the exhausted Desmond, "Are you all right, tesoro mio?"
"Just a bit winded," The American replies before glancing over at Altair, "How much further do we have?"

"A few more before we reach to our destination," The Syrian arches an eyebrow, seeing the young man's current status, "Are you sure that-"

"I said I'm fine! I need to get used to all of that jumping, running, and climbing stuff." He waves his hand to let the two know that he is still alive.

Desmond can swear he hears Altair and Ezio grumble something about having to build up his endurance, which according to his mind, meant two ways... one of them that caused his face to grow a shade darker than it should be. It was obvious that both Assassins knew what he was thinking about because he hears Ezio's chuckle, "What's wrong, tesoro? Are you thinking about what happened a few nights ago?"

"H-Hey!" The American stammers, his face still red, "No! I'm just- thinking about something else, that's all!"

"So why are you lying?" This time, Altair is one who is teasing him, a small smirk on his face.

Desmond's glare should have worked into telling the two Assassins to leave the subject alone, but his blushing diffused the effect (making him pout instead), "It's just that I was... look! I'd rather like to focus on trying to finish this... this 'morning jog' and get something to drink before I die from lack of water! Or..." His eyes look down, trying not to meet their faces to stop making a bigger embarrassment out of himself.

...or get a rather terrible ache that will do through his body since Desmond apparently forgot to stretch (and ask Ezio for that horrendous medicine - well, that pain from... ahem (Stop thinking about it! The time traveler mentally smacks himself, feeling his face heating up again, Stop blushing goddamnit!) wasn't terrible compared to what he's going to feel tomorrow).

And he should really stop rambling when he feels nervous about something.

"You really need to stop rambling out loud, habibi."

Desmond's head instantly snaps back up to see a slightly amused Altair, who is now leaning against the wall with his arms crossed, "Would you like to tell us what else has been on your mind?"

The time traveler gawks before narrowing his eyes, a bit furious-

"Awww... well, well, elder. It seems you've angered the piccolo passerotto." Ezio chuckles, his hand trying to cover his mouth to prevent from chuckling.

"Stop calling me that!" Desmond huffs in irritation before trying to steer their conversation in a different light, "Are we going to finish this run or not?"

"We will," The amusement immediately disappears from the Syrian's eyes as he pushes himself off from the wall, "It seems that initially, I wanted to return and wake up the idiot-"

"Which I did, bastardo," Ezio's mood changes back into the irritated one from earlier, "Why did you both not wake me up?"

"You were still consumed with the Sandman's visions." Altair rolls his eyes, "...or your senses have dulled."
"Hey! My senses are not that terrible!"

The Syrian seems to ignore it as he address back to Desmond, "We talked about this before, Desmond... your skills. You need to improve on it."

"I know that," The American nods, his face returning to its original color, "I'm guessing that's what we're going to do all day? Just running and jumping around?"

"No. Were you not listening to me earlier? The... stupid brat," Ezio glares at the Master Assassin at this slight insult, "... and I are going to train in order to see what skills you have learned from the Assassin Order you were raised in before proving your worth to the other Assassins. Hopefully you possess enough energy to show us what knowledge you have in wielding the weapons of the Assassin."

"...eh?" Desmond blinks, confused, "I thought it was just the hidden blade?"

The Master Assassin frowns, "...were you not taught to wield other weapons as well?"

"Other weapons? Ummm... hang on a sec."

The American places his bag down to fish around before taking out the small dagger Clay gave him and the hidden blade that he placed in his bag for safe-keeping. After closing and readjusting the bag over his left shoulder, Desmond reveals the only two weapons he has to the other two Assassins, "I only have these two at hand. The rest... it's back in my own time."

He can feel Altair carefully pick up the dagger before glancing at the hidden blade, "Put the blade on. You will always need it."

"I know." It was a mantra that was strapped into his mind thanks to Connor and Clay. Keep the hidden knife on, keep the damn thing on you at all times...

As the young man straps the hidden blade on his left arm, he sees Ezio walking over closer to inspect the dagger with the elder. He was too concentrated to hear Altair's question since he was making sure the straps were not cutting his arm circulation off before looking up at the elder, "Ask that again?"

The Syrian frowns, not liking to repeat himself, "I asked who gave you this. This does not seem to look like any ordinary blade I have seen."

"Oh..."Desmond's eyes softens slightly when looking at the dagger, "Clay- my older brother- gave that to me as a welcome back gift." He sees two pairs of eyes looking at him in surprise; a small chuckle escapes from him, "He said it was for emergency in case the hidden blade breaks in one of my missions. I highly doubt it though, but I still carry it around with me and I use it... I know how to handle it."

"So you are proficient with this?" Ezio blinks, inspecting the blade once again as he takes it from Altair's hands, "The craftsmanship is simple yet so smooth..."

Desmond nods, a small nod, "My brother had it custom ordered... to make sure I keep it on me at all times." He gestures for the Italian to hand the blade back to him, in which Ezio complies, "...Next to the hidden blade, my father, Connor, and Clay taught me how to use this knife in a fight. Well, of course, we used dummies and all, but... I managed to get the hang of it."

"So I see," Altair murmurs, crossing his arms as he muses, "Are you good with anything else?"
"As in fighting wise? I can do some martial arts, boxing, some punches..." Desmond blinks before realizing that the Syrian was asking about the weapons they use; not hand-to-hand combat, "Wait - for weapons? I don't even know how to hold a sword!"

The Master Assassin looks surprised, "What about throwing knives?"

"No."

Ezio's amber eyes slightly widen, "Not even poison darts? Or archery?"

"No! We don't use those in our time at all because... ah." The American sighs in defeat, knowing that there was no way to tell those two blockheads that technology has changed them, "...let me guess. I have to learn how to use those aside perfecting what I use with the Hidden Blade."

Both Altair and Ezio nod in unison, causing the young man to groan.

"Like I said, I don't even know how to hold a sword, let alone trying to throw knives. I mean... I did once, but that was when I was..." Desmond trails off, not wanting to finish the sentence before shaking his head, "...well, you know."

"We know," Altair grips his fist, not wanting to be reminded about the Bleeding Effect again, "Don't dwell on it, habibi."

The young man hesitantly nods, his eyes still glancing over at the tightened fist before shifting his eyes downward. "So... is it just like wielding a dagger?" He gulps, trying to change the subject as he shuffles his feet, "Holding a sword, I mean."

"I'm afraid not, tesoro mio," Ezio shakes his head, "Holding a sword is much different than the knife. Weight, balance, technique as well as stance. You need to learn how to efficiently take care of those without hurting yourself."

Altair's silence was an agreement with the Italian as they glance over to Desmond, who slightly gulps, "...ah. And archery...?"

"That requires a lot of practice, but it is not needed in this time," Altair replies, looking around from his view on the alleyway, "One shot and it will gain the Templars' attention."

"So arrows are out?" Desmond doesn't even want to comment that the modern Assassins use guns and bullets as opposed to the hidden blade. He has a feeling that those two will not react well to any sort of technology at all (well, the communicator was okay for the Assassins); especially with the Animus... and sharp hitting bullets.

"Unfortunately... yes," Ezio has a disappointed look on his face, "I do have a crossbow, but like the elder said, it does catch the attention of the guards and your enemies."

A crossbow? That catches Desmond's attention. He has wanted to wield one as a child, but his parents were against it (and some idiot who happened to overhear and pointed out that the arrow can accidentally ricochet and turn to attack him, which made Desmond wonder whether or not this guy watched too many cartoons). He did also know that the Italian Assassin was proficient in using the crossbow as he witnessed in the Animus.

"Actually..." Desmond pauses before trying to word his sentences carefully before asking without making himself like a moron in Italian, "Ezio? Do you have still have your crossbow?"

"Si. Why?" The Italian asks, a bit confused, "I do not have it with me at the moment-"
"No no! I was actually going to ask if I can try it out," The time traveler can't help but ask, just to sate his childish curiosity, "...for just one try. I mean. I want to try and wield the crossbow... can you teach me?"

If anything would have alarmed Altair, that was it as his dark amber orbs look at Desmond in surprise. Ezio, on the other hand, looked ecstatic as he nods.

"Of course!" The Italian beams, hugging Desmond, causing the younger man to be caught off-guard before kissing him, "Anything to help you! Tesoro mio, you don't know how happy this makes me!"

Well, that was a surprise. Desmond gently chuckles, smiles back, and gently pats the Italian on the back, "You have no idea how thankful I am. I've... honestly wanted one as a kid."

"You'll get your own when you have proven yourself efficient with it," He can see the Italian grinning as he feels a small peck on his cheek, "I'll thank you later in a more appropriate manner, caro mio."

"H-Hey..."

"Ahem. Are you two finished?" A growl cuts through their small moment.

Oh boy... Desmond rolls his eyes, seeing Ezio smirk at the now obviously jealous and ire Altair.

"Now we are," The Florence Assassin drawls as he is proud of fulfilling his achievement of getting Desmond's attention for the day, "Do you have a problem with it, stronzo?"

"As a matter of fact-"

"Wait!" Desmond (once again, in hashed Arabic) walks a bit, stopping Altair in his tracks as he faces the time traveler, "Actually, Altair. I need a favor to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"Do you mind showing me how to create your bombs and how to use them?" He must have a knack for catching Altair twice in a row. Ezio looks curious to see how the Syrian will respond to this.

To be honest, Desmond thinks that those have been very useful for sticky situations, even back at home and in his own time. Not only it will be a distraction with the potent chemicals, but opposed to using grenades and dynamite (oh, the horrendous tests with that have been proven... let's put it this way; Rebecca and Lucy has banned the men from touching the red sticks since then- yes, Shaun is trigger-happy when it comes to explosions next to Connor. That even creeped the living hell out of Clay, Desmond, Rebecca, and Lucy for about a week), smoke bombs are more useful for escape and distractions.

Not to mention that Ezio doesn't have the bomb crafting knowledge until later in his life, so Altair was the best at that.

"...please?" The time traveler asks, this time trying to also stop those two from making a scene in public. He just hopes that things will go smooth sailing after this-

"Fine."

Desmond perks up to see Altair relax from his tense position (the one in which he looks like he is ready to murder someone), "...really? You will?"

Was that a blush he can see from the Master Assassin's face?
"Yes! Thank you!" Desmond can't help but sigh in relief. Finally! He doesn't have to rely on the recorded memories to see how to make a smoke bomb or having to rely and finding some vague results on the internet, "You have no idea how grateful I am for this!"

It wasn't until he feels arms wrap around in a gentle embrace. "I agreed, didn't I?" The Syrian chuckles, gently

"Hey! Hands off him, old man!" Ezio frowns, annoyance in his voice.

"You took just as long, baboon," Altair cuts back

Okay. Maybe wielding some of those should be easy then, Desmond mentally sighs in relief, also relieved to calm any fury that any of the two should have, "So! When do we begin?"

"Good." Altair nods, "We'll start... after another round of running through the buildings now the preening baboon has finally joined us."

"Hey! I am not preening, elder!" Ezio's spark of irritation returns, "And you think I can't endure whatever you and my tesoro just went through? Vaffanculo! I can show that I can be just as equal to you!"

"Then prove it, brat," The Syrian slaps Ezio's head before pointing towards the top of one of the taller structures, "Race towards that building."

"Tch- There? That is too easy!"

"Through the roofs of the buildings," Altair finishes, a small smirk in his face, "You will never reach there, novice."

Desmond groans, facepalming.

Ezio gapes before narrowing his amber eyes, "Is that a challenge, old man?" The Italian growls, competition in his eyes, "Let us begin."

And with that, the two Assassins were gone as they begin their... race.

Desmond groans, hanging his head as he begins to run after the two Assassins. So much for wanting those two to get along. They're just as bad as me and Clay!

After another round of running, climbing, and jumping through another section of Venice, the three Assassins got themselves some food and drinks- mostly water to regain most of their energy.

During the second run, Altair and Ezio quickly knew that Desmond's endurance did not match to par with theirs (since in the midst of their competitive streaks, they noticed that the young man tried to catch up to them from a few distances away). In the end, they just waited for Desmond to join them... in which resulted in him nearly collapsing from exhaustion just to track the two Assassins down.

It is official, Ezio deems, seeing how slow Desmond was walking next to Altair, His endurance needs to match that of mine and Altair's. He can only last in battle for so long before... this happens.

They also tested Desmond on knife fighting (the young man used the dagger to show what he has learned from his brothers). While the form was unusual, it was proven best for Desmond since he seems to be comfortable with it; it was a surprise to both Assassins to see that he was fast and managed to take down the straw targets in a short amount of time; the same goes for the Hidden
Blade. Except with it, Ezio and Altair were surprised to see that Desmond incorporates their own moves with his own to execute most of his attacks.

They don’t dare ask Desmond where he knew their moves - it was from the Bleeding Effect (since Connor relayed that information to the two).

It wasn’t until after they reached back towards the building that Ezio found a perfect sword for Desmond to use while he was grabbing his own from the blacksmith. The sheath was black, adorned with thin and elaborate decorations of leaves at the end of the sword. The hilt was covered with black leather, the silver metal contrasting against the grip. There are buckles that allow easy attachment to the leather belt that Ezio asked (and paid) for.

Taking out the sword from its sheath, the blade shined from the light of the She hilt slightly curved, something that this blacksmith wanted to try for just this sword; the metal was forged of the same alloy that created Ezio’s own blade.

Giving the sword a few swings (away from the blacksmith and his possessions so he won’t injure anyone, of course), Ezio can tell that the sword is light enough for both combat and to hold against the side so it won’t feel like a rock was attached on the belt. He will have to tell the young man that it will take time to run around and get used to the weight against the left side.

As for how the blade is crafted, it slices against the air smoothly; the stabs were swift with precision. Of course, the blade is a little short for Ezio to handle, but it is good enough for Desmond to handle.

He knows Altair has his own sword (he has seen it constantly by the elder’s side) - possibly as a weapon given as either a reward or a gift from a mission to excel in his rank. Ezio knows not to ask about it (it was possible that the sword might have been a personal item - after all, the hilt is drastically different in which it was shaped into that of an eagle and has brown leather wrapping).

Perfect, The Italian smiles as he places the sword back into its sheath, Now, to begin training...

Desmond was gawking at the sword Ezio gives him, not daring to pull the sword out from the sheath before looking up, ")no way. Nooo way. I- I can't hold onto this!"

"Why not?" Ezio asks, a bit confused when he sees how alarmed Desmond looks, "It belongs to you now, tesoro mio."

"But..." The young man trails off as he looks back down at the elaborate sword, "How much was this?"

"Enough for you to train with," Altair frowns, looking at the sword before shaking his head, "You are spoiling him, Ezio. What the hell are you thinking?"

"The weight of the metal alloy is light enough for Desmond to wield," Ezio rolls his eyes, arching an eyebrow over at Altair’s sword, "I can imagine it is a lot lighter than the sword that you have on you."

"At least it gives me more force to kill," The Syrian glares back before looking down at the time traveler again, "Habibi. Are you right-handed or left-handed?"

Desmond frowns, holding the sheathed blade by the belt loop, "I'm... wait, writing or fighting wise?"

"Which hand do you use most often?" Altair asks again, looking a bit exasperated.
"I use my right hand for writing," The time traveler pauses, looking at the sword again before gripping the hilt with his right hand, "For some reason, this feels right."

"You have to be familiar with it," Ezio comments as he withdraws his blade with his right hand, "These are not like the hidden blades in which they are attached to you."

"You don't think I know that?" He can hear the American grumble as he carefully unsheathes the blade to get a good grip on it (his hand still holding onto the leather loop) before blinking, "This sword feels a little heavy."

That surprises the Italian Assassin as he walks closer to inspect the blade again, "A little heavy? How so?"

"It's... like lifting a long weight," Desmond murmurs as he holds the sword upward, "I'm not used to it, you know... are you sure teaching me how to hold a sword is a good idea?"

"Not how to hold one," Altair indicates towards the straw dummies they have been using before unsheathing his sword and striking one of the dummies, causing the straws to spill out, "...but how to attack with one."

Ezio rolls his eyes before following suit, this time using some of the techniques Mario taught him as he too strikes and stabs a straw-filled dummy before the straws spills out from it, "Now... you try, Desmond. This should be interesting to watch..."

The young man looks at the sword before nodding (hesitantly), poising to attack with the blade before running up to the third dummy and strikes it... with little strike made into the dummy as opposed to how Altair and Ezio slashed the dummy.

"Like... that?"

Already he can see the elder sigh and place his hand against his forehead. Ezio frowns, shaking his head, "That was merely a scratch - try again Desmond. This time, put more force into the strike." He hopes that the young man will get at least a strike in the straw dummy.

"I'll try," Desmond nods, licking his lips in anticipation as he takes a few steps back, poising his blade... before running to strike it again. This time, he goes put in a little more force when he strikes the dummy. The strike mark is deeper than his first attempt, but it still looks light compared to the state of the other two targets. "Well?"

"...this might not be as simple for him as it was for us," Altair mutters, glancing over at Ezio, who gives a small wince. "Much better than the first try, but it needs more strength into the strike. You are supposed to finish your opponent, not wound them."

"But..." Desmond pauses, "That's the best I can give."

That's... it? Ezio stares in surprise, "Hang on. Try stabbing the target and take the blade out."

"What? Are you kidding me? Like a rapier!?!" Desmond look at the Italian in alarm, who looks in confusion (the same for the Syrian, who is just observing at this point).

"What in the world is a rapier?" The Italian blinks before sighing, "Never mind that- look what I do and repeat, all right?" He sees the nod from the time traveler. Walking up towards the dummy, Ezio unsheathes his knife before stabbing the dummy... and successfully sheathing it again. "Go ahead,"
He indicates the dummy towards Desmond, who nods before taking out his sword.

He does stab the sword deep into the dummy, but when he tries to take it out, the sword would not budge from the position. Frowning, the American tries to grab the sword again, but the sword wouldn't pull out.

"You have got to be kidding me," The American glares at the sword before grabbing the sword with both hands and pulls on it as he takes a few steps back... causing the sword to come out, but the force from it causes Desmond to lose his footing.

"Whoa!" The American fumbles in his step before falling on the ground (the sword clattered in front of him, missing him, thank God), "OW! Stupid piece of crap! Why the hell is it hard to take the sword out?"

"Your strength... does not match to efficiently wield the weight of the sword," Altair explains, shaking his head as he helps Desmond up while Ezio grabs the sword, "You need to build up more arm strength and have the agility to wield the sword like an extended blade."

"This is not a knife, tesoro mio," Ezio takes the sheath as he puts the sword back in before handing it back to Desmond, "Remember; this is the third blade next to the knife and hidden blade."

"...oh." Desmond sighs, shaking his head as he glances down at the sword, "I'm still not used to this. Holding a sword itself is harder than it looks..."

Dear God. Ezio grimaces, placing his hands gently on Desmond's shoulders, Let us hope his throwing skills are better than this.

Knife throwing wasn't any better.

"Mio Dio..."

"...what?"

"What are you doing?"

Desmond stares at the Italian Assassin as if the obvious was right in front of him, "I am throwing a knife. The one from the set you let me borrow."

Altair grimaces, seeing the Italian getting a bit annoyed. Keep at it and eventually your emotions will get the best of you. The Italian somehow had a feeling of what Altair was thinking, causing the Italian to take a deep breath and sigh, his irritation going away slowly before turning back to Desmond.

"I'm talking about your stance," Ezio frowns, but he sees the confused look on the young man's face before clarifying, "-the way you're holding the knife."

"This again!?"

The Syrian doesn't even want to know whether he should interfere in this exercise to show Desmond how it's been done before when throwing the knife. In fact, from the rate it's going, he might as well present it to the young man just to let him get it over with. And yes, I want to know- which novice showed knife throwing as if it was tossing away a scarp of paper?

He can hear the Italian Assassin huff in annoyance before taking one of his knives out, "Watch."
And with a good amount of force, he throws the knife and it hits one of the arms of the marked x that was lined against the center of the straw-filled dummy. Satisfied, Ezio turns to Desmond as he thumbs over towards the dummy, "Now you try to follow what I just did."

Altair can see the incredulous look on the young man's eyes before letting a groan escape him while picking up another knife from the set, "As if that obstacle course was bad enough..."

*That was just a warm-up. What constitutes that in your time?* The Syrian frowns in slight ire, wondering what in the world does Desmond deem as a simple exercise.

"*Desmond, You're hitting the target wrong! Again!*"

"*Sorry- I'm not used to this technique! I'm more used to the ones I learned from training with my brothers!*"

"*But you're throwing it as if it was a bomb!*" Ezio exclaims, exasperated to see the knife thunk outside the target area (the knife hit the wall and it was going to make a small crack on the outside wall). And on the ground near the target and the house there were three other small knives strewn about, "*Chi ti ha insegnato questa tecnica?*"

"Umm..."

Altair can see the struggling look on Desmond's face before meekly mumbling something about how his brother Clay was supposed to be the one who is an 'expert' on knife throwing. The look on Ezio's face does say something like exasperation before glancing over at the elder before shaking his head, indicating that asking Desmond to perfect his throwing techniques will take a while.

"*In any case,*" Ezio sighs, taking the knives that were on the ground before handing them back to Desmond, "We will have to work on them... a lot."

A groan, "I know, I know..."

*If Malik is here with me, he would not be happy about the way Desmond is behaving,* Altair rubs his temples in a mix of irritation and exhaustion as he witnesses the scene before him. He truly cares a lot for the young fledgling... but this?

Whack.

"*AGAIN!*?" He hears Ezio groan as the knife misses its mark... for the fifth time, "*Caro mio... I have a certain amount of patience for this.*"

Desmond looks like he wants to bang his head against the wall as he huffs in irritation, "...great." He was then muttering something to himself.

*It is the way we were taught before,* The Syrian sighs, shaking his head as he sees Desmond throw the knives again- this time with the way Ezio taught him- and the knives manage to hit around the x spot where they were marked.

This time, Desmond looks surprised as does Altair, but Ezio blinks before a small smile appears on his lips, "*Finally! See what I mean?*"

"Yeah, yeah, I get it, your way seems to be better..." But time traveler can't help but grin at the way his aim got better.

Altair can't help but smile at Desmond's small success before seeing the Italian Assassin grab one of
the knives on the set that was laid on the ground.

He then walks up and throwing one of his knives towards the target- hitting perfectly in the center of the x, "Keep practicing until you get anywhere near my knife."

"...Are you serious!" Desmond's grin instantly changes into a scowl, glaring at the elder, "I can't do that!"

"That's the entire point," The Master Assassin replies, "You have to be sharper than what I've seen you do."

The time traveler groans, grabbing the sharp knives, "I thought the entire point for this exercise was to allow me to focus, not to throw some stuff. When am I going to get to the actual fighting?"

*Impatient, is he?* Altair arches an eyebrow before a small smirk, "Possibly soon. If you are lucky enough to go through another run through the roofs again."

Desmond opens his mouth in protest before groaning, shaking his head as he prepares himself to throw more knives to target the one Altair just threw, "...again? Great."

The Syrian knows how much Desmond has been trained by other Assassins- it was evident that Desmond had been taught the very basics when he was a child and when he was reinitialized as a novice Assassin when the Order (at Desmond's time) took him back after his capture from the Templars. It was also clear that whatever method Desmond was using to fight the Templars and guards with was something that his brothers have taught him; it was short and smooth, but even Altair can see some flaws in execution and how his *habibi* could have done better.

Desmond was a little out of shape too; how long has it been since he last ran? Well, with the fact that he looked a little bit underweight for his age, that made the Master Assassin worry-

"AHH! WHAT THE HELL!?"

"Merda! Watch where you are throwing it!"

Altair looks up, alarmed to hear the new voice that disrupted his thoughts as he looks up to see Leonardo along with one of the women that was in the Italian Order yesterday... wait, what was her name again?

"Leonardo!" Ezio was also surprised to see his friend in alarm, "I thought you were going to come by during the evening!"

"I have a good reason to come here, amico mio," The artist sighs, shaking his head as he points up at the knife, "What are you doing?"

"We are training Desmond improvement on his techniques," The Italian responds, frowning as he sees, "Is something wrong?"

"Scherzi!? Meaning... he threw this knife?" Leonardo asks before a exasperated sigh escapes him, "Desmond, be careful next time! You nearly murdered me! Teodora would have been my witness to see my death along with these two!"

Ah. Teodora. The Syrian sees the slightly surprised woman behind the exasperated painter. *Isn't she the one who suggested my habibi should see a woman from her harem?*

Desmond gulps, his face a bit pale, "Shit! I'm sorry! Oh God! Ah hell, I need to improve so much..."
Ezio shakes his head as Leonardo slaps his hand against his head. Teodora was now shaking in laughter from all of this. "Yes, tesoro mio... you do."

Altair sighs, rubbing his temples as he shakes his head in frustration. Malik would have called Desmond 'novice of all novices' if he sees this in person. Allah, give me strength.

It wasn't until after they have gotten into the house, quickly washed up to look more presentable, and ate a light meal (which actually was a relief to Desmond since he was beginning to look weary) that Leonardo takes out the map from his small bag that Ezio realized it wasn't just about checking up on the youngest member of the Assassin Order. Though he can tell the artist was a bit worried about Desmond and the fact that the young man nearly impaled a part of the blonde man's clothing earlier...

Dear Lord, I think Desmond needs more work. Ezio mentally groans, wanting to hit his head against the wooden table in frustration from their training. Yes, he sees a bit of improvement from his tesoro, but his skills... were not up to speed.

The three men were outside near an open window to allow some cool air in; Teodora had shooed the three men away so she can patch up Desmond and 'give him some space'; in which Ezio translated this to 'getting some dirty secrets' so she can use them as blackmail against him (he was suspecting it had to do with him messing around with one of the women one night).

"So, you said that training was brutal?" Looking up, the Italian sees Teodora grin in amusement as she motions Desmond to unwind the bandages so she can inspect the wound. A wicked grin appears as she eyes the multiple marks that were over Desmond's neck and shoulders (in which Ezio can't help but smile at the blushing young man, who is giving him and the elder a death glare), "My, those two have been roughing you a lot. What exactly are they teaching you?"

"N-Not in that way!" The young man sputters, "I was honestly training the entire day by running around Venice - you and Leonardo just saw me with them!"

She was laughing; Ezio realizes there was a good chance that she will interrogate him and Altair on how exactly this happened. All he knows is that she will never let this go. It was a good thing they were outside;

"Well, at least you three have begun trying to improve on your skills," Leonardo sighs, his nerves calmed from the accidental murder attempt earlier, "Remind me again how... exactly are you thinking this will impress your uncle?"

"Desmond is not exactly the best in shape for the fighting with various weapons," Ezio sighs, rubbing his temples in exasperation, "His skills with the small knife and hidden dagger are brilliant. His hand-to-hand combat is a new technique I have seen."

"Not to mention his endurance is not up to par," Altair cuts in, earning a glare from Ezio, "His coordination is off and he needs to build more strength. Yes, his basics are good and his close combat is excellent. In order for him to keep him hidden from the Templars and make sure he is not known about his actual time, his skills in the traditional weaponry must be focused on at all costs."

"...well, that explains a lot of things," Leonardo grumbles, absentmindedly feeling the area in which the knife nearly got to him earlier before his eyes snap back into attention, "Ezio. Altair. That's not why I am here aside to check up on the three of you."

That catches the two Assassins' attentions at once.
"Does it involve the map?" Altair was the first to guess; Leonardo nods, a small smile on his face.

"It took a while, but I cracked it. The inscription is finally done."

"You finally solved it?" Ezio can't help but inquire to Leonardo, "Bene! Leonardo, amico mio, you're truly a genius!"

"Well, it was thanks to Altair that I can finish and understand the sentences," Leonardo chuckles at his friend's enthusiasm as he nods to the Syrian Assassin, "But in terms of where the relic is..." The man pauses slightly before resuming, "...the others are scouting a few areas as we speak." He doesn't see Altair's eyes look over at Leonardo in slight suspicion. Ezio doesn't seem to catch it, it seems.

The Italian sighs in relief, "So far, this is good. We are preparing ourselves for a retrieval then."

And that's when he sees the artist slightly wincing at those words. Ezio blinks before frowning, ...merda, what now?

"Don't think too quick and do not judge just because of how simple it is to retrieve something," Altair narrows his eyes, glaring at Ezio as if he is still under judgement, "It was not easy for you to get the Apple, if I recall?"

Ezio winces, knowing how close he was to being surrounded by the Templars when they know about the Apple. And that was when reinforcements came in - his uncle and the Order, actually. But this time, he is not sure if there will be any reinforcements coming in for this mission... and from Leonardo's concerned look, he can tell there is no way that this mission will be easy.

"This will not a simple retrieval mission," Leonardo sighs, feeling for the map in his small bag, "If the Templars would to retrieve their hands on this or even hears about our recent moves, they are bound to gain the item by force - even have to shed blood for it."

"Cazzo," The Florence Assassin hangs his head, "They came prepared last time... what happens this time?"

"Did you not forget what most of your assassinations taught you?" Altair nearly slaps Ezio back into attention, "Never underestimate your opponent and stay one step ahead of them."

"I know, bastado! Do not remind me that I sometimes forget about that."

He can hear his friend chuckle. Traitor, Ezio rolls his eyes before glaring at the elder again, "And what do you propose us to do, huh? Try to find out the daily routines of the Templar guards that will stand in our way to retrieve the Piece of Eden?"

"Listen to yourself, you brat," The Master Assassin deadpans, crossing his arms, "What do you think?"

The Italian was about to snap back when he realizes Altair was right. He closes his eyes, trying his best not to yell at the elder since he was focused on other proprities at the moment as he calms down.

"Wow. In out of all people, I don't see amico mio get easily angered, but the elder does a great job of doing so," Leonardo can't help but quip in amusement, even when said elder glares at the artist for this comment, "Does this happen frequently, Ezio?"

"You have no idea how much," Ezio grumbles, "It gets worse when..." He pauses before a light blush appears in his face, "...whenever he gets near my tesoro-"
"Your habibi!?" Altair snaps back, irritated, "Since when Desmond is yours!?"

"...A Dio, not this again..." Leonardo groans, shaking his head as he places his hand over his head, "I cannot tell if this is worse than what I have to deal with the bastardo Micheangelo."

"Hey! At least you two argue over the arts!" Ezio then glares at Altair, his small blush gone, "I have to deal with this stronzo here all day!"

"You are not any better, brat," The Master Assassin dryly snarls, "I believe I have mentioned this before, and I will say it again. You treat Desmond as if he is one of your concubines!"

"I do not have concubines! And that was long ago!" Ezio growls back, his light amber eyes filled with rage, "Since when did you pay attention to Desmond anyway!? I thought you married with an ex-Templar!"

"That has changed; I did not marry her," The Syrian seethes back, "And what of you? What sort of reason validates you to have what is truly mine!?"

The blonde artist groans, closing his eyes before glaring at the two, "Giuro, siete due idioti. Per essere più precisi: due idioti apprensivi ed inamorati!"

Ezio pretends Leonardo didn't say that in front of him and the elder as he snaps back, "All I understand is that my tesoro seems to favor me more, NOT you!"

That got Altair baffled before his dark amber narrows, "Oh? What possible reason do you have to think that you are the better one for my habibi?"

Ezio doesn't see Leonardo shaking his head as he walks over towards a confused looking Desmond, who seems to have finished his business with Teodora since he just exited out to the yard.

"Just... what the hell's going on here?" Desmond asks the blonde artist, who is closing his eyes and taking in a deep breath to calm himself down.

"The usual idiotic banter between these idioti," The artist grumbles before glancing at the young time traveler with a slightly less stressed expression on his face as he swiftly changes his language barrier, "And how have you been, Desmond? And where is Teodora?"

"I'm honestly tired. And Teodora left, saying that she'll be returning with Antonio and the others later tonight," he groans, tempted to flop on the floor and lay there, but he can't, "I did not know training with these two would be this hard!"

"Ah, well, they were trained by the best Assassins the Order can provide," Leonardo can't help but grin, "They make mistakes, but they tend to learn from them. The same should be said for you, amico mio."

Desmond smiles, "Thanks. So... what's happened to the map?"

"I finally managed to fully translate the transcript," The artist sighs before glancing back at the now arguing Assassins (who are now arguing about the way they managed to work with the Order), "Unfortunately, before I got the chance to tell what is inside the said map, Ezio and the Master Assassin are in... well, you see what is happening in front of you." He gestures towards the two bickering Assassins, this time they seem to get really angry about something. Leonardo shakes his head, this time in defeat before facing Desmond, "But I should tell you first since you were the one
who had the map."

That catches Desmond's attention immediately, "What is it? And umm... Altair had the map first."

"But you were the one who brought it to my attention." Leonardo grimaces, "It is written in the form of a riddle. I tried to solve it, but out of all the puzzles I manage to receive, this one has to be the most difficult of them all. " Leonardo digs into the bag to take out the map, which is now scrolled up with the insignia of the Assassin's Order seal pressed on the wax before taking out a small envelope and handing it to him, "If you don't mind, the language I wrote it in... I tried my best to write it in your language, Desmond. I just gave up and wrote in which I was familiar with."

"Do you know what it says?"

"All I understand is that it talks about an object," The artist pauses, "Possibly the Piece of Eden we are searching for. You'd have to read the inscription to understand why I was confused."

"I will. And trust me," The American chuckles as he takes the scrolled map and the letter before opening the letter, "I love solving puzzles. Huh. ... wait. This is Italian and yet it doesn't look... oh. Wait."

"It doesn't, eh?" The artist looks over Desmond's shoulders before he grins, "I suppose you know of my secret writing?"

"Secret writings?" The time traveler rereads the inscription again before placing it back in the envelope. "Do you want me to get a mirror?"

"Not now," Leonardo chuckles, "Not even Ezio knows about this; I dare not speak of my methods of madness to others, hence why I wrote some of my notes in this way. It is useful to prevent my notes from smudging in ink. Useful, no?"

Desmond grins, knowing pretty well the history behind mirror writings; he knows that Leonardo was worried for someone will take his ideas, but also because of the ideas about being a lefty in this time, "It is a rare thing in my time; some consider this as a talent, you know. What's in this note, anyway?"

Looking up to see Ezio and Altair still in the middle of their bickering (Just what are they arguing about... oh. Right, The artist feels really sorry for Desmond at the moment),

In a low voice, Leonardo whispers, "There is one thing I am going to let you know first: the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari is a Templar lair."

His brown eyes widen in slight horror as he recalls that particular building. If he recalled correctly, didn't Ezio receive his training to jump (from the thief Rosa) from there? And also... wasn't that where Ezio and Sofia Sartor married in 1512?

His heart slightly twinges at the thought of Ezio being married to his future wife (it is supposed to happen, he did witness it). Initially, Desmond was happy that Ezio did settle down with the one he loves, but now that he is here with him... the same can be said for Altair and Maria...

For once, the time traveler is feeling jealous for both future wives for being with the respectable Assassins. One part of him was happy to know how much Altair and Ezio truly... cares for him (to the point in which their affections are poured out for him). The other part of him is saying that this is wrong, he is changing their feelings for their supposed spouses, he shouldn't have changed it...

"Desmond?" Leonardo's voice cuts Desmond's thoughts out, causing the young man to look up to see a concerned artist, "Desmond. Are you all right?"
"Y-Yeah!" The American lamely nods, a fake smile on his face, "I'm okay..." No, you're not.

And he sees the artist frowning, "...are you sure? You don't seem like-

"Ti faccio un culo così, Altair!"

Both him and Leonardo look up to see a really pissed off Ezio glaring at one smug looking Altair.

And from the looks of it, they really are ready to kill each other.

"Porca puttana." The artist is the first to groan, "They have issues."

"Oh... fuck." Desmond pales before walking over to try and cool them down before any blood were shed, "Altair! Ezio! Wait! Stop!"

Whatever fight was going to happen, both Assassins stop to see the time traveler run up to them, panic written over his face as he steps in between them.

"Is something the matter?" Ezio asks Desmond.

"Yeah, I thought I asked you two to try and get along with each other!" The American glares at them, "I don't want the two of you to kill each other over something that can solve itself!" He was expecting some sort of protest from either of them, but he got silence instead. Looking up and seeing both Altair and Ezio, he sees hesitation crossing their faces. "...what?"

"What we were...talking about," Altair lets out a heavy sigh, "Is something that cannot solve simply by itself, habibi."

"Then what is it!?"

Ezio winces before shaking his head, "Nothing. Do not worry, si?"

"But... the fact you two continue to fight every single time," Desmond is getting tired of this, "Is there any other way that you two can try to vent out your anger issues out without looking like you want to stab each other!?"

That made the two Assassins look at each other before a wicked smirk appears on each of their faces, causing Desmond to pale before shaking his head as he steps back.

"No. Nooooo way. I am already aching a lot from the running and weapons training and there is no way in hell am I going to let you two have your way with me!"

"Who said about that happening sometime today?" He nearly jumps as he hears the Syrian's chuckle, "You were the one who brought it up, habibi."

"W-What!"

"And yes, caro mio, that has been on our minds, but perhaps it is better to save it for something better," Ezio has that seductive smirk directed to the Desmond, who blushes even darker.

"L-Leonardo's here!" Desmond groans, a blush covering his face, "I thought you two were supposed to talk to him about other stuff! Not having some duel with each other or something!"

He doesn't see an idea light up in Altair's eyes before straightening up and calling out, "Brat."
"What?" Ezio instantly changes into a look of ire.

"You have our hidden blades on you, correct?" The Master Assassin presents his blade, "No other weapons?"

The Italian Assassin blinks in confusion before slowly nodding, suspicion apparent in his face, "Elder, what exactly are you planning?"

Altair sighs, knowing pretty well he is going to regret asking this for the fact that he might be prodding into the Florence Assassin's ego, "Let me see if your skills are up to par with mine. This will be a fight- no bloodshed, no purposes except to see how much you have learned."

Ezio looks surprised... before a smirk makes his way into his face as he lowers his hood, "A challenge then? I will be enjoying this!"

"You two are suggesting a duel?" Leonardo steps in, a concerned look on his face, "Ezio, I am not sure if this is such a good idea..."

"Yeah- Altair, Ezio, are you sure?" Desmond tentatively asks the two Assassins as Leonardo shakes his head, muttering something about bickering idiots, "I'm just worried that you two will be injured along the way-"

"No, we won't," Altair replies, shaking his head before facing the Italian Assassin, who looks actually delighted to be challenged into a fight by the Master Assassin of Masayf, "Remember, this is just practice. Watch and learn, habibi. You can learn something out of this."

I hope so, The American grunts, stepping back to see the two Assassins prepared to spar each other, ...well, at least the best I can do is to see how I can fight against someone who is equally as good as them in combat.

"I'll make sure these idiots don't kill each other and remember that this is for your training, Desmond," Leonardo groans, his hands meeting the face of his palm for the upteenth today, making Desmond's face pale at that revelation.

...ah crap. I forgot about that.

"Let's hope that doesn't happen," Desmond pales, hanging his head as he sees the two Assassins "...goddamnit, why do I get stuck in these situations?"

End Part 12

This won't go well.

What's next: While the modern Assassins get a notice from William about an extension of time for reasons unknown, Desmond's training gets turned into a fighting skirmish...
Fueled

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Hilarious thought. But no.

I've been watching a lot of videos and sites on their fighting styles and honestly... umm, well, the notes at the end of this chapter are for my judgements.

I just realized something; by the time you guys read this, I did add a small translation thing to make sure you know what Ezio and some of the Italians were saying. I should have done that a while ago; I am so sorry! I'll begin placing it in next chapter.

Sorry if this chapter seems a bit different than the others; enjoy!

Warning: The usual spoilers and action descriptions (and how I get at it) along with a bit more seriousness on the side. Also, like I said, these are just from what I have seen and understand from their fighting styles, so I can be wrong. Let me know if there was anything about their fighting styles I have missed. Also a bit of change in character.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"italics" = Italian, Arabic, any other language OR a flashback (depending on how it is used)

"bold italics" = over the mic and phone

"normal" = English

bold sentences = emails, screams, or Bleeding Effect (depends on how it's used).

Part 13: Fueled

Clay is tapping his right foot in impatience as he glances over at his laptop screen. He is trying to upload the same file the hacker gave to them earlier by asking Shaun to load it on a small flashdrive. When asked by the historian, Clay responds to him that he wants to forward it to Desmond and get his opinion of it.

After all, He recalls himself mentioning, Don't you think you should know what we're looking for when Dad asked you to grab the map?

It was something Clay was bothered by; did William even know about this item as well? He has heard about what the properties of it, the supposed powers they grant to the owner, the nicknames that the Piece of Eden has been given...

Come on, you stupid effing file... He narrows his eyes, seeing the green bar on the loading screen trickle bit by bit as it was uploading one of the files he managed to gather while he was in Abstergo, Hurry the fuck up so I can get this over with and I can return to looking up more information!
It doesn't help that his older brother is in the room, typing in a storm in what seems to be an email to William or someone else. It could possibly be a small rant to Rebecca or to Shaun (most likely from the rate that his older brother is going) or something to William (that would not happen unless it is an actual emergency like say... one of them being killed on the job or gone MIA). He doesn't see Connor interacting with Lucy (Clay knows a part of it was about the emails), which can be understandable... even though it was proven that now Lucy didn't even write them. He also wonders why Connor doesn't trust her as much, but that thought was shoved over when he hears a small indication that the file was done loading.

Shaun and Rebecca were going to prepare food for the gang along with Lucy - well, Shaun is a bit wary of her as opposed to Rebecca (who is still stuck on the theory that Lucy isn't the mole in the Assassin Order). For Clay... he honestly thinks while Lucy does have the thoughts of an Assassin, her mentality can be said is of one... so why is there this nagging feeling there that something is missing?

Thank you, technology! He mentally sighs in relief, clicking open when the computer prompted him to. Double-clicking on the file and seeing the contents, Clay barely manages to click on one of them when his iPhone chirps off.

"...Seriously?" The blonde Assassin groans, closing his laptop and setting it down on Connor's table. He can see his older brother glancing up at him before going back down, still typing on his laptop. The phone continues to ring off as Clay rummages through his pocket and takes out his phone before responding to it, "Hello?"

"Clay? This is William."

Dad!? He can't help but look a bit bewildered, "Hey... what's going on? Is it some sort of emergency or something?"

William Miles grunts, "Actually... I am not sure if this constitutes as one. It's more about Abstergo and Connor isn't responding to my emails along with Shaun, Rebecca, or Lucy."

"Well..." He glances over to see Connor still typing something before pausing... an resuming his typing again, "Con's busy. Shaun, Rebecca, and Lucy are making dinner. And Dad, in case you want to know-" That catches Connor's alarmed attention as Clay turns around to look at the oval time portal, "Desmond's not back from his mission yet."

Clay has a feeling he knows what his father is feeling at the moment... before a terse sigh was heard.

"Make sure Desmond is all right," William murnurs, "I don't want another death on my hands... especially one from another family member." He falls into a lapse of silence before clearing this throat of all worries, "What I am calling about is we have a little more time to retrieve that Piece of Eden; Abstergo is under a bit of fire for having some of their files leak out."

"Wait, what?" Clay blinks, a bit confused before having the idea to place the phone on speaker so Connor can hear as well, "Hang on, Dad." He quickly places the phone down after placing the speaker feature on, "Connor's with me. So you said Abstergo's files leaked?"

"Someone managed to hack into Abstergo's central database, take their files, and post them up on a website Abstergo can't gain access to," William replies. Connor's brown-amber eyes widen in surprise as Clay purses his lips in confusion. "And before you ask, I am pretty sure this person or group is not with us. Had I ordered one, it would be a small one for distraction purposes. Not something this... chaotic."
Connor frowns, "Aside that one time that Shaun forwarded to those guys two years ago, we didn't even bother to try and enter into their systems without risking the chances of letting our presences known. At least whatever Shaun did was successful... somewhat. But how the hell did someone manage to hack into their system? I thought they found a way to lockout Erudito."

"I don't know, Connor, but it is causing a massive uproar in Abstergo," The leader of the Order replies, confusion in his voice as well, "There are some investigations over in America; the Assassins HQ over in the East Coast just let us know and we're getting prepared to take action in case because of all of this, there is a chance that Rikkin and even Vidic has to be involved in order to control the scrutiny and the problems they have to handle from the PR."

"What does this mean for us, exactly?" Clay asks, "Since Abstergo's... well, dealing with that shit." Sucks to be them... Ha! He can't help but be mentally gleeful about this... payback to Abstergo.

"It means that we have more time to get more things done," There was a small degree of relief in William's voice, "The first thing is we are going to send the new recruit to retrieve everyone from this area in order to get you over to the new area. It's going to take about a week or so for him to arrive with our connections, so be prepared to leave immediately with the equipments and the Animus hard drive."

A week? Clay's eyebrow shoots in surprise as he glances over at Connor, who looks mildly relieved... yet concern was written over his face.

"Father, you didn't tell us about the new recruit yet," His older brother quietly replies, "Didn't you say that the new person suffered from headaches or something?"

There was a silence from their father's end before a heavy sigh was heard along with some scuffling, "The new recruit seems to know everyone pretty well, which I find unusual since the only thing I showed of your group is photos of everyone that is present in here. How he manages to know everyone that well, I really don't know. But he is on his way here to pick you all up. Desmond... where is he?"

That made Clay mentally groan as he glances over to Connor, who sighs and takes over (as usual), "Father, Desmond's fine. I think he has a few hitches in Ita... I mean, Jerusalem." The blonde stares at Connor, whose eyes were closed from the recent blunder.

"I... see," If William had some sort of indication that something was wrong, he didn't say anything, "When Desmond comes back... please tell him to call me. Your mother and I are beginning to worry about him and his safety. I just hope he isn't captured by Abstergo again."

The likely chances of that happening will be slim, The blonde Assassin rolls his eyes, Not if we can help it. The Native-American's glance towards him meant that they both share the same thought.

"That is something we won't allow," Clay replies, not wanting to even return back to those labs. He mentally shuddered, recalling the time he and Lucy realized why they needed the Assassins and what the true purpose of the Animus was.

Connor seems to readily agree with him before asking, "But say Desmond returns earlier than usual; anything we can do?"

"Hide. Don't give your position away. Call me or your mother to let us know the change in location if you decide to move."
"The usual tricks," Clay muses, "Lemme guess. Do you want me to make more forged IDs and passports again?"

"Make sure you go the location that we can trust. I am pretty sure the public airports have some officers that aligned themselves with Abstergo without knowing it."

He can see Connor's eyes narrow as he mentally plans out an escape route.

"Dad, one more thing," Clay frowns, "How are the other areas?"

"We are safe and secure at the HQ here," William replies, cutting to the point like Connor, "I was going to email to Shaun about this, but it seems as if you two have been anticipating this. Moscow's safe and sound at the moment. They do have a potential lead on another Piece of Eden, but let's hope things don't go wrong. So far though, nothing seems to go wrong. Osaka is doing fine, it seems; they are switching to a new location and thanks to what is happening with most of the Templars as of now, we are moving along safe. Denver, on the other hand..." There was a trailing off in his voice before he lets out a worrying sigh, "...there seems to have been an attack over there, but I have gotten some word that some members have survived. They are, however, off-grid."

Ah great, at least we're still surviving, Clay grunts to himself before asking, "And about Sao Paolo?"

"They were recently attacked."

That made the two men freeze in their seats before Clay manages to ask, "...wait, how!? I thought they were off-grid for a while!"

"I know, but it seems as if they were almost caught." William's voice turns into a soft murmur, "I'm starting to think there is a mole in that area... We are investigating that at the moment."

"...great." Connor hangs his head, "This is just as bad as those emails we saw..."

"That's another thing I wanted to talk to you about for a brief moment," They can hear their father mention, "It turns out my suspicions were right; those emails were not meant for me and used my name as an alias to pretend they were chatting with me. Another thing I have understood is that Lucy does not-"

"She didn't write those emails!" Clay was quick to jump in to mention this. Despite the small off-chance that the blonde woman did have some doubts about William and the Assassin Order at one point, he knows and his mind is telling him that she was being framed. "That style of writing- it sounds as if some old English man is talking in it. Lucy is a bit more blunt and straightforward. The bastard who wrote this just flits around the subject and makes it so damn ambiguous-"

"He gets to the point though, and that's what worries me," The older brother stops Clay's ranting, "What do you suggest we do about that?"

A small brief period of silence before a heavy sigh was heard on the other side, "...I'm still investigating that. But still... keep an eye out. I'm afraid that's it; we'll take care of those when Desmond returns from the Animus."

Clay was gaping in ire, ready to yell at his father before feeling Connor hold him back, shaking his head as he mouths, Don't you dare say anything. The blonde squawks before giving a heavy sigh,
resigned to that decision for now.

"Fine. ...look, Dad, just... please keep us updated on everything when you can."

A bitter chuckle was heard from the Leader of the Order.

"I will... let me know when Desmond returns. Be safe, boys. Peace and safety," William murmurs before hanging up the phone, ending the call. After a few seconds of silence, Clay and Connor glance at each other before letting out a groan.

"So much for the good news," Clay pockets his iPhone before turning his attention back to his laptop, "...I think."

"Don't try to jinx us," Connor sits back in his seat to face his brother, "Murphy's Law is already in motion where Desmond is. I've told you all that he bled, right?"

"You mean we heard about it," The blonde Assassin bitterly mutters, "I thought we got that fixed before he left on this mission!"

The older brother grunts, "So did I. It's still there... Regardless of time." He looks at the computer monitor with concern to see there are no indication as to where Desmond is or anything about his vital status, "I'm getting worried that he might be stuck in Venice for too long."

Clay looks back towards the Animus before looking at the monitors again, "You really want to find him and get him out of here, huh?"

He can see the tight nod from Connor, "...badly. I am getting seriously worried that something's happening to him in there. As much as I want to trust Altair and Ezio, I take it with a grain of salt; there's no way I can tell if Desmond is okay or if he is injured."

"I know," Clay grimaces, sitting against his seat, "It sucks being on the sidelines; especially when we can't do anything about it, even with the risk of being trapped in there ourselves thanks to that god-awful glitch!"

All he hears is a 'tch' from his older brother, but the worry is still present. Even Clay can't help but admit; he just wants his baby brother to return safe and sound. The glitch is preventing that from happening (for God-knows why), making the entire group impatient and worried. Clay can tell it's starting to take a toll on his father too; his mother might be worse off since (after all) Desmond is their biological son.

Goddamnit, Desmond... The blonde's eyes narrow as he looks back at the Animus machine, which has been on idle, What the hell's going on over there with you and those two Assassins?

The Syrian is wondering whether or not he has either made a fantastic decision or one that potentially could be a terrible idea.

Yes, granted, this did stem from an argument regarding - well, what else could they possibly argue about aside who is the better Assassin and their traditions? But he was wondering whether this can teach Desmond about anything (except that they obviously did not keep to their word about getting along with each other) as he swiftly throws a punch towards the Italian, who manages to dodge it with a smirk.

"A fist fight? Is this what you want?" He taunts the Master Assassin.
Altair silently growls in irritation as his left hand subconsciously takes the hidden blade out and strikes at Ezio. The Italian's eyes widen (slightly) as he dodges the attack before capturing Altair's right hand (which was already balled into a fist).

"Too slow, elder!"

It was the only warning he got before seeing Ezio's right hand swiftly come up, the hidden blade revealing itself before striking at Altair... who quickly parries it with his own hidden blade. He can't let go of his right hand since the Italian is holding it to prevent any form of escape.

"Not bad," Altair can't help but admit, the other man is smoother and elegant with his attack before turning his right arm to twist Ezio's hand. The Italian lets out a small wince as he is forced to release his hold on the Master Assassin's right fist. It was then that he realizes that at that moment Ezio is open for a wide attack as Altair quickly steps in, his left hidden blade prepared to strike at the opportunity presented to him.

"But you need to be aware more of your surroundings!"

His eyes widen as he hears his blade immediately meets another... revealing another hidden blade in his left arm.

"Be aware, huh?" The Italian's smug voice returns, "And yet I came prepared. What says you, elder?"

Ezio should be glad that he is an Assassin; if he was associated with the Templars, the Syrian would gladly killed him for the Italian's enormous (and irritating) amount of pride. Silently growling, he immediately launches a series of jabs at the Italian, who seem to parry and dodge them at every chance. The Italian did the same to Altair in return (only except his is a bit quicker, the Syrian notes), causing Altair to block the Italian's movements - the only disadvantage being that he needs to react quicker in order to make sure Ezio doesn't inflict any sort of life-threatening wounds on him.

He knows the artist and Desmond are observing the fight; they should let them know whenever anyone is about to severely injure the other. It served little for this match (since dueling usually involves some cuts, bruises, and injuries that always result in bleeding).

But for his habibi's sake, however... Altair quickly glances over to see Desmond standing next to the artist, a mixture of worry and fascination on the young man's face. He has been observing the fight, He notes before dodging a few of Ezio's punches, But it seems as if he is more concerned of our well-beings-

Altair's thinking stops as soon as he feels a punch against his stomach, forcing the Syrian to slightly stumble over before glaring as the slightly surprised Ezio.

"You were distracted, so I took it as my opportunity," The Italian smirks, readying to deliver another assault of punches.

"Not bad... for an amateur," Altair shoots back, darting towards the Italian before assaulting him with a series of punches and swings from his hidden blade. Again, the flurry of blades blocking each other along with several side-steps and dodges; there have been some close calls in which the blades would barely meet their clothing (making some marks in it).

It wasn't until Altair sees Ezio cornered that he feels like he has the chance to attack. A small smile graces his face before he begins to stalk and run towards the Italian, figuring out a way to land a blow and hopefully bruise that annoying boy's pride.
He misses.

"What the-!?" He can't help but exclaim in alarm- where the hell was he!?

"Looking for me, elder?"

Altair suddenly turns around to see the Italian run towards him (and how in Allah's name did he get over there!?), his arms ready to strike him. No doubt he will use both blades at the same time, The Syrian narrows his eyes, armed to block both hidden blades-

All of the sudden, instead of going for a straight attack with his hidden blade, Ezio instantly headbutts Altair against his chest, a sudden amount of force overwhelming the Syrian (since he thought he was parrying a knife attack- not a headbutt!).

How the hell was that possible!?

Altair groans in slight pain as his back harshly hits the ground from Ezio's shove, squeezing his eyes shut. That brat... he will pay for this! That is not how to take down an opponent!

"Altair?" He can hear Desmond call out (a little panicked), but he can hear the artist assure his habibi that he's all right; just a bit bruised from that... unexpected move. Since when the hell did the Assassins learn to rudely push like that?

Never, was the obvious response. Altair will make sure Desmond will never repeat that irrational move whenever he goes in a mission. He has a feeling it was just because the Italian was trying to catch him off-guard... or to just show off in front of his habibi. It seems to be more of the latter.

"Ha!" Ezio crows out, a bit of pride for taking down the Master Assassin of Masyaf as he walks over towards the fallen man, "So, old man. How does it feel to lose to a younger Assassin?"

The Syrian frowns. While the Italian was quicker in attacks and smoother in how he executed his moves, they were also a bit irrational at times...

Like I would let the brat gloat over me! His mind growls in irritation.

Instead, Altair's eyes flash open as he quickly stands up and swiftly kicks the incoming Italian along the abdomen, causing the Italian to be caught off-guard and crashing on the ground. Thankfully, his hidden blades were sheathed so no injures there. The Syrian narrows his eyes, mirth filling in them as he brushes off the dirt along his outfit as he walks over towards the cursing Italian.

"MERDA!" Ezio curses, rubbing his abdomen as a dull ache from his back forming as he looks up to see the Master Assassin smirk as he walks over to the fallen Italian Assassin, "I thought you were gone by now!"

"Not so brilliant, are you?" Altair smirks, standing over Ezio, who quickly looks up at him in surprise, "Expect the opponent's moves; your moves were beginning to get predictable. I will have to admire your fighting style; you must have adapted from what I have been teaching others."

The Italian scowls, irritated as he scrambles back up, "I'm just surprised you countered a lot of my parries. How do you know the way I fight?"

The Syrian replies, "Some of actions were mimicked by the fledgling." He glances over at Desmond, who was also surprised to see the close call made by the two Assassins. Ezio frowns, glancing over to the American.
“That's true...” He quietly murmurs, his hand on his chin before an idea formulates in his head, "Say, elder... I have something in mind that can help my tesoro."

Aside that stupid name Ezio has given to his Desmond, Altair was a little interested to know what the idea is, "All right; this better be good."

"You instructed Desmond to see us combating each other, right?" Ezio has a small smile on his face, "Perhaps it will be much better for him to join in on this duel? It will be better to teach him as opposed to letting him see or hear on how we fight. And also..." His light amber eyes glance over to Desmond, who is sighing in relief to see that neither of those two got any sort of major injuries on them before chatting to the artist, "...we can see how he fights. He's already accustomed to our techniques from that effect and from that cursed machine. But how much of our techniques does he truly understand?"

The Syrian frowns, "So you want us to see how familiar Desmond is with our fighting methods... and to teach him a few things along the way? You could have just mentioned it all instead of using useless flowing words. It makes me wonder if you were well-educated in understanding the common man or just showing off."

"Exactly!" Ezio then blinks before glaring at the Master Assassin, "...wait, what did you just say, bastardo!? I talk like this-

"To the ladies, I presume. I doubt my habibi would be interested in hearing such dabble," Altair deadpans, clearly not interested before he glances over at Desmond again, "Back to the subject at hand-

"You do realize I can scar that precious sword of yours," Ezio seethes (and he knows it isn't about the sword with the eagle hilt). The Syrian rolls his eyes, getting used to see the murderous look through the light amber.

"And I can easily castrate yours with a single strike," The Master Assassin shoots back, secretly enjoying the slightly horrified look on the Italian's face before getting back to their main focus, "If Desmond truly recalls our techniques, he should be able to predict our moves. However, from his... training..." He sighs wearily, "...we have a long way to go."

"Tch. As long as we can help him," The Italian glances over at Desmond, who is now talking animatedly with Leonardo, "...we can talk all the advice we can, but actions will aid the body."

Altair can't help but admit the brat is right; experience does also teach things words cannot.

"And perhaps later tonight and when he improves," Ezio shoots him a smirk, "We should help him... focus on other priorities aside training and the retrieval mission."

And that, the Master Assassin can't help but tug a small smirk, is something he will gladly help the Italian teach his habibi. If he can succeed becoming an Assassin, of course.

At least those two didn't kill each other.

Desmond can't help but heave a sigh of relief. Sure, there will be some bruising here and there (especially that kick Altair did on Ezio), but no blood was shed.

"I'm surprised," Leonardo can't help but muse before glancing over, "Normally for training, Ezio doesn't get this jumpy and worked up, but..." He lets out a groan, "Well, these are two hard-headed
Assassins we are talking about."

Just like me; blockheads, The American can't help but deadpan to himself, "Hey Leonardo?"

"Yes?"

"Earlier before they..." He gestures towards Ezio and Altair, who are in some sort of conversation about something, "...got into the argument, what were you going to tell me about the map?" Aside telling me that the Piece of Eden is located inside the Frari, he mentally reminds himself, a small pang in his chest, reminding him of Ezio's future along with Altair's. Desmond ignores it.

"Oh. About that," Leonardo frowns, looking a bit concerned, "I was going to mention more about the inscription when both of them are finished. It seems as if they are..."

"At least I learned something from it," Desmond can't help but wonder what would happen if he is forced to face this in person. He has experienced their movements and their abilities when he was in the Animus; seeing it in person is another thing.

"Ah, Ezio," He looks up to see Leonardo with a small (and relieved) smile on his face as the Italian Assassin walks up to the two, "Are you finished for the day?"

"Oh, we'll be done soon," Ezio's lips were curled in a small mischievous grin, "It's just there is one more thing remaining before the elder and I call it a day."

"...really? There is more?"

"There are?" Desmond parrots back in confusion.

"It is more like a presentation of your current skills in combat," Altair also walks up to the three men (Leonardo looks a bit surprised, Ezio a bit irritated, Desmond looking horrified), "Desmond. Show us what you have learned in your times."

"I thought I already did!" The American exclaims in alarm, "I thought I showed you how I fight with the blades."

"I meant in hand-to-hand combat," The Syrian clarifies, dark amber meeting slightly panicked brown, "In combat."

"In other words, tesoro mio," Ezio quips, "Spar with me and the bischero." Leonardo holds back a snicker as Altair glares at the smirking Florence. Desmond, on the other hand, is still horrified at this thought.

"...I have to spar with you two now!?"

"You heard us," Altair nods, "Fight the both of us with the skills that you were taught in your home."

The American's eyes widen in a mixture between horror and shock as he look at the both of them when the intent was made clear. For some reason, Ezio realizes, this idea scares Desmond more than ever. After what he just witnessed and seeing two Assassins duel each other...

"Seriously?" Desmond pales, trying to step out from this, "...no. Nuh uh. Nooooo way. No way in fucking hell! I'm not ready for actual... combat! As in fighting against another Assassin!"

Ezio arches an eyebrow, "Are you sure about that, Desmond? You must have some experience. Why would it explain how you took down those other guards without the use of your blade?" He can see
the young man pale even more as the memories of that return to him.

"That was with normal guards! Now I have to face against the both of you! I can't possibly do that!"

Desmond sputters, trying to find a way out of this predicament quick as he can and his body aches from the training. How can they forget that?

"You also knocked those guards without letting them return to conscious," That also piqued the Master Assassin's interest, readying his hidden blade as he rolls his left arm, "Well then... are you ready?"

The time traveler gulps, glancing around to see Leonardo giving a small weak smile, shrugging at him as if there was no help for his predicament. Even Ezio knows at this point, there will be no way out of this.

"Sorry," Leonardo replies, "I'm afraid I can't help you here. You're on your own, amico mio."

"Thanks for the help," Desmond grumbles before looking at the two Assassins again, "Are you sure about this? I really don't want to-"

"We'll be done with training for the day if you agree to do this," Altair cuts in, making it easier and quick for the American to agree, "That way, you can allow your body to rest."

Desmond gapes and was about to say something before sagging his shoulders, looking even more exhausted than before.

"...you swear, this is the last thing for the day regarding my training?"

"You don't trust me, habibi?"

"No, it's just... okay, fine." Desmond sighs, feeling his hidden blade that was attached to his left arm, "I'll do it."

"Bene! That should do it!" This should make things more interesting... hopefully better than his performance earlier today, Ezio chuckles, seeing the hesitant American walk up to both of them, his hidden blade ready to be used if necessary (in which the Italian hopes he would use). He sees his tesoro close his eyes and take a deep breath to calm his nerves... before opening them to face the other Assassins, his eyes silently telling them that he is ready for the small fight.

If anything was to be said of the two Assassins' first move, it was they immediately lunged to strike Desmond, in which the young man manages to dodge before backing slowly towards an open area, trying to calculate how to approach against both Assassins.

Looking over, Desmond can see that there is a wall and a ledge he can jump on-

It wasn't until he turns (a little too late) to see the Syrian grab and shove Desmond against the ledge, the tip of his hidden blade almost edging his neck. Desmond doesn't see Ezio anywhere-

"Lesson one. Never get distracted by anything," Altair roughly replies, his dark amber eyes narrowing, "Had you been a Templar, I would have taken out your neck."

Desmond frowns, recalling that first lesson from Connor, "I already know that!" He swiftly grabs the Syrian's left arm and to Altair's surprise (after swiftly sheathing his blade away), the time traveler manages to use his left hand grab Altair's wrist, shoving the Master Assassin away before Desmond places his right hand to force Altair's elbow to bend his left arm before allowing himself enough
room for him to dash towards the other side of the training field before Altair can react-
-only to be roughly shoved to the ground and having Ezio's hidden blade against his neck (What the hell's up with Assassins and NECKS! Desmond's mind screams). The Florence Assassin smirks before lowering his head (and a swift kiss against his cheek).

"Second thing to learn," Ezio murmurs against Desmond's ear, "Be aware of your surroundings, tesoro. Otherwise, you will not be able to tell who is after you."

Desmond glares at the other Assassin as he tries to stand up, but the Italian wasn't budging from his position.

"Let me guess; lesson three is to find other ways out of situations?" He grumbles before his hands find Ezio's chest and (barely) uses most of his strength to shove the Italian off him before stumbling a bit back.

"This is the best you can do?" Ezio asks, a bit disappointed as he straightens himself up, "I was hoping for- OOF!"

Desmond had somehow knocked Italian off his feet (literally) with a swift low reversal roundhouse kick before turning his attention back to the incoming Syrian Assassin, who was ready to strike at him with a punch. Thinking quickly, Desmond manages to use his right hand to lower the punch before giving the Syrian a shove, forcing the older man to let out a surprised grunt before colliding on the floor.

The American had taken down both Assassins with his hands. No blade needed.

"And that's how I spar - no hidden blades. I'm done."

Desmond can't help but smirk as he stands up to walk away from the two downed Assassins-
-only to be immediately swiftly back on the ground, his right arm being slightly twisted as the American winces in pain before feeling the cool top of the hidden blade against his neck... again.

"Tsk tsk, tesoro mio. If only you realize how unpredictable your opponents truly are..." He hears Ezio's hot murmur before feeling a small peck on his ear, "I admire your strength and courage for taking the two of us down like that without drawing your hidden blade. But the mind wasn't that of an Assassin... it is more of a warrior who relies on strength and luck than his skills and mind."

The American grunts, "So!?" He feels the hidden blade tip leave him and Desmond stands up, brushing his back to get rid of the grass and dust from the ground when he feels someone come up behind him, pressing the top of the hidden blade against his back (causing the young man to freeze).

"You forget, habibi," He freezes, feeling Altair's whisper against his ears before brushing up against the shell of Desmond's ear, "Never turn your back on your enemy. Do not forget what you have learned today from all of this. Or else you will be a dead man." The Master Assassin withdraws his blade and snaps it back in its case, "...the brat's right. You need to learn how to withdraw your hidden blade and use it in combat; it is an extension of your arm. Use it to its full potential like you saw us."

Desmond looks down at his hidden blade before he sighs, No duh, Desmond.

But he can't help but have a grin in his face; he finally fought against the two famous Master Assassins...
Altair can't help but admit— he was a bit disappointed in Desmond and his skills. There was a part of him that thought he uses his hidden blade to deflect some of the moves and maybe use the abilities he presented to him and the brat on the dummies.

*Is it because he fears of harming us?* He mentally asks himself, glancing over to Desmond. He can't help but see his *habibi* having a small smile on his face, causing the Syrian to be surprise before softly chuckling... and hiding it again in his mask of indifference.

*Desmond... you need to realize this isn't a trivial matter.* He closes his eyes, trying to think of the best time to talk to the brat about Desmond's performances in training without having Desmond near them. For some reason, Desmond reminds him of Kadar, Malik's younger brother; he was also eager to train with Altair, to see and watch his moves and techniques while Altair and Malik sparred. Kadar was still young, a novice Assassin... he hides his eagerness with hesitation, trying to harm him and his brother as little as possible.

In the end, it came to naught... due to Altair's mistakes.

The Master Assassin closes his eyes before opening them again, glancing over at Desmond once more. While he knows his *habibi* differs greatly from Kadar in personality and in experience... their fighting styles and techniques (minus the time difference) were too similar.

*I need to let Desmond understand he needs to take this as if it is life's worth,* Altair's eyes narrow when Ezio approaches him, gently patting the young man on the shoulder as he chats with the artist, *...I need to let the idiot Ezio know not to be a gentle person with him. Not after these... disastrous results from today.*

He knows Desmond is different than Kadar. But the need to protect is all the same...

*Except unlike Kadar, Altair mentally reminds himself,...Desmond is someone I truly want to be with.*

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After washing (for the second time) and seeing if there are any wounds (turns out Ezio received a small nick from Altair's blade) they need to patch up, the three Assassins thought they would use the rest of the day to recover.

That wasn't the case when the two thieves and two women came in to see the current status of their safe house as well as the three Assassins. There were missions to be done (much to Ezio's dismay and Altair's relief for doing something) and materials to prepare for their mission. There was also a message sent from Mario to the Order, stating the similar objectives for all Assassins.

Nothing about the map yet except for what they understand; the location was within a structure in Venice. Only Desmond and Leonardo knows; the artist makes a note to tell Ezio and Altair of the true location they should be scouting at.

...then again, knowing the incident with the Apple and how the Templars did not get to it in time, the chances of Templars appearing in Venice are higher, meaning they have to be careful.

Leonardo shakes his head as he hears Ezio complaining to a snickering Teodora and a laughing Antonio while hearing Altair grumbling to La Volpe and Paola (who were *very* amused). It wasn't until a few seconds later La Volpe is laughing over at Ezio's expense for being beat by Altair. The artist can also tell the other Assassins has gained some interest in recruiting Desmond despite the time difference; he did tell Ezio that he was surprised to see the young man skilled enough to carry and land a few wounds on the two Assassins. Now it was all up to the Leader of the Order to see if
Desmond was fit...

At least for now; it will be until the actual retrieval mission that Desmond will present whether he is true and loyal to the Order or betrays them to the Templars.

The artist knows where this is going to go; more training, a few minor missions to see how good and efficient the young man is in terms of getting something done for the Order, and finally, at the big moment, the mission to retrieve the item will be a test of Desmond's mind, loyalty and skill. Mess up the entire mission by betraying them, and the recruit is gone to the hounds.

Ezio has told him some stories about the very few trainees from other areas (and the one who betrayed his father) who claim to be for the Assassins and instead betrayed them. Their comeuppance was handed to them in a justful way or an invisible guilt their family is forced to burden with until the day they die.

From what the artist gathers, Bartolomeo is either still trying to track the guards' movements through his mercenaries or taking the day with his new lover Pantasilea (to everyone's surprise, she was the one who expressed interest in him instead of the other way around). Niccolo had business with some officials (for God knows what, it always has to do with politics. Even he can hear Paola complain that the politician is being a stiff). Antonio and Teodora were also taking the view to Venice quite nicely, but they came to check on the three Assassins after their training.

"Leonardo," Ezio catches the artist's attention, "Can you see if Desmond is all right from training? I fear that that bastardo elder and I might have beat him up badly."

"Stop your worrying, Ezio," The blonde man lets out an exasperated sigh, "I am sure he is fine; but if the bambino is concerned-" He can't help but grin, "Awwww. Ezio, are you concerned for your tesoro and you don't want Altair to get in the way of-"

"Shut it," Light amber eyes glare at him, but a light blush taints his cheeks, "J-Just check on him!"

"All right, all right, I will! No need to fret about it," Leonardo's eyes crinkle in amusement before walking towards the open door and entering into the other room. Once he enters in, he sees Desmond's head against the wooden table; his slouched figure not budging from the seat (he knows the American is still alive) as his arms were limping.

"Desmond?" Leonardo can't help but ask, feeling a bit sorry for the rough training.

A grunt greets him.

"Are you feeling better?" Leonardo asks, knowing the young man was out of it earlier; even he notices after he mentioned the location of the Piece of Eden, Desmond wasn't exactly his usual self.

"I know I am going to ache all over tomorrow," The American groans, not even trying to lift his head from the table, "At least I know what to work on so I can improve... Hopefully by then I'll be able to hit the center at that stupid mark. Sorry about nearly killing you earlier, by the way."

"Just don't do it again, please," Leonardo mutters, "I do not want any part of my right body to be stabbed."

"I'll try not to." A muffle was heard from the table, "Oh man, I am going to be sore when I try to get up..."

The artist chuckles, feeling really sorry for the young man for having to deal with the intense training. He has read from Altair's Codex (or should he now refer to the author as the older version
of Altair? The one who came to Venice is a lot younger... even though he is older than Ezio by about two years) that the training of an Assassin takes time and skill along with tremendous amount of effort. It could even last an entire lifetime.

It seemed like Desmond was the type who didn't do this often and often uses his basic skills to get out of a situation. Speaking of the young man, why is he looking more worried? He figured that it wasn't from the training session; it was about something else-

"Desmond?" Leonardo was going to ask the young man, whose attention was perked up when he sees Desmond freeze as soon as his name was mentioned along with the words 'difficulty' and 'training'. His curiosity piqued as well, the artist turns around to get a better hearing from the main room; Desmond is sitting perfectly up, also hearing the ensuing conversation.

"It sounds like you two are teaching him well. But his injuries..." Paola's scolding voice was heard, "What if his wounds reopens again?"

"The body can heal itself," Altair quietly replies, "Every scar is a lesson for an Assassin to never make the same mistakes."

La Volpe's voice was next, "That is true; the same for every thief. From the way you are describing the movements and techniques that boy uses, it sounds a bit primitive to use such techniques, but they were effective."

"Effective, yes. How he takes care of himself and understands the weapons we have now?" Altair again, "...not even close to what we have learned."

"You are criticizing him harshly, elder," Ezio's wary voice was heard next, "However, I do understand what you mean; but his techniques were effective in taking us down- you experienced it yourself!"

A grunt was heard from Altair.

"Fighting and combat are not the only ways to become an Assassin, you do understand," Antonio's slightly ire voice as if he doesn't want one part in this conversation, "That boy knows the thinking of an Assassin."

"But his mind is not of one."

"Altair!" Ezio exclaims in fury, "What the hell are you trying to say about Desmond!?"

Even Desmond and Leonardo were wondering the same thing. The artist, however, can sense a bit of fear radiating from the foreigner-

"He's... well, how can I put it like this?" Altair is speaking as if he was taking in charge for the time being, "Desmond is still young. He should have been proficient in various weapons by now, but..." A frustrated sigh, "From his training, he needs a tremendous amount of work; Desmond is still a beginner - had my friend seen him in battle, he would have mentioned that Desmond is the 'novice-of-all-novices.'"

"...Altair, we are not back in Jerusalem," Ezio deadpans, "I understand since Desmond is still beginning to learn about all weapons. But what are you trying to say in general?"

There was a bit of silence before a tense sigh was heard from Altair.

"I do not want to say this, about my habibi, but I have to. I'm saying I don't think he is truly fit to be
Leonardo can't help but mentally agree with the elder on that. When he glances over to the said subject, however, he sees the young man's eyes slightly flashing before narrowing, his jaw firmly set in line as if he was personally offended by the elder's comment-

"Don't try to defend him, you've seen his techniques and usages," Altair's sharp voice returns, this time, he must be speaking to a silent Ezio. The suffocating silence returns, and this time, the Italian Assassin lets out a few words that sounded like a mutter of forgiveness.

"...Si. I can't deny it," Ezio's tired voice returns, "While I want to help Desmond and protect him... he needs more effort. I do not think he truly understands what it feels like to be a true Assassin. If Mario would see him right away and witnessed what we both have seen, he will be disappointed. But... from the way we are teaching him, he can improve, Altair. He is one of us! We do not leave a man behind. Even those who are still learning- who are still young. I would even bring in one of the younger Assassins on a mission."

Another round of silence before he hears Altair's hesitant voice responds again.

"...and what if that said novice makes a mistake and compromises us? What will you do then?"

A small sound of abrupt shuffling was heard behind the artist; he sees Desmond beginning to stand up and was about to march through the door-

"I... I don't know." The Florence Assassin's voice was barely heard, "If that same question was directly at you."

"I will honestly not hesitate to let the novice die in honor rather than return in shame." The Syrian's calm, collected voice made the American stiffen, his hand freezing before he even touches the metallic handle, "I've made that mistake once... and I will never let that allow again."

Leonardo can't help but feel sympathy for the time traveler as he glances to see the young man looking a bit upset before squeezing his eyes shut, gripping his fists.

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So... Desmond closes his eyes, ...to Altair and Ezio, I'm still technically a freaking novice. Great. Thanks for stating out there how horrible I can get.

There is a part of him that knows how much he has to learn about the ways of the Order that took place in the past- when the technology in Desmond's time didn't exactly exist; gunpowder was a new innovation while steel was the common demonstrator between warriors (next to honor and duty). At the same time, Desmond is glad for the new techniques and abilities; he has something else under his belt aside using two smaller blades and a simple gun. And he didn't tell both Altair and Ezio, but he was actually elated when he gets the chance to train alongside the two Master Assassins in person. Desmond thought both Assassins were impressed from the mock fight.

But what he heard just now... the way both Assassins said it...

...were they that disappointed in him? Was he that bad? The way you tried to hold and use the sword and the knife didn't help. The American gripes, recalling the difficulty of making precise attacks with the blades, Not to mention how many times I fell down to the ground from that stupid skirmish... Goddamn it. Desmond grits his teeth, not even wanting to face either one of the other Assassins right now-
"Desmond?" Leonardo frowns, "Is something the matter?" He can see that catches both Ezio and Altair's attention when the artist inquired Desmond of his current state. He pretends to ignore them and the fact that he and Leonardo are on the other side of the ajar door.

The young man opens his eyes, looking up to see the concerned artist, before giving him a small smile, "No. Nothing's wrong. Thanks for asking though."

The blonde artist frowns, not buying it, "...are you sure?"

"Y-Yeah, I'm sure." The time traveler nods quickly, wanting to go back to the safe house and sleep the rest of the day away to recover his tired body.

"All right then," The artist mutters as he looks around, "If you need to find a place for you to clear your mind, my studio will still be open."

Desmond nods, a quick relief spreading through his face, "Thank you, Leonardo. I... don't know how to thank you for all the trouble-"

Leonardo chuckles, placing his hand on Desmond's shoulders to calm him down.

"Like I said when you first revealed that you trust me, do not worry about me. You have helped me a lot with my inventions and projects; but your trust is more worth it."

The time traveler is surprised to hear this come out of the famed artist himself.

"...thank you." He hears himself say, this time out of sincerity.

"No problem. And you need some rest," Leonardo gently pats Desmond's shoulders, "It seems as if you had a rough day."

_No shit_, Desmond can't help but let out a small tired chuckle, "Okay. But... for the letter-"

"Read it when you are alone and have time," The artist quickly replies, "Do not show it to anyone else. Especially not to the Templars."

The American nods as he heads towards the open door to the other room (where they were resting) before hearing the artist talk amongst his fellow allies.

Desmond quietly shuts the door before collapsing at the mattress. After he takes off the stick shirt and throws it on the floor, Desmond rolls on his back, his eyes looking towards the ceiling. He lets out a silent sigh, obviously on the verge of irritation from both Assassins' comments from earlier.

It was said in a similar context his father said after the first few weeks Desmond was rescued and presented the amount of skills he has as an Assassin: Desmond not being able to fight, wield any sort of weapons or the hidden blade, and his basics are barely scratching the surface of the Assassin's ideals. Only back then, he had Connor and Clay prove William wrong by helping him train; Lucy, Rebecca, and Shaun were there to help him on both fighting and support.

His pride was slightly elated when William looked at him after weeks of training... and he said that he was proud of his son and that Desmond has a chance of being a true Assassin. That was also the day he gave Desmond his own hidden blade...

Looking at the said hidden blade, the time traveler lets out a small smile before looking back up at the ceiling.
Both Altair and Ezio said almost the same things William said. He feels something thick forming in his throat as the comments returned once again, But... why am I feeling like I just got stabbed by tons of needles? Are they that different to me than my own family? I mean, I... I 'care' for them a lot, I want to be with them, I want to... damn, stop crying!

He clears his throat, preventing himself from crying before wiping his eyes, "I'm not sensitive," he mutters to himself, turning over to the left side before covering himself with the blanket.

So why the hell are you still stuck on it? His mind asks, wanting some form of answer.

He doesn't even know how the hell to respond to that; especially since the entire training took a toll on his body.

Guess I'll worry about it later... Desmond can feel his eyelids feeling heavy before drifting to sleep, his hollow breathing becoming steady as his body begins to relax.

**End Part 13**

Ah, the lovely thing called miscommunication and misunderstanding...

What's next: Training with high expectations is one thing; having your emotions bottled about the criticisms is another. Beating up a bunch of Templars (as an excuse to vent out emotions) by going into their hideout for a request is something else entirely.

**Chapter End Notes**

I tried to make it so that Altair and Ezio have different fighting styles since they focus more on precision, accuracy along with a small bit of power. When I looked at the videos, I can say that in my personal opinion, they look similar. Yes, there is a difference in weapon technology and that 300-400 year time jump for both Assassins. And yes, one might look more powerful than the other (I've looked this up) along with the emotional impact both Assassins have experienced. Connor, Clay, and Desmond are the results of all of this thanks to the Animus and the Bleeding Effect along with blood (and plus, I have nooo idea when Clay fights in the series - well, maybe when Desmond was in the Synch Nexus. Please clarify for me).

But in the end, breaking it all down, Altair and Ezio have similar movements. Desmond's attack moves reflect of the modern times in which we have a blend of a few fighting styles... and he did find some way to defend himself that wasn't related to being an Assassin.

Hence why I wrote Desmond's fighting style differently along with Altair's and Ezio's.

And on the other hand...

...Assassin's Creed IV. Not to mention the DLC for Assassin's Creed III: The Tyranny of King George. Honestly, what do you guys think of this?
Disclaimer: I don't even own it.
Okay... Sorry about the very long wait. A lot of stuff happened... I'll spare you the long story and give you the gist.

So... interesting thing happened recently (and aside work, life, and other stuff that happened in my life recently that has caused a massive delay in this chapter). My computer hard drive died on me while I was trying to boot it up one morning. I am honestly not surprised to see that happening (since it was about four years old) since it was getting slower thanks to the amount of time I devote to the laptop. At the same time, I have about four years worth of files that are trapped in that said hard drive. Don't worry; my laptop is fixed now.

My thoughts of ACIV will be on the next chapter; sorry. That was the thing that had to go first since it's been bothering me and I am getting really frustrated.

And for the long delay; enjoy this first part of a long chapter!

Warning: The usual spoilers and action descriptions (and how I get at it) along with a bit more seriousness on the side. Also, like I said, these are just from what I have seen and understand from their fighting styles, so I can be wrong. Let me know if there was anything about their fighting styles I have missed. Also a bit of change in character.

Part 14.1: Bottled Up

"And you handed the map over to Desmond... why, exactly?" Ezio asks, his eyes slightly narrowed as he glances over at the artist.

Most of the Assassin Order had left to either to continue some of their missions or to take care of other matters that were outside of the Brotherhood (most likely either helping others or trying to rest for the night. Paola and La Volpe decide to do the following and talk to Niccolo to see if he knows about the current status of the Borgia family since it seems as if they will be a greater threat to the Order). By this time, it was early evening. Altair was cleaning his weapons with the supplies one of the Assassins managed to give him. Ezio and Leonardo were the only two remaining in the room... and when Ezio asks for the map, the artist honestly replies that he handed the map to the time traveler.

"I thought he has the right to know of the contents of it first," Leonardo replies, shrugging as a small smile appears on his lips, "After all, Desmond was the one who had the map first."

"Next to the elder," Ezio rolls his eyes, slightly glancing over to Altair, who manages to glare at the
Italian Assassin before looking back and finishing polishing his blade. He stretches his arms, looking around for the other said person, "Speaking of... where's Desmond?"

"Ah... well..." That was when he sees the artist looking a bit hesitant to respond. Blinking, Ezio faces Leonardo, a frown on his face, "...he was really tired, so he told me that he was going to take a nap."

"A... nap."
The Florence Assassin recalls how exhausted his tesoro was; the training- was it even training? While Ezio knows Desmond truly needs a lot of work, he is still ire that Altair called the young man's methods abysmal, blocky and not all that accurate. In some way, the Italian noticed the elder was comparing Desmond to an untrained, immature novice; there was some degree of pain shown in Altair's eyes, but Ezio didn't dare to ask what made the Master Assassin think such thing… it almost seems as if the Syrian Assassin had once been like Desmond or has seen someone make mistakes like the young man… and succumbed to his early demise (or either disgrace or worse-death).

Ezio just hoped to God Desmond didn't hear the entire conversation.

"I see," He slightly falls off his seat to glance over at Altair, who was now polishing his throwing knives. He doesn't look up to face the other two as he sheathes back one of the smaller knives, "Thank you for letting us know."

"It is no problem," Leonardo slightly nods before facing Ezio, "Why do you want to know more about the map?"

"You forgot to mention to us about what was written in the inscription," Ezio grumbles, not wanting to put the subject of the map any longer than it should, "Was it anything particularly important that the bastardo and I should know?"

"A lot, unfortunately."
The Italian sits up; he can hear the knife being set down as the Syrian Assassin glances up at Leonardo, the atmosphere immediately changing into one of concern. Leonardo manages to catch on and continues to talk, knowing pretty well the interrogation he was going to be bombarded with.

"Yes, if you two must know, the inscription mentions about a Piece of Eden. No, it is not the Apple; we already have one in our possession. What the item is, I am still baffled with it and I do not know. As for location, the map is saying the Piece of Eden is around area in which the Frari is located."

"The Frari?" Ezio was surprised; he knows where that cathedral is (Altair, on the other hand, looks confused as hell) since he had to meet up with the thief Rosa for his training. But the Piece of Eden… "How is it located in there out of all places?"

"What is this 'Frari' you speak of?" Altair frowns, now walking up to the two of them, a look on confusion in his face, "Is it somewhere particularly important?"

The Italian was about to smart mouth Altair when he recalls that the Syrian doesn't know most of his way around Italy (despite running around the entire city yesterday...). Then he also recalls Desmond knows his way around the city just as well as Ezio does. His light amber eyes narrows to the Syrian, who manages to deflect it.

"It is a church... and it is also one of the more known areas in which Templars gather in," Leonardo explains before glancing over to Ezio, "He's... wait, have you even entered inside the Frari?"
"No, I haven't," Ezio frowns, "Why would an Assassin step right inside a Templar's lair?"

The artist blinks... before nodding, a bit embarrassed with his mistake. Altair shakes his head before glancing over to the artist again, "What of the inscription?"

"That, I can explain to you two about," Leonardo's face changes into that of a confused one, "The inscription is... well, it's obvious that it is a Piece of Eden."

No doubt it's something worth of value, Ezio mentally notes, his eyes slightly narrow. He'll get the information out of his friend later... and possibly from Desmond (since he and Leonardo did have a chat while he and the elder were sparring).

Leonardo doesn't stop there, "It's also known to change its appearance; some say that it's in a form of a stone, some say that it presents to them in a form of a liquid - an elixir of sorts." He frowns, as if he looks a bit worried about something, "It is also said that only this item chooses whom its owner should be..."

"Much like the Apple," Altair quietly mutters, his eyes slightly dimming at this thought. Ezio frowns; perhaps something happened to the elder once before that involved the Apple of Eden? The Codex (the older, wiser and experienced Altair has written this... not the young Master Assassin (who seemed to be around 30) who is standing with him and the artist) mentioned about the visions that were seen when touching the Apple; various mechanisms and technology that were never spoken unless revealed to the Assassins, desired by the Templars to use for their advantages...

...all because the pages were written from the source of an item that was created from those who came before.

"So, this new Piece of Eden is hidden away here... why?" Ezio decides to finally ask the artist; if that was all what mentioned in the inscription, should there be some sort of indication as to why the item was situated inside the Frari?

"That I am afraid I don't know about."

"That I am afraid I don't know about." Leonardo grimaces, looking down as his fingers as he was inspecting them. The Italian slumps his shoulders since that was - once again - another cryptic question that nobody in the room knows about. Not even the elder can understand, "Whoever has written this map, however... he or she has been very specific about it."

"As we can tell," Altair sighs, "For now... we have to begin looking around the area to be aware of the Templars and their movements."

Ezio was about to open his mouth to say something, but he frowns, knowing his question would have either a confusing or obvious answer (depending on who is responding), Which also bothers me since the Templars are not aware of this map at all... the elder did mention a Templar soldier had the map in his time. Shouldn't they be looking for the map at this point?

"It seems as if we have a lot to prepare, even if the Templars are not expecting us at this time. The only thing they are more obsessed with obtaining seems to be the Apple," Altair's voice cuts Ezio back to reality; the Florence Assassin sees the Master Assassin glancing at him before looking towards the room in which Desmond is currently in, "...even if we have to take Desmond in a mission he is not fully prepared for."

"Desmond isn't..." Ezio was going to cut back in, reminding Altair that Desmond seems to be more than prepared when he recalls the training, the sparring... and the way Desmond presented himself. He can see the elder staring at him, giving him an 'I told you so' look. Leonardo looks a bit disappointed, as if he somehow hoped his best friend will help the young man in a more positive
light as opposed to what happened earlier...

*Did Leonardo listen to what the elder and I were saying back there?* Ezio asks himself, but decides that he'll ask his best friend about it later (Leonardo was with Desmond in that room after all and the doors aren't all that soundproof) tonight or tomorrow.

"...we'll just train him some more until he shows improvement. And yes, bastardo," And he glares at Altair once more, this time he really wants to beat the elder up without any constraints, "Desmond will no doubt improve; he won't be like a novice as you said he would be."

Altair must have seen this coming, but he just kept silent. Leonardo has a surprised look before he has a small smile present.

"In that case, let me know when you two want more information. Or better yet, ask Desmond for the map. Perhaps, though... it is a good idea to try and forward this information to your uncle, Ezio."

The Italian Assassin nods; perhaps it is the best if Mario should be notified about this... along with Bartolomeo and Niccolo. Surely Teodora, Paola, Antonio, and La Volpe know about this. The Assassin recruits shall be notified of this later on, perhaps if they desire back-up (which, already with the Master Assassin and him along with Desmond) in case things do go horrifyingly wrong.

"We will," Ezio and Altair both nod, knowing pretty well that they will ask the American for it-

"And please... for the love of God," Leonardo has an exasperated look on his face, "Stop bickering like love-sick fools and get along for Desmond's sake! You two are no better than two jealous women!"

"WHAT!" Altair and Ezio balk, glaring at the artist. The artist just rolls his eyes as he opens the door to leave...

And then he pauses before turning around, this time, a smirk is present on his face, "...then again, I wonder if I should ask Teodora or Paola to bring in one of their women to please Desmond for the night?"

Altair looks like he is ready to murder the artist as the Italian can see the Syrian seething at the mere thought of someone flirting with... his 'habibi' (as much as Ezio hated to even imagine leaving the young man with the elder in the first place).

Ezio's eyes narrow into slits at this question, "Leonardo, amico mio, if you so dare ask one of those two to bring in anyone to try and please my tesoro -"

"And on that note, I shall be taking my leave!" The artist quickly exits... but not without a burst of laughter escaping from him.

Silence fills the larger room as the two Assassins try to calm themselves down at the possibility of someone trying to get their way with what is theirs; that thought already crossed their minds once (vaguely) with a woman they heard Desmond's comrades mention. Myrna, was it? Ezio mentally notes to make sure everyone understands that Desmond is his and his alone (but with Altair? It's already getting impossible, seeing as how possessive the Syrian Assassin is). It wasn't until after a few minutes have passed that he hears someone walking up to the other room. Opening his eyes, he sees Altair opening the door that leads into where Desmond is-

"Oh no. You are not going to be the one to wake him up."
Ezio instantly strides up to Altair as the two enter in the room to see the sleeping young man, "...I will."
Altair rolls his dark amber eyes to glare at Ezio, "Shut up, brat. If my habibi needs his rest, then he can recover."

"And yet..." The words about his training were on the tip of the Italian's tongue, but from the slightly concerned look the elder has, he can tell that aside the harsh criticism he spoke of Desmond earlier, there is a degree of worry and concern that is present. Ezio sighs, shaking his head as he follows behind the Syrian as they enter inside the room.

"...so, I'm taking that we're not going easy on him in terms of training?"

"No." And then, "...you too, twat. I am not that cruel in terms of judgement." And after a second, this time, Altair's voice softer and calmer, "We both have the same reason, you know. It's not just for us... the Order depends on us. We have people to protect along with the items we have."

The Italian blinks before sighing, running his hand through his long hair.

To protect the innocent... and for us... He looks down to see the sleeping time traveler; the blanket barely covering Desmond's chest. The American's mouth is slightly open to breathe, but there are some remnants of dark circles under his eyes. The Italian silences himself to prevent chuckling, but his lips graces into that of a calm smile as he sits against the make-shift mattress to observe the sleeping beauty.

"It's not just the Templars I am concerned about."

Ezio grimaces, his light amber eyes narrowing as he looks at the Syrian Assassin, who is beginning to gather the other items in the room.

"I know..." He quietly muses, glancing down to the sleeping time traveler before gently brushing his fingers against Desmond's jawline.

Altair grunts, a substitution for an affirmative, "We'll see if he can improve tomorrow. ...and hopefully he won't make the same mistakes as he did today."

In some way, the Italian can see how... concerned Altair looks.

"And your words from earlier " Ezio can't help but ask, glancing back down to see the young man stir a bit before slightly adjusting his position to face away from the window where a small gust of wind was coming in, "Are they truly how you feel about him?"

Altair fell silent for a bit before he sighs heavily, leaning against the wall for a bit of support.

"...while my frustrations were expressed, I don't mean any emotional harm to Desmond." The Syrian replies before gathering his items, "...even if his methods are... unusual and not what I had initially expected, I still believe he can become one of us- an Assassin." The Master Assassin takes Desmond's bag before pausing to look down at him, "...though I believe this will take a while for him to truly understand our methods of this time. How he will adapt here is something I was afraid of..." His voice trails off, as if he was thinking about something.

"Time was already a factor to begin with," Ezio mutters, picking up Desmond as he carries him from his back (He realizes that Desmond is a bit lighter than the usual soldiers' bodies) as he indicates for the elder to go ahead first, who manages to open the doors for him before leaving the meeting house to return to the safe house (which honestly wasn't too far off).

For the walk back, it was strangely silent; the only thing they can hear were the dogs barking, some people conversing (rather those who are accustomed to the night), along with some loud talking and
boisterous laughter in farther areas.

When the two Assassins reach into the safe house, Ezio pauses once the elder lifts his free arm so he can look around to see if the safe house has been breached. He nods, allowing the Syrian to quietly place the bags before entering the safe house, his hidden blade and sword in hand. The Italian can't help but realize how Desmond can sleep through all of this as he can feel the young man's steady breathing against him. Ezio shivers, not from the breeze, but from how close Desmond's lips are to his neck...

"It's safe."

He looks to see Altair once again, this time, looking relieved as he retrieves the items and entering inside the safe house. As soon as the door is closed, Ezio immediately heads towards the room with the mattress so that he gently places Desmond on the bed to allow him to sleep. Altair in tow as he places down Desmond's bag along with the the bag of supplies and equipment cleaners.

Ezio can't help but let out a small chuckle as he sees Desmond make a small noise of slight discontent until he adjusts to make him body comfortable with the bed. "Adorabile," The Italian murmurs, running his fingers through the American's hair.

"You might wake him, brat," Altair grumbles, but he grabs a chair and gets comfortable, glancing at Desmond. Ezio can swear he sees the elder murmur something that sounded like an endearment to the sleeping young man (causing a silent flare of jealousy), but he keeps it to himself.

"Tch. You've been roughing him up and you called him a 'novice-of-all-novices.'"

"It is true though," Altair frowns, "Unless Desmond can find a way to improve... no. I can never let it happen again. Never."

Ezio was going to ask what the hell is the elder talking about, but he keeps his mouth quiet. And yes... Ezio can't help but admit, Desmond has a lot of work ahead of him.

That still doesn't mean his tesoro has room to improve.

You'll be fine. Don't worry, tesoro mio. I'm not sure why Altair thinks of you as such... He shakes his head before looking at Desmond again. Let's hope you do better tomorrow at the training, si?

The next day proved to be a bit more interesting than what happened on the first day in training.

Desmond was a bit more apprehensive, but it seems as if he was more prepared for the training. Despite the aches all over his body (along with some faint bruises from some of the hits from yesterday's duel), the time traveler was actually fine in terms of how he dealt with the weapons this time as well as his fighting techniques.

In fact, the young man was a bit too careful about his usage of the throwing knives and handling the sword. As for the running, climbing, and jumping, it seems as if the time traveler's stamina was beginning to stretch out than what it was yesterday (and from Altair's standpoint, he can see that the young man was slightly wincing from the strains his body had to toil through... but not a single complaint escaped him). For the physical hand-to-hand dueling, while Desmond did get roughed up a bit, he did a little better job of parrying and dodging. In fact, there were little to no signs of the brasher fighting style Desmond performed; he was trying to fit to a new style of fighting that looks to be a combination of both Ezio and Altair's abilities.

The two Assassins were surprised; perhaps the Bleeding Effect did have a lasting impression on
Desmond.

When either Altair or Ezio tells Desmond about their critiques and how he can improve or whenever Altair points out whatever he is doing wrong or Ezio pointing out some tips, Desmond will immediately try to make sure their advices comes into good use. The young man was more than willing to listen as opposed to being stubborn and say that his way is better. As the result, Desmond winds up improving (bit by bit). The other strange thing is that the time traveler isn't complaining about the difficult routines as much (nor is he vocalizing about how difficult (or how borderline impossible) some of these tasks are).

He isn't talking to them as much either. He just nods, acknowledges their advices, and then goes back into what he was doing... this time, using their advices and even attempting to avoid anything that could cost him a serious injury or a sharp reprimand from a higher Assassin (if Desmond was in the actual training regimen, of course).

That's what the two Assassins have noticed in the first half of the day.

By the time afternoon rolled around, the Master Assassin decides that it would be best if he decides to look around Venice (possibly to either alleviate some stress for being in wait for too long or just running around the city to get used to the area). At this point, Ezio decided to help Desmond with the crossbow... as the young man's interest has been piqued (slightly) since the Italian has offered.

In this case, the young man was trying his best to make sure he doesn't botch up the practice.

"Position your crossbow so you can aim at the target," Ezio instructs the young man as Desmond adjusts the crossbow to fit his range of sight.

"Okay..." Desmond mutters, narrowing his vision as he eyes the target. He knows that in some way, the crossbow will have some form of recoil. Just like a normal handgun, He mentally reminds himself as he prepares to grip himself with the weight needed to counter the knock back energy. The other thing that Desmond was prepared for was the fact that if he gets it wrong. Seeing as how his mind is still thinking about the thoughts from yesterday...

Relax, Desmond, He grips the crossbow tighter, carefully eyeing his vision towards the target doll, Pretend you're holding a gun... only it's made out of wood and there is a good chance that the recoil isn't so bad. Try not to think about it, don't think about it.

His brown eyes narrow before pressing the trigger, allowing the arrow to release.

The recoil wasn't as terrible as compared to the gun, Desmond found out, but the fact that he was a little bits of from the target didn't help his silently ire mood.

"Damn," He mutters, seeing as how the arrow hit the dummy's arm instead of th chest. The Italian looks a bit surprised before glancing at Desmond.

"Huh... while it is a little off from the target, you did a pretty good job pinpointing one of the vital areas in the straw dummy." The Italian arches an eyebrow, but he can't help but chuckle over this, "Well... at least you are improving. A lot better than the day before."

I wonder if that's supposed to be another way of saying, 'You need more work' and expect me to hit the target on my next shot, Desmond can't help but grumble in his mind. Instead of verbalizing all of that, he just gives the Italian a small, tight grin before facing back at the target dummy. His grip on the crossbow got tighter as he tries to get into a good position to hit the center of the target, "Huh. So... if I just keep my eyes on the target..."
Ezio frowns, seeing as how stiff Desmond's body was. It was as if he was tensing up and subconsciously releasing his stress through the crossbow. While it was good for the recoil...

...Desmond isn't relaxing enough.

What is the matter with him? The Florence Assassin asks himself before walking over to the time traveler, who launches the trigger, making the arrow fly towards the target.

Thunk. The arrow hit a bit below the target area, causing Desmond to sigh and shake his head, "Damn it! I can get the arrow to some of the vital parts... if this guy was a soldier or something-"

"Tesoro, calm down. You are not using the crossbow in a real fight; this is just for me to see whether or not you can effectively using it." The American tenses up in surprise, not expecting to hear the Italian's low voice (there was a bit of seduction in it too) as he hears someone shifting behind him, "Here, let me show you something..."

Standing behind the time traveler, Ezio gently takes the time traveler's arms (where it is tightly holding onto the crossbow) and gently places his hands over the young man's before he adjusts it to the point in which Desmond realizes it is near the center of the target. The American was about to say that he can take care of the rest from here when he feels the Italian's warmth (even from his clothing and armor) pressed up against him. A light blush dusts his cheeks, but he doesn't say anything.

"Calm down, tesoro mio. Relax; there is nothing for you to be stressed about." Ezio murmurs as he wraps his left arm around Desmond's waist before gently massaging his side.

The time traveler blinks in somewhat surprise; for a minute, he thought the Italian would force the crossbow out of his hands and beat him up or something. But... from yesterday... Desmond mentally stammers as he begins to slightly relax (his teeth were still gripping though), What the fuck was yesterday about then? That critique of me... Was it... What the hell, Ezio!?

"Desmond. Are you all right?"

Desmond blinks, lowering the crossbow a bit to face slightly concerned light amber. He blinks, his mouth tightening as he bottles up what was going to be an angry rant.

"Y-Yeah, I'm fine," He nods quickly before quickly turning back to focus on the crossbow, "So... you want me to relax when I'm taking this show?"

"Si... and aim well, like you did for some of the knives earlier today," The Italian nods, now looking to where Desmond is aiming the weapon. At least the time traveler's body relaxes slightly Narrowing his brown eyes, Desmond's arms slightly tenses up (not as hard as last time) before pressing the trigger, releasing the smaller arrow...

Thunk!

He lowers the weapon... to see it hit within the target area. It was in the midway point between the center and the farthest edge. He grabs another arrow and shoots it... and repeats it three more times; each landing near to the center of the target before the last arrow landed thunk on the center.

He can hear the Italian murmur words of impress and surprise. The time traveler can't help but wonder if this was because he has seen Ezio use the crossbow while he was experiencing the Ezio's memories or if it came from watching Connor use a bow and arrow during his target practice ("Better hand-eye coordination practice and I don't like smelling like gunpowder," was the response Connor
He also recalls there was a mentioning that whenever a person watches someone else performing an
attack or an ability, the observant can perform a similar action the other person has done. Shaun had
called it something similar to an emotional contagion; it was usually linked with a strong emotion.

Desmond gives himself a half-smile, *Well, at least you got it closer this time.* He can't help but feel a
bit of elation in his stomach for achieving this much for a simple target practice drill with a crossbow
out of all things (he only has an idea of how to hold it).

"*Stai migliorando. Well, well... looks like we got ourselves a natural,*" Ezio chuckles, a
smile prevalent as he gently kisses Desmond's cheek.

"H-Hey!" The American stammers, trying to grab another small arrow when the Italian wraps his
other arm around Desmond's waist.

"Perhaps I should reward you for your improving efforts, *caro mio.*"

That causes the time traveler to blush as he feels Ezio's lips against the back of his neck before
nipping his lower neck. He shivers, closing his eyes, the feelings from yesterday beginning to slip
itself away from his mind. Desmond can feel Ezio chuckle at how things are going; even his English
(with that damned accent) is seducing him.

"Hopefully the bastardo elder doesn't mind if I take the rest of the day off to have you for myself,
no? I can have you all to myself..." He can feel the Italian's hot murmur against his left ear. Closing
his brown eyes, he allows the Italian to place hot nipping and kisses over his neck, ears, and cheeks,
enjoying himself to-

"*You're not a novice; your body is not of a novice... you are a natural,*" Ezio murmurs in Italian.

And that was when yesterday's thoughts came back rushing into Desmond's mind, causing reality to
come crashing back to Desmond. The heat begins to ebb away as he silently gulps, looking down to
the ground.

"Hey... Ezio?"

"Hm?" The Italian's lips move to brush against the shell of the American's ear, "Is something on your
mind, *tesoro mio?*

In fact... Desmond's blush wasn't going away, feeling how close Ezio was against Desmond. Even
after he was elated to see the five shots that hit in the center of the target area (*That's way better than
what I've done before!* He can't help but sigh in relief and mentally reminds himself to keep
practicing), Desmond still can't help but wonder if... maybe what Ezio said the day before... it
sounded like while he did see the flaws in Desmond's attack skills, he didn't seem all that pleased to
agree with Altair's critique of the young man.

That made his blush go away as his eyes still locking on the ground.

"Am I really going to be like you and Altair? Like an actual Assassin? I'm not a complete failure..."
He quietly asks himself. He doesn't see the Italian's eyes look at Desmond in complete surprise
before feeling his hand taking Desmond's chin and gently turning him to see worried amber eyes.

"Desmond. You are improving so that is good news. What made you think you are not going to be
an assassin like me and that *bastardo* Altair?"
The American's eyes widen slightly, making him realize that he nearly implied that he overheard both Assassins the day before (key word being nearly).

"...it's nothing." Desmond quickly dismisses, his voice still sounding indifferent to cover up anything implications before making his way back to the house... only to realize the Italian's arms are still not letting him go. A light blush covers his face, "Umm, Ezio...?"

"Hm?"

"I... do you think we should continue training before Altair gets back?" The time traveler quickly tries to change the subject as he swiftly places Ezio's arms from the earlier hug and grabs the crossbow.

True to Desmond's word, the Syrian Assassin returns, this time with a few materials at his hand. He blinks and frowns, glancing over at Ezio, "Brat, there is a message for you from one of your... trainees. He said he has completed a mission for you."

"Grazi," Ezio nods, but his amber eyes are still following Desmond's form. He frowns, still in confusion over what Desmond asked himself earlier.

With Altair, it was a bit different.

This time (it was at the next day), Desmond can swear that he felt like his ancestor- the one who began his bloodline- is truly judging him. He had a feeling that Ezio was doing something similar to him the day before, but it wasn't as badly as-

"Desmond, unless you are planning to kill off one of the birds with your stare," Altair's deadpan voice jolts him slightly from his thoughts, "Are you going to concentrate with where you are supposed to throw the bomb?"

"...sorry," The time traveler mutters, shaking his head before focusing at his current surroundings.

He and Altair are training for most of the day; Ezio decides to take the time and handle whatever affairs and missions he needs to take care of over in Venice and some over at local cities that most likely has to do with the Brotherhood, Altair has decided to oversee the entire training regimen for the day. In place of the crossbow (in which Desmond has become more proficient in), it was bomb making. Well, the making was easy, but the other part...

...it was pretty difficult trying to pin down a good location to throw a freaking smoke bomb without grabbing anybody's attention before taking down a few of the Templar Guards that were standing nearby (from what he has seen from Altair, his eyes flashed golden earlier and Desmond knew right there Altair used the Eagle Vision before pointing out the Templars and the suspicious people that they need to target and be vary of just so they don't get their attentions yet.

"Try again and this time..." The Syrian points over to an empty spot, "Try to aim and set off at the ground far from any group of people so that nobody notices and compromise our position."

"Okay. Hopefully I can do better this time. That last one..." The young man grumbles, still not satisfied about the earlier attempt, "My aim was off." He grabs another bomb that he created before making sure that the fuse is currently aligned so that he can instantly ignite it with no problems. He walks up near the edge of the building that is facing their target area-

"...Desmond."
"Hm?" Desmond wasn't looking at him; he was too focused on his current task at hand.

That took the Syrian slightly aback, but he didn't show it. For some reason, instead of the usual confusion and questioning, Desmond has taken to himself to carefully observe how Altair created the smoke bombs before activating it by throwing it (not to mention seeing how the angle of projection will affect who and where the bomb will hit). And for the first time the young man did test out one of his handmade bombs, Altair had to admit...

...Desmond did a good job with it (if not for the fact that he threw the smoke bomb near a Templar).

He has also noticed earlier while they were training with the swords (and even had a small makeshift duel to test out how much Desmond has learned from that Italian bastard), Desmond didn't mess up as much or slip his grip. The knife throwing has gotten better too. The actual hand-to-hand combat was getting there; all they needed was for Desmond to begin incorporating using his hidden blade. But it was much better than what had happened... two days ago.

It seems as if something was motivating Desmond to improve on his techniques and making an actual effort to do so (as opposed to what he has witnessed back at Masyaf in which come novices don't give a damn as to what they are fighting for or being very nervous and blundering at their skills... horrendously. But it seems as if his motivation had to do with the two of them.

Speaking of that...

The other thing Altair has noticed is the way the young man interacted with the two Assassins. It was evident yesterday that the young man was more quiet and attentive. He didn't complain once about how his modern techniques clashed with the ways of the Brotherhood that both him and Ezio were taught.

Unlike the novices that he has seen, Altair notes to himself, Desmond's pride doesn't present itself this time around when he utilizes his own techniques; two days ago, the time traveler would have been boastful about the strength-based combat skills he has earned (Speaking of, who in Allah's name taught him those ridiculous moves?). But...

...this time, he has been more careful and thinking about what he was going to do before performing the action that was equally effective and accurate.

And that, Altair realized, was something that didn't fit right with his habibi.

Is Desmond forcing himself to do these actions?

"Are you all right?"

The young man blinks before he gives a small smile, "Yeah, I'm fine. Why? Is something wrong?"

I should be the one asking that, The Syrian Assassin narrows his eyes slightly as he notices how... fake Desmond sounded. It was as if something has overtaken his habibi and made him into someone else entirely.

Walking up to Desmond, he can hear the young man squeak as the Syrian gets closer to him before he can feel their bodies against each other. The Master Assassin has to admit; he has missed the closeness of having the young man against him. But now wasn't the greatest time to act upon his bottled emotions and cravings; teaching Desmond was more important. Altair eyes the smoke bomb the young man has in his right hand.

"Aren't you going to throw that?" He quietly asks, taking a step back to allow Desmond some room
to throw the bomb.

The young Assassin looks at the bomb before frowning, "...oh. Right. About that..." Desmond steps back, his eyes locking on to the area Altair pointed out to him earlier (nobody was near it and if the bomb did explode, there was no way anyone can have some freak out attack over it; the people might wonder if someone crashed a pottery set or something). Narrowing his eyes, the young man quickly lights the bomb and throws it...

...to land on the ground with a **poof**.

Luckily, the ground was either dusty or dirty enough and the wind picked up on the bomb's remains easily; the people that were present on the ground level were either too busy or distracted by another matter altogether.

The guards had left the area right when the bomb went off anyway.

"**Much better.**" Altair nods, silently approving how Desmond pulled it off. But to him, something still feels off...

The young man sighs in relief, his shoulders relaxing before he faces the Master Assassin, "So... what now?"

The Syrian picks up a few of the leftover bombs and handed a few of them to Desmond, "*Hold onto these and do not waste them. These are valuable for safety.*"

The American nods, taking no waste in time to take the bombs and place them inside the bag that he brought with him.

About a couple of seconds passed in silence (minus hearing the noises of the people from the ground level) as the two made their way towards a higher vantage point; Desmond has a feeling he knows what is coming next.

"**This time,**" The Syrian gestures over to the haystack pile that is inside of an empty alleyway, "**You** jump first."

The American slightly pales, **Well. Shit. Okay. That... was something I haven't done since- oh wait. This morning.** He gulps, taking one hesitant step towards the edge of the roof-

-before being yanked back (from his shirt).

"Ack! What gives!?" Desmond was about to rant about how his concentration was broken when he sees the Syrian Assassin look at him with concern.

"**Desmond, are you sure everything is all right?**" Altair asks once more. **Whatever Desmond is doing... this doesn't feel right,** he wants to know (badly) what has made Desmond change, **While I do commend for his improving efforts-**

"Altair, I'm feeling fine. I'm just thinking about some things on my mind." Desmond quickly responds, his eyes darting away from dark amber orbs, "That's all. It's been like that. Don't worry about me, okay?"

"...I see." Altair murmurs, his eyes slightly narrowing as his grip on Desmond's shirt tightens. **He's lying.** His mind tells him and judging from his **habibi's actions,** Desmond is hiding something. If it had warranted some sort of worry from the Italian brat, something must have affected the time traveler.
He sighs, wanting to tell Desmond that while his actions from two days before did force Altair to rethink about making the young man an Assassin, his recent improvement wants him to rethink of his doubts.

Instead, he decides to settle on being subtle and hope that Desmond will at least understand to let go of... whatever the hell was bothering his habibi.

"Desmond." He pulls Desmond close to him, wrapping his arms around the young man.

The young man blinks and was about to open his mouth to ask something when Altair brushes his lips against Desmond's. At least they were in a higher elevated area and nobody was paying attention (nor they are looking up). He misses the taste of his habibi; he didn't get the chance yesterday due to a certain brat who took up most of Desmond's time training (which should be a good thing, seeing as how Ezio commented on how far Desmond has gotten... in a few day).

"W-What-

"For your efforts," Altair gives a small smile when he sees a light blush appear on his habibi's face, "If you continue at this rate, you will become like one of us."

And just from that, he sees how doubtful Desmond looks at his slightly flushed face changes into one of concern and indifference. The Syrian frowns (knowing that his actions somewhat... backfired) as he can hear a slight mutter from the young man, something about-

"Desmond?" He can't help but ask; was there something wrong when he gave a small compliment on the young man's skills today?

"It's... nothing." The American quickly replies before looking at the area, "H-Hey, shouldn't we get going or... something? I thought that I was going to..."

"Ah." The Leap of Faith. The Syrian's eyes narrows as he glances over to the edge of the roof before sighing, "...Let me ask one more time. Are you sure nothing is bothering you?"

Desmond looks at Altair in slight surprise before giving a small nod, "I'm... I'm fine. Is something up?"

He doesn't see the Master Assassin's jaw tighten (a little bit) at this response.

"It's nothing, habibi." He sighs, "...let us go, shall we?"

Altair makes a mental note to ask Ezio if he knows anything else about what has bothered Desmond.

"It's been bothering me how indifferent Desmond has been." The other Assassin murmurs as he glances over at more notes from the other Assassins and from the Codex. He is not concentrating as his mind is wandering back to another subject.

Altair narrows his eyes as he sees that Ezio looks even more distracted than usual. "...from the way you are currently concentrating right now, it makes me wonder how you managed to get to where you are."

"Vaffanculo, vecchio," Ezio glares at the Master Assassin, "And here I am wondering the same thing about you. And no, I know you are going to ask, I do not know anything that perhaps might have caused some sort of disruption in my tesoro's mood. Perhaps you might have an idea, elder."
So obviously, the Italian knows absolutely nothing.

"Unfortunately for you..." The Syrian sits down at one of the chairs as he looks over to the door to the room where Desmond is napping at, "I do not have an idea as to what effected Desmond. Was there anything that he indicated or said that made you realize this? And no," He can see the other Assassin's mouth about to open, "Do not mention anything about his recent training and how he has been more careful and all. I witnessed that for myself. I was talking about anything that he has said or might have implied."

Ezio lets out a weary sigh, looking up from the Codex as his chain rests on his right hand, "...yes. He mentioned something odd yesterday which bothers me."

Altair's frown slightly deepens, "The same for me earlier today."

"What did he say to you then?" The Italian immediately asks, worry tinting in his voice, "He mentioned something about not being able to-"

The Master Assassin stares at the Italian, "You idiot. As sharp as my hearing was, I can barely hear what Desmond said."

He can hear a small thunk on the table,

"Thank you for the help, bastardo." Ezio grumbles in sarcasm, causing Altair to glare at him in disdain.

"And what do you suggest we do then?" The Syrian is very tempted to wake up the sleeping young man and ask him if they said or did anything that bothered the young man-

"I have an idea."

Altair stares at Ezio, who is thinking about something, "...but you want to go over it with me first before you actually perform said stupid idea, correct?"

"Ehi!" The Italian's sharp light amber glares at him, "When did you ever presume it was a stupid idea, bastardo!? And well..." He grimaces, "...there is something I want your assistance with."

...what the hell does he have in mind that can help us in this situation? The Master Assassin can't help but wonder whether or not Ezio's plan has anything to do with why Desmond is acting the way he is, "All right, but it will cost you."

That makes the mischievous grin falter off slightly as the Florence man stares at the Syrian Assassin. "All right. What is it that you want?"

"That I will discuss with you later after I hear whatever your ridiculous plan involves and what you want from my end." Altair responds back, knowing pretty well that one day Ezio's curiosity will get the better of him (and costing him something).

Ezio groans, "Fine, fine... but whatever your 'cost' is, it better not involve having my tesoro to yourself."

Well, there went one idea from Altair's head.

"Can you try and find that small... device Desmond was using?" The Italian asks, pointing to Desmond's bag. Altair stares at the bag, then to Ezio, and back to the bag...
"You're joking."

Ezio shakes his head, a meek grin at his face, "...it's worth a shot?"

It took all of Altair's will power (not to mention risking the chance of waking up the napping Desmond) not to punch the living hell out of the annoying brat for making such idiotic suggestion.

"Desmond? What the... is this you?"

Thankfully, it was Connor who responded. Ezio was looking at the Syrian before responding, "I'm afraid not, amico."

"I'm going to guess this is Ezio." Connor's voice instantly turns into a one of surprise, "What are you two up to? And where's Desmond?"

"Desmond is-"

"Don't you dare tell him." Altair shoots Ezio a glare, "Connor. Can you tell us something?"

"Well, seeing as how you two morons aren't going to tell me what Desmond has been up to for the past- oh, I don't know- three days," Connor growls in ire, "I'm not sure how I should respond to this."

"And why should we? He is fine!" Ezio rolls his eyes (although he knows how it feels like to be worried for his brother), "What makes you think that-"

"He hasn't contacted ANY of us for the past three days and it is making me worried to no end. Now spill."

Knowing that Connor is worried about Desmond's sake... well, right now, said young man is resting from the exercises (after the bombs and more running, along with some sword dueling... the usual for them). But-

"Mi scusi, but what does it mean..." Ezio pauses, trying to form it right, "...when you say, 'Now spill'?"

There was a silence at the other end before...

"Wha... oh. Right." Connor's voice was deadpan, "I forgot. You two don't understand some of our terms in modern speak." And then some inaudible grumbling later, "It means to tell me what is going on with Desmond. Is he hurt? Has he recovered? Is he-"

"Calm down! My habi-Desmond is fine! He is resting at the moment!" The Syrian snaps in irritation, catching his slip of the tongue (barely) in time. He can feel Ezio glaring at him for the small slip, but he ignores it (for the better of it and after all, Desmond is his habibi! What right does that peacock have, anyway?) as he continues to talk, "He has been training under my methods-"

"What do you mean, your methods?" The Italian barks in ire all of the sudden as he sits up, his glare turning into a narrow pierce stare, "Desmond is also being taught under me!"

"Wait, you two are teaching him?" The Assassins' mouths stop right before they were going to begin having another fight, "Huh. Well... that explains one reason as why he isn't talking a lot recently. But as for Desmond's training?" They hear an exasperated sigh, "Oh God. What the hell
"Did Desmond botch up now."

"Connor, what do you mean he botched up?" Ezio was immediate to defend his tesoro, "Desmond honestly did not-

"You brat. Be quiet and let this man speak." Altair's voice was border-lining deadly and threatening to punch that annoying face before looking back at the communicator (that was sitting at his hand), "Connor. Is it possible to ask you something?"

There was a second's worth of silence before another sigh was heard from the other side, "All right... what is it? And for the love of God, please don't ask me anything about Desmond's interests or the Bleeding Effect." The last part sounded like Connor was going to gag. That made the Syrian's eye twitch slightly, but the Italian just smirks.

"There is something else about the little sparrow the elder and I want to inquire about..."

End Part 14.1

Part 2 coming up within a couple of days.

On a very unrelated note, my right hand is going to ache in the morning (I had to do work with my tablet).
Beaten Up

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: ...I honestly don't mind saying these, but still...

All right, the new game also involves player involvement. In other words, this is like 'You get to choose' in the side story. So, is it just us looking through Desmond's ancestors' memories? What are we going to do in the modern times? Just report back and email to the head honcho of Abstergo? I feel like this is a choose your own adventure thing; if Erudito makes an appearance in the next game, then I will be surprised... or not.

What the heck does this have to do with the ending of ASC 3 in terms of connection?

On the other hand, I have heard about the DLC for ASC 3. My thoughts on it: It's not a bad premise, it sounds pretty descent, and maybe I should reserve my judgement on the entire story until I find out what happens in the last part of the DLC. All I know is that basically Connor is supposed to stop George Washington's tyrannical reign while he is in possession of the Apple of Eden and makes allies and enemies... basically the same as the actual game. Right...? (Yeah. Not played it either.)

...and the reason for the other massive delay is because of life and stuff, once again. To put it plainly, being a college graduate is a good thing and a curse (you'll see what I mean soon...).

Long awaited Part 2; enjoy.

WARNING: The usual, the spoilers and all... and how Desmond gets to be a bit moodier (and a bit OOC as usual). The same for the rest. This chapter is mostly about Desmond.

And action in this part (oh thank God FINALLY).

"italics" = Italian, Arabic, any other language OR a flashback (depending on how it is used)

"bold italics" = over the mic and phone

"normal" = English

bold sentences = emails, screams, or Bleeding Effect (depends on how it's used).

Part 14.2: Beaten Up

Altair officially wants to kick the Italian Assassin out of the chair. Predictably, Ezio was much worse than a very ire Malik.
He will be thankful for Malik's appearance once he manages to find a way to return to his time.

After about five seconds' worth of silence, the response Ezio got was, predictably, filled with irritation at the usage of the nickname.

"And what, exactly, do you want to know more about my brother - in other terms- your 'little sparrow'- about?" Connor icily asks, "If this is anything about Desmond in a-

"Okay, not in that way!"

The Syrian rolls his eyes before he snatches up the communicator and gives a glare to the flusterling Italian.

"Ezio. Shut your mouth and let me handle this." Then he mutters, "...stupid kid, not thinking about what he is supposed to say."

"Huh. Well, that explains things." The eldest Miles sibling grumbles back.

"OI! I AM HERE, STRONZO!" The Italian barks in ire, only to be met with another glare signaling the Italian to shut up since Desmond is still sleeping.

"Going back to... look, Connor. What the brat and I want to know," Altair quickly cuts in to prevent any more possible insult to injury, "Is who taught Desmond his fighting style and techniques after he was released from the Templars' grasp."

If they were to meet this Connor face-to-face, he sounded surprised.

"Oh. That? Aside his Bleeding Effect and how we dealt with it? Desmond was trained by some of our top Assassin professionals." And then he pauses, "...and then he was trained by me and Clay. Why?"

Altair frowns, wanting to know more about this other person, "Who is this Clay you speak of?"

"Oh. Clay is Desmond's older brother. I'm the oldest... if you can call it that." Connor replies before changing the subject, "Wait. Hang on. Why are you two asking about this right now out of all times? I thought you two had an idea as to what his fighting style is-"

"It does not reflect of those of what I have taught to the Assassins in my time!" Altair hisses, his eyes narrowed; the first time he has seen Desmond fight, he has never seen such blocky, broad movements that uses more power than necessary, "Is this what the Order has come into?"

"And you thought the way I have been brought up has been terrible," Ezio rolls his eyes before he earns a slap upside the head, "Ehi! Che diavolo, bastardo!? I am only telling what you have repeated to me for the first time!"

He hears Connor sigh on the other side.

"We still try to employ the methods used by various Assassins orders, to adapt. But we still hold the principles of the Brotherhood and the Order and there are some of the Assassins who specialize in accuracy," The man on the other line responds, "Unlike what you think, Altair Ibn-La'Ahad, you and Ezio Auditore da Firenze have shaped the Assassin Order to what it is today."

"And yet," Altair frowns, "It seems as if you have difficulty having others being loyal to the Order."
"...oh God. That. We are still recruiting people for our causes, but..." Connor lets out a frustrated sigh. "It's the Templars. They are making it harder for us to be discreet about anything that we do. It's a miracle that we got it this far without getting discovered."

"Such thing has happened before?" Ezio finally gets over his annoyances and for once, realizes that maybe things over in the future aren't as bright as it seems.

That catches the Syrian's attention, but he doesn't vocalize it. The man on the other line, was a bit hesitant... before Connor lets out a small sigh.

"The last time we were discovered by the Templars... it was about twelve years ago, back in 2000 when someone masqueraded as one of us and handed most of the Assassins Bases and Headquarters to be slaughtered by the Templars. He was known as Daniel Cross, an agent to Abstergo. A handful of Assassins, including us, escaped from Abstergo's killing spree and went into hiding for a long time. It wasn't until a year or two later that we finally managed to blend into the rest of the world without being discovered until Desmond ran away." Connor responds, sounding distant, a bit of anger present. "We thought after a while, we were fine, safe, away from Abstergo... no, the Templar's clutches."

Both Assassins knew the next part to this. Altair was still silent; Ezio's fists, on the other hand, are beginning to clutch.

"I'm guessing that a part of Desmond's fighting skills comes from his experience when he dealt with strangers over in New York." Connor continues, "He mentioned while he was traveling to New York, he actually met up with a few people that helped him in self-defense since he was going up there alone. They mostly rely on-"

"Power and strength as opposed to accuracy. Am I correct?" Altair asks, recalling how Desmond's techniques dealt a series of damages, but did not hit the vital points.

Connor was dumfounded before he sighs, "...I'm taking that you two saw how Desmond fights."

"If you can call... those brash movements and energy draining techniques fighting, then I seriously wonder what caused our world to change to the way it is in your time!" Ezio grumbles, shaking his head before yelping at a smack Altair delivers at the back of his head. The Syrian can hear the other man grumble something about blaming the idiots that helped Desmond, which included Clay.

"Hang on. Altair, Ezio, why are you both asking this when you two have already seen how Desmond fights?"

Altair glances over at Ezio, who lets out a sigh before nodding. The Syrian turns his attention to the communicator, hoping to Allah that he doesn't get screamed at for this from his habibi's older (and protective) brother.

"Do you mind telling us anything useful that can aid Desmond on combat?"

The next day, Desmond can't help but wonder if this was a sign of relief or some divine intervention stating that he should stop acting like the way he is and just calm down.

Both Assassins were not there - in fact, when Desmond even woke up, he was even surprised to see the bed empty. To be honest, Desmond was more likely expecting the two of them to patiently wait for him to get up (like they did for the past two days) and to train with them.
It made the time traveler wonder what's urgent that caused the two of them to leave so damn early in the morning. Odd, unless there is something urgent, I thought Ezio would be the ones who would take care of this since this is his time. Altair would be... somewhere, right?

Turns out he was wrong; the Syrian isn't there either; he was nowhere to be found in the safe house. Desmond has a small sinking feeling that something must be off when he sees a note posted with one of the throwing knives, but upon a closer inspection, Desmond can tell it was hastily written in Italian.

...that he can barely make out as he tries to decipher what he has a feeling is Ezio's writing.

"Great. Thanks for leaving me with this when I can't even read this at all," Desmond grumbles as he squints his eyes to take a closer look (and hopefully try to read) the barely legible writing.

"...wait, they're on a..." Desmond trails off, examining the rest of the letter closely before letting out a small sigh, crumpling the letter and taking the knife off from the wall before pocketing it. "If they were on an important mission or something, they should've let me know about it! What the hell are they up to, anyway?"

He pauses in his steps as he glances over at the crumpled note again, his eyes filled with slight confusion, Hang on. I know that there wasn't anything important or significant that Ezio has done in this time period. So... what mission is he on? He opens the letter open and rereads it, just to make sure he wasn't hallucinating. And... he is asking for Altair's help? What the hell?

Desmond's dark brown eyes narrows; this isn't exactly what he thought the two Assassins to do... together, no less. He knows how much Altair and Ezio hate each other (to the point in which Desmond can swear he can tell they are ready to duel and or kill the living hell out of each other), and the only time in which they work with each other is when...

A light blush taints his face before shaking his head, looking back on the letter before his frown (and uncertainty) returns once again.

So, why did they decide to go on without me? Am I that useless or pathetic? Desmond asks himself, feeling the rough texture of the paper crinkle in his shaky right hand, I don't know what the hell is actually going on, but... He lets out a tired sigh before glancing over to the propped weapons. Grabbing one of the swords (not the one that Ezio gave him; for some reason, he wants to save it for later) along with the pack of throwing knives that has been set up, the American glances over before seeing the sun barely reaching to the top of the roofs.

...I'll get my answer later. But for now... He glances down at his strapped hidden blade before sighing. Maybe it'll be better if I trained for the entire day. Better than doing nothing, anyway. And I really don't want to disappoint them.

"Desmond! Are you sure your hand won't be harmed from all of that?"

The time traveler winces before looking up to see the other woman, Paola. She has walked through the safe house with the artist and Teodora. The others... well, they are busy with their own problems, that was for certain. From the looks of things, the two women have decided upon themselves to check up on the young novice Assassin.

And they found him nearly hacking one of the testing dummy into straws and hay (well, his sword usage skills are being improved, that was for sure).
Paola frowns, looking over at the now mutilated target dummy, "I can see from your emotional state things have not been too well for you..."

"Oh, no, things are fine," Desmond can't help but mentally grimace at how false that just sounded. While he did admit, the rough training did improve Desmond and the fact that he had a feeling of what he was about to go through from the past few days helped Desmond understand more about what he needed to go through.

His emotional state, however, was a different story altogether. If Rebecca or Lucy were there, they would just state that Desmond's mind has been in a horrendous train wreck and that he needs help... badly.

He can tell the two women were staring at him with unconvinced expressions.

The American mentally winces, knowing pretty well how snarky Shaun would get about how he places his feelings into his actions... and also from how sharp women are in terms of reading emotions in others.

Fantastic.

"...You know, if you weren't such a terrible liar like some of the men I have encountered in my life, I can actually call you out on your lie, Desmond." Paola lets out a exasperated sigh as she glances over to the safe house, "Where are Ezio and that other Assassin... Altair, was it?"

"I don't know," The time traveler straightens up as he places the sword back in the sheathe as he walks towards them, "There weren't there when I woke up this morning either."

"Ah. I see then..." The Venetian woman murmurs before clicking her tongue, "I had something about one of the possible locations for the Piece of Eden inscribed on the map, but the others are busy and apparently, so are those two assassins. But..." She glances over to Desmond, "If you don't mind, would you care to listen?"

Desmond blinks before nodding, a small relieved smile on his face, "Sure... why not?"

"Bene... we have also brought some stuff for you to eat," Teodora chuckles as she grins, "...and then we will have a talk regarding your relations with those said men."

"Sure, ok- wait, what!?" The American's brown eyes widen when the last part of her sentence sank in before he pales, dread filling in his stomach as he sees the mischievous grins on both women' faces, "Oh God, you can't be serious..."

"You do realize," Paola grins, "This means you will tell the two of us everything that has happened...?"

Desmond wants to smack his head against the wall of the house (if he can) out of pure embarrassment. He gapes and was about to ask when Paola cuts him off, her grin still there, "And... haha, si, Desmond. Teodora has mentioned it to me. I have seen some relations like this in my lifetime."

"...and?" Desmond can barely creak out, his face still blushing red. It was already bad enough that his friends back at home know about it first. Teodora was equally as bad. But...

He just knows the Gods up there must be poking at his thread of life with poker sticks just out of pure sadism.
"Don't worry, we women have a code of keeping secrets." The Florence woman gently pats the young man out of sympathy, "Especially since we Assassins all have secrets of our own."

The American can barely nod, his face still blushing red.

"Let's get inside before you faint." Teodora giggles as Paola begins to talk about how she has seen something happen in the abode that she runs (much to the amusement of the other woman and Desmond's confusion; she was speaking rapidly and was laughing in between). It wasn't until when they got inside that he can tell it wasn't just about his wounds and other necessities (and embarrassing as hell gossips) that the two women are here.

"Anything for me, I... guess?" Desmond meekly asks, fidgeting his fingers.

"Well. Sharp and observant " Paola nods as the two sits down at the seats across from the young novice Assassin.

Teodora takes a letter out that is sealed with a familiar looking symbol before handing it over to Desmond, "This is from, well, I can take it that you have an idea."

"Leonardo, huh?" Desmond mutters as he gently opens the letter to read (actual) legible handwriting before reading it to himself, "My friend- I have a favor to ask of you for today. I am currently busy doing some work for the first half of the day, but I was wondering if you can do me the honors and picking up some supplies that I have run out of. The money is attached with the map. Please, for the sake of whoever you believe, do NOT lose the money or the supplies."

He looks up at Teodora and Paola, a slightly exasperated look on his face as he sees the women chuckling, "...what? ...that's it? I just have to do some shopping for him?"

"Well... Yes. Leonardo is terribly busy with a last minute commission." The Venetian woman purses her lips, "He did pass on a message that he forgot to write in there; he is available when it reaches to the midpoint between noon and dusk."

"He also said that in case you do not know what you are looking for, he has provided you some names on the map so you don't forget them." Paola continues, "...in case you forget, of course, who is benefactors are."

Of course... Desmond mentally groans, knowing pretty well that somewhere in that stupid diary that Shawn and Clay snuck in, he has an inkling that Leonardo knows of Desmond's habit of being a time traveler continues to read the letter, "Also, before you pick up my valuable supplies, I have a delivery job for you. Normally, I would ask Ezio to do it for me, but seeing as how busy he has gotten (along with the Master Assassin Altair), I am afraid you are the only one who I can turn to."

"Why can't Ezio... oh." Desmond recalls that the Italian Assassin is on a mission of some sort before looking back on the letter, "There is a painting Teodora and Paola have carried with them. A family requested this painting for me a month ago, and I believe some walking will do you good, especially if you want to maneuver around Venice with ease. Take this painting and get the commission fee. The location of the family is attached with the painting. Be careful and do not ruin the painting! When you are done, see me and I will give you a portion of the pay for the help I requested on you. Thank you, da Vinci." He sighs, bowing his head slightly before nodding, "...why not. I need a break from training anyway." He nods, taking the money and map from the letter before handing them back to Teodora, "Tell Leonardo I'll do it. I'll bring the stuff back to him after I deliver the package."
“Just do not try and destroy the painting...” Teodora hands Desmond the covered painting, “The last person Leonardo sent to deliver a commissioned work, it did not go too well.”

“Eh?” Desmond blinks, wanting to ask why.

Paola grimaces, “To simply put it, the painting barely made to the person who requested it.”

The American groans. Oh God.

“Well,” The Florence courtesan sighs as Teodora makes Desmond take his shirt off in order to inspect the healing wound, "It's not like anything terrible will happen to you while you handle these jobs... will it?"

Delivering the painting was simple; no troubles as long as he was holding the freaking frame with two and and had to make sure his knees aren't crashing against the painting (and he wasn't tripping).

...Even if the person who requested this painting was a little bit farther from the areas he was familiar with in Venice. Desmond was actually thankful for the map the artist provided for him.

At least he wasn't wearing his Assassins garb Ezio provided for him or his normal clothing. It's seriously getting annoying though, wearing these clothes... He grimaces as he adjusts the vest Paola provided for him, I really can't wait to throw on a regular T-shirt when I get back.

Picking up the supplies required a bit more effort, but with the running and training he got from Altair and Ezio, Desmond has to admit, it took him half the time to grab (not to mention pay and barter) for the items that Leonardo wants. He did a lot by running on the roofs and even scaling a bit on the walls (no, he knows he's not Spiderman), which was useful to dodge any suspicious attention. Though the kids want to play with him, he just gets his items and everything in time.

And now that he has all the items, the problem with most of them was that they were fragile (he knows because Lucy and Rebecca were looking at the Venetian glass and even comments on how delicately intricate they were) and now, Desmond is making his way towards the way he came... by foot.

"At least they were right about walking around and taking the time to look at the scenery," Desmond mutters to himself as he walks around the open streets. He can see the various stalls set up, the various groups of nobles and every day common men talking, conversing and shopping, walking around. He can hear the children playing in laughter as they chase after each other. He can't help but smile; there is a part of him that missed the times in which he can just be a normal kid and experience a normal childhood.

Then again, his circumstances won't let him have such thing.

No wonder looking at everyday people going about makes me calm, He knows it's weird for other people, but it was a contrast to what he went through. Clutching onto the thick satchel that contains the bottles of ink, brushes, and nibs, Desmond walks a bit faster, making sure that now and then, he doesn't attract too much attention. He knows there are people looking at him, wondering where the clinking sounds are coming from before returning to their conversations or their routines.

Every now and then, he looks up to see some birds flying, some of them chirping. The air helped him cool down from his walk. At the moment he sees a familiar area, he calms down and slows his speed. I'm almost there to-
"Stop! H-HEY! I told you to STOP!"

Desmond's ears perk up as he looks over towards one of the alleyways that connects to another section of the plaza. He frowns, his brown eyes slightly narrows as he quietly walks towards the area-

"I said to quit it! I told you, my mother doesn't need your attention!"

And that got Desmond worried as he blends with the shadows on the alleyway to look and see who was talking to what. His eyes slightly widen as he sees one young boy trying to back away from a group of five men- they look more like guards...

...wait. Why do those guards look familiar?

"Ah come on, boy!" One of the guards barks, "Let us have the woman for the day- we'll return your mother to you later at night!"

The young boy- He's about ten to eleven years old, Desmond muses to himself- looks defiant ready to strike at the guards, but his body is frozen in fear. The guards, on the other hand, have some armors on or the look like they are just in civilian clothing... but their clothings are dark red and black while some of them have on steel grey armor-

...wait. Dark red, grey, and black.

His eyes widen in slight horror. It does look familiar.

If memory serves him right, Shawn and Lucy did some delving research into the guards Desmond keeps running into while he was inside the Animus. The guards had to wear certain colors in order to distinguish themselves from other guards (for family rivalities to protection for a certain faction and cities). The guards who serve the city of Venice wore blue and gold for clothing and armor. The ones who serve the Vatican wore white, red, and sometimes yellow. The Pazzi family wore black, red, and gold. The Medici family wore yellow, black, and white. French soldiers wore blue, white, and green.

...and if Desmond recalls about the last major family, which was the Borgia family...

Oh... shit... Pleasease tell me I am wrong... Desmond makes sure the rowdy guards aren't looking in his direction before he takes a deep breath and closes his eyes, I haven't used this for a while. Don't fail on me now... He concentrates on activating the Eagle Vision as his eyes immediately flash gold, his focus now was to the young boy and the group of guards, who are now beginning to look tired of the boy's protests.

The boy was white. The guards flash red.

Oh holy fuck. Desmond pales, careful enough not to drop the objects in fear of getting caught. He knows the boy is going to die if the argument continues like this-

"So, brat. What do you say?" He shakes away his Eagle Vision to see the young boy step back in fear at one of the tougher men holds out a small knife, "Last chance to join our ranks... if you allow that mother of yours to please us."

"NO!" The boy roars, clearly agitated, "I saw clearly what that bastardo Borgia did that day. He clearly was the one responsible for all of these corrupt murders and hits! He even hired to take out my father just because he talked back to that fat pig!"
If that didn't fuel the guards' anger, the next comment did.

"That corrupt, fat, imbecile will burn in hell for all I care!"

The 'leader' of the group freezes before his face begins to contort with rage, "What.. was that, you insolent brat!?!" It wasn't until he grips his knife and begins to walk towards the frightened boy, "You better take that back about Sir Borgia!"

It wasn't until Desmond steps in front of the young boy that the man stops and the group of guards, blocking any possible attacks that might be dealt.

"Leave the kid alone." Desmond quietly replies. His left hand is still tensing up, preparing to use the hidden blade if anything goes wrong. Hopefully, if things go well, there will be no blood shed, no attention being drawn from Borgia's own guards, and hopefully, nothing will force those guards to connect him to the Assassins.

"What... what was that, you lowlife?" The man with the knife asks, sneering as if he hears and offensive comment from someone who he deems to be lower in class than him-

"Hey, h-hey... that's Ezio!" One of the guards gawks in horror, taking a step back, "W-What the hell is he doing here!?"

Desmond's left eye slightly twitches, already ire of the comparison bantering. ...seriously!? There's an obvious difference between the two of us!

"You moron!" One of the other guards spit out, "That's not that bastardo Assassino that we've been ordered to watch out! It's obviously one of his copycats! There's no way he's one of them!"

The American lets out a mental sigh of relief; so far, nobody has made the connection to him and the Assassins yet.

"Get out of the way and we'll deal with the kid ourselves." Another guard growls, forcing Desmond to ground himself before shaking his head.

That made the 'leader' of the group grow more ire as he grips the knife tighter, "You are one stubborn bastard, aren't you? I'll give you one chance to get off free..."

"But- boss!" One of the more portly guards exclaim, "He just witnessed our conversation-"

"It doesn't matter!" It wasn't until he sees the knife-wielding man turn around to argue with the man that Desmond sees a chance for the young boy to leave and get away as far away as he can.

"Hey. kid. You might want to stay away from this." There was a look of surprise at first and hesitation.

"What about-"

"I can handle them." Desmond nods, glancing over to the boy, "Alert one of the Venetian men and have them come over here to handle this peacefully. Understand?"

The boy quickly nods as he quickly makes the dash towards the alleyway. It wasn't until one of the other guards notice that everything begins to go downhill.

"Boss, the boy!"
"WHAT!" The 'leader' turns around to see the boy dash quickly towards the main crowded plaza, causing the man to curse loudly before turning to glare at Desmond, "You stronzo! You let an opportunity like him get away!?!"

"You were going to force him by raping his mother," Desmond grumbles in English before quickly shutting his mouth, realizing what he had just said. It wasn't until the men approach him with "This bastardo! He's speaking like those filthy uncultured barbarians from that England!"

"Find the boy! We'll take care of this... whoever the fucking hell he is after you find the boy and drag him back here!"

Crap. Desmond pales slightly as he takes a step back, his left hand twitches to prepare to take out his hidden blade as his eyes follow to see two of Borgia's guards run to try and find the boy, Do not harm an innocent. How about we don't involve the innocent?!

"Sir! He's not here!" One of the guards holler as the other man look around from the alleyway, "It's crowded in here-"

"You coward! What are you, a woman?!" The man with the knife growls before turning to face Desmond, "No matter. Let's finish him first instead and then we find that boy."

"You really don't want to." Desmond replies quickly, not wanting to break his cover as an Assassin (or have any suspicions forcing the guards to link him to the Brotherhood).

The leader rolls his eyes, "I can assure you, your death will be a favor at the hands of Sir Borgia and it will be swift!"

This makes the American want to facepalm himself upon hearing these words come out from one of the men who works for one of the most corrupt men in Italian history.

Well, since he did just so happens to be in 'training'...

Desmond rolls his eyes, "You asked for it..." And instantly, his eyes flash into the molten gold, allowing him to see the guards flash red before his eyes, causing them to have panic attack. Well, my day just HAD to turn out like this, didn't it? He mentally groans, knowing damn well the gods (or the First Civilization or whoever the fuck was controlling his life) were clearly enjoying his dismay.

He sees the expressions on the guards morph into one of extreme horror... some filled with a sickening fascination.

"What the-" The portly guard instantly pales, "Shit, an Assassin!" And that was before the American takes the guard (along with another guard) with a swipe of the hidden blade. He quickly dodges the guard who was behind him, throws one of the throwing knifes to the guard's open throat (in which it hit perfectly as the guard gurgles out blood as he collapses to death) before throwing out a couple more to distract the other incoming guards before rushing up to the off-guard men and killing the three incoming guards with his hidden blade.

"An Assassin!? Well, well!" The man Desmond presumes to be the captain of the group drawls as he smirks, "He must be one of that bastard Assassin's novices after all. Wonder if we can send them a message-" He rushes over towards Desmond with his blade sticking out, intending to kill the American-

And that instant, Desmond dodges the knife attack before preparing to sink his hidden blade right
into the man's abdomen with one fluid, accurate motion.

That is, before he feels the man punch his stomach.

"ARGHG-!" He gets knocked back, clutching ahold of his stomach before looking to see the man smirking, cracking his knuckles, "Goddamnit-"

"As much as I want to kill you first," The guard drawls, "I think sending a warning to the Assassin Order will be a better idea."

Desmond stares at him before shaking his head, sheathing back his hidden blade, "A fist fight? Really? Out of all the things- oof!"

He winces as he feels the sting of another punch landed to his stomach again before he manages to block the other incoming punch. That caught the other man off-guard before Desmond grits his teeth and begins to punch the other guard with his right hand hard.

"Wrong move, fucker." He growls before proceeding to continue pounding against the now horrified guard.

Desmond can feel his hands burning as he drags the bruised and dead guard (or rather, the brute man was supposed to be the leader of the group).

"The fact you guys were glowing red and belong to the Borgia family doesn't help your case," Desmond mutters to himself as he proceeds to shove the dead guard into the haystack that was conveniently hidden in the dark alley. He knows that the occasional thieves and beggars would dare to go near (or rather, what he recalled from Ezio's memories from being in the Animus) this area; the guards won't be found until a couple of weeks later or so.

Glancing down, he sees the five dead guards before looking around to see if anyone has witnessed Desmond dragging a dead man (luckily for him, the blood spatters are barely seen).

If any of the Assassins sees what he was doing, they might wonder why he didn't just leave the dead men when he had the chance to. He knows that it wasn't wise to just leave a freaking dead body in plain sight and if it was Borgia himself...

...well, he would jeopardize the entire order from a single, idiotic fight to save an innocent boy.

I don't want that kid to end up like me or any other Assassins or getting killed... or some traumatized kid, He mentally grimaces as he swiftly cleans his blade with a spare cloth one of the guards has before quickly sheathing back his hidden blade. Though I think those men were guarding this area for a reason... later, think about that later! Right now, get out of here!

By the time he manages to finish retrieving and cleaning all of the throwing knives from Borgia's guards, he can hear the boy's voice echo through the alleyway, this time with another person's voice accompanying him.

Shit! His brown eyes widen as he quickly places the throwing knives back in the pouch and manages to stuff the bloody cloth into his bag. Speaking of bag... where did he leave Leonardo's stuff?

He barely stepped away from the haystack when the boy approaches with a woman following behind him, the boy as animatedly talking and moving his hands around in Italian as he glances over at Desmond. Desmond can't help but notice... how excited the boy was for having his life saved.
Normally, Desmond would be up for it. This time, he needs to grab the satchel containing the bottles of ink and nib (he sees where he placed them- he's surprised nobody stole them yet) and get the heck out-

"Owowowowwww..." He winces when he brushes his knuckles against the rough texture of his pants. Looking at the state of his hands, he mentally groans, seeing how torn the knuckles are. *From just one fight!?*

"Signore! Signore!"

Desmond looks up, seeing the young boy run up to him, relief in his eyes as the other person (it was a woman) running towards them, a surprised look on her face.

"Mama, mama! This is the man who saved me from Borgia's men!"

Well, that was blunt. Desmond slightly blanches, but he sees the woman sighing in relief as she hears that the men who were harrassing her son were gone.

"Signore, grazi!" The boy was filled with gratefulness, *"You have saved my life from those men. In turn, I owe my life to you!"

"You... whoa, hang on," Desmond holds his hands up as he gives a small weak laugh, *"I just wanted to help get you out. You don't have to thank me by saying that you owe me a favor."*

"But you saved me from those who call themselves guards," The boy continues, *"Is there anything you want me to do?"

That was something Desmond was not expecting for him to say as he stares at him, open-mouthed. "Ummm-"

"Mi dispiace, signore," The woman gives the time traveler an apologetic smile before glancing down at her son, *"Those men... they have been harassing the two of us since my husband passed away. But hearing that you saved Benito from them," The woman gives Desmond a small smile, *"Thank you. I can not thank you enough."

Desmond blinks before he feels himself smiling, "Um, I... "You're welcome... ma'am."

The woman chuckles, a small timid blush appearing in her face. Her son (Benito, was it?) looks up to Desmond before grinning, "Hey! What's your name?"

The American blinks before he grins, kneeling down to meet the boy face to face, *"I can't tell you my name. Sorry. But... " He pauses, "Let's just say I'm someone who likes to help other people."

"How can you do that?" The boy asks, his eyes widens in surprise, *"I thought you are my guardian angel or something!"

Desmond was slightly surprised; nowhere in his actual time do people say that he's like a savior, a guardian angel. And assassins are not revered as those; they are silent, shadows that move to kill. To serve the innocent, to help them towards the right direction.

*I'm... I guess I am one. And you can be one, too." He can see the boy look at him, urging for him to continue, "There are others who will, one day, ask for your help like you did to me. Trust in people that you feel that you can trust and help them. Don't be like those men- Borgia's men, I mean. Be aware of your surroundings; know what you are doing, and don't be quick to judge things." He stands up, seeing the boy's awed expression, "Because you may never know; one day, things will"
"happen to you that you will never expect."

"Wowww..." The boy murmurs.

"Grazi, ragazzino estremamente utile," The woman shyly smiles before giving Desmond a gently peck on the cheek, "For that, my child and I am grateful to you."

"Um..." Desmond lightly blushes before he gives a small smile back, "N-No problem, ma'am. I was just trying to help your son from being in danger."

He sees the woman smiling in relief before turning around and guiding her son back to the plaza where she heads over to one of the shops. It wasn't until he glances up to see the sun shining brightly, nearing towards the buildings; it must be late afternoon.

_Crap. I need to hurry!_ He grabs the satchel and was about to leave the area when he feels a tug on his shirt. Desmond was about to snap at the amounts of interruptions when he hears someone clear his throat; it was from the boy.

"I still owe you something." The boy has a determined look on his face, "Can you promise me to let me help you?"

Desmond looks surprised before sighing, "...are you sure you want to keep that promise?"

"Promise!" The boy chirps, "I want to see you again!"

The young man's eyes widen before they soften, this time, a gentle smile spread on his face as he kneels down before closing his right fist and raising his pinky. The boy Benito looks confused before mimicking the gesture.

"This... is something I've seen for making a promise." Desmond can't help but recall this from a Japanese anime Rebecca, Lucy, and Clay were seeing on their day off. He gently loops his pinky around the boy's small finger, "Is that okay?"

Benito beams, nodding, "Okay! Promise that you'll see me again, signore!"

"I promise." Desmond chuckles as he feels the boy looping his pinky tighter before releasing it.

"Don't forget!" Benito hollers as he runs to catch up to his mother.

He feels the smile slip from his face once the boy and his mother leaves; Desmond sighs, shaking his head as he decides to head back over to the artist. After all, he was late with delivering the payment and supplies to Leonardo.

_Che dialovo!? Your knuckles!_

Leonardo looks up to see the slightly distressed Desmond, who is sitting at one of his stools, leaning against the table. His right hand is extended to Paola, who is bandaging up his knuckles from his brawl. The Venetian woman was clicking her tongue,

Desmond should be lucky that the Florence woman stopped by Leonardo's place; she has been looking to deliver a piece of news to Ezio (regarding Mario). Instead, she sees that the foreigner has decided to stay longer at Leonardo's workshop until she saw Desmond's bruised and torn knuckles.

"I was in a fight." The American grumbles, his face red in embarrassment.
Leonardo groans, "You... what is with you and the Assassins? You always manage to anger someone easily!"

"I know, I know..." Desmond’s muffled response was heard as the artist shakes his head before inspecting the ink bottles.

"Luckily for you, mi amico, my materials are not damaged," Leonardo shakes his head, "And just in time too; I am struck with inspiration!"

He chuckles, seeing the American glare at him before hissing, feeling the wet cloth placed on his knuckles.

"So. What did you do this time?" She calmly asks (even though there is an underlining fury in them). For some reason, her kicking Desmond did calm him down (as it reminded him of how Connor would get Desmond's attention whenever he dozes off). He winces, feeling her hands tighten to straighten as she finished cleaning the knuckles before beginning to bandage them.

Desmond grimaces as he feels the pressure of the bandages, "I found someone being harassed by a group of guards. It was either to walk away or to help the boy."

"And from your state, I'm taking that you decided to help an innocent."

If it wasn’t for the fact that the Florence woman was scolding Desmond to remain sitting down, Desmond would have yelped and jumped at the sight of La Volpe glancing over to them. The Florence thief takes one look at the foreigner's knuckles before sighing, shaking his head, "Didn't the guards use swords and knives?"

"Yeah, but one of them decided to think punching me was a good idea," Desmond grumbles to himself, earning the slight confusion from the thief and woman, but Leonardo hears it before he sighs and shakes his head before getting back to his work (on his pieces of paper that were in the sketchbook that he made).

"They are getting cocky and think they are invincible when they have the weapons and items of a warrior," La Volpe sighs, looking a bit irritated, "In reality, they are just as vulnerable as any rash person who believes that they can get anything they want."

"Huh. No wonder Borgia hires morons to do some of his dirty work..." The American mutters until he looks up, feeling three pairs of alarmed eyes on him, "...what?"

"Did you say Borgia?" La Volpe asks calmly, sitting down on one of the stools next to Paola.

Desmond blinks before groaning, "I shouldn't have killed his men, right?"

"Well, seeing as how people are beginning to realize how slowly corrupt Borgia is," Paola muses as she finishes wrapping the bandage on his right hand, "I'm assuming that it is a good thing."

"On the other hand," La Volpe frowns, "If word was to get out that an Assassin took down Borgia's guards in Venice, then this means Rodrigo will begin to send more of them here. Where were you when this happened?"

Desmond manages to tell the thief the location the fight occurred before La Volpe nods. As soon as Paola cleaned and bandaged Desmond's left hand, the two left Leonardo's workshop (not before telling Desmond and Leonardo that they will meet up in the top of the clock tower tomorrow night to find the Piece of Eden in the location the map specified). When the door shut, Leonardo sighs, shaking his head as he glances over to the young man before going back to his writings.
"I swear, Desmond, one day, you will find yourself in more trouble than ever. And you may not realize it, but it will be when you are at your most vulnerable."

The American sighs, closing his eyes, but he nods. "Hey, Leonardo."

"Hm?"

"I told that boy that I was a guardian angel." A bitter chuckle escapes from the time traveler, "Do you know how ironic that sounds?"

The blonde artist looks up in surprised, setting his pen down, "In what way?"

"I think I've told you about how I managed to know you before," Desmond continues, not facing Leonardo, "The Animus, looking through the memories of Altair and Ezio. Back then, I thought I was intruding into their lives, into other peoples' lives, even as I help them and... experience what they went through, what abilities they used, how they used them. I was doing what they were doing; the right thing.

"When I began my mission... I thought I was doing the right things on my own, hoping to God I don't screw up. I was trained to be an Assassin, to defend myself in any given case. I thought I was doing everything right, from the missions to my techniques. After hearing Altair and Ezio say that I was horrendous, clumsy, blocky... it threw me off. I was happy that I was able to train with the two most influential Assassins I have ever seen. But to hear that..."

Leonardo looks concerned, but Desmond doesn't look up to see his friend. Instead, another bitter chuckle escapes from the young Assassin as he continues.

"God, I'm a fucking moron, aren't I? I keep making these stupid mistakes; even my dad pointed them out from Day one. I told the kid to be aware of his surroundings, know what he is doing, don't be quick to judge things. I'm a huge hypocrite. I didn't even do that on the time I was supposed to impress them- the two people I actually... care... about." He feels a lump form in his throat, "Instead, I fucked up. I actually made them think I'm a huge failure!"

"Desmond..." Leonardo sighs, gently patting the young man's back to comfort him, "Is that I heard that you've been exhausting your energy in your training?"

The young man nods, Teodora and Paola must've told him. "Yeah. To try to make myself better. I've gotten better, but I'm still not happy with it. I can't disappoint anyone anymore." He blinks, looking at his hands before gripping them (despite the pain), "...not again."

I really hope you don't lose your life in the process, mi amico, Leonardo grimaces, seeing how injured Desmond is,...you do have people that care for you. Especially to those said two idiotic Assassins...

---

"So that's what Desmond has been thinking about for the last few days?"

Ezio is clearly distressed; he can tell that Altair is not saying anything. The Syrian's eyes were narrowed, as if he has clearly not realized the repercussions of his words. Ezio closes his eyes as he takes in a few deep breaths before turning to glare at Altair.

"You. You were the one who caused this!"

The Syrian frowns, not facing the Italian, "Even if my words were true that day, I was not expecting this to happen to Desmond." He closes his dark eyes. "...I need to apologize to him, don't I."
Ezio nods.

"You too, brat." Altair glares at the Italian, his eyes also accusatory, "It isn't just me. In fact, we both do owe him an apology."

"For what? Something that obviously he was trained with before we forced him into what he expects us to be satisfied with!?" The Italian narrows his eyes as he lifts up the package in his hands, "Why do you think we asked that... that stronzo brother of his for advice?"

The Master Assassin shakes his head, glancing over at the package too, "Perhaps what we asked this Connor about Desmond's fighting abilities was all for naught."

"...Puoi ripetere?"

"I'm starting to rethink giving Desmond that-"

"Ohhh no!" This time, Ezio was indignant in his decision, "This-" And he holds up the package again, "-was your idea. You were the one who suggested it. Even if he doesn't like it, it is still- oh wait. What were your words? Oh yes, I recall: beneficial to his fighting methods even if the form and techniques are not satisfactory to what you have learned from!"

Altair glares at Ezio, "What are you trying to say?"

The Florence Assassin's free hand was twitching as if he wants to gouge out one of Altair's eyes in sheer ire, "Well, isn't that obvious, so-called Master Assassin of Masyaf? It's going to be a big waste if we get rid of this now-"

"Tch, fine!"

A silence passed between the two Assassins.

"...so. How are we going to handle this?" Ezio can't help but ask out loud, glancing over the Syrian, "If he tries to run away without listening to us like he did last time-"

"He will not." Altair flatly states as if it was obviously a rule between the two of them, "What makes you think such thing will happen?"

"The last time he tried..." Ezio trails off before sighing, silently placing his fist against the wall. The thought of losing Desmond in a fight was bad enough-

"Perhaps this is a good time to let him know about the rewards for his recent improvements."

The Italian looks at the Master Assassin in surprise... before a small mischievous grin was present on his lips.

"Well, well. Looks like we can work with each other after all, coglione. What do you suggest we do to get our tesoro's attention?"

Ignoring the insult (and the instant urge to punch Ezio's face again), Altair's response was something the Italian wasn't expecting.

"We'll make him talk to us."
End Part 14.2

Well, next part should be fun to write. And I will get those said side chapters up and beginning; it'll be in a different story though (most likely in here; though I am going to post them up on fanfiction.net).

And out of subject, I'm pretty sure you guys heard about the Boston marathon incident that happened a month ago. It's just terrible.

What's next: To put it plainly, the bleeding knuckles are the least of Desmond's worries when he gets back...
Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Should there even be anything about this?

Christ.

You guys are the best.

So, I should explain for the long wait/absence/whatever the hell took me damn long. I got a job and it is interesting since it requires me to do a lot, which burns a lot of my energy, leaving me no time to draw, write, and... yeaaahhh, to put it plainly, it's a lot of work.

Not to mention stuff's been happening in my life (like usual, only the fact I have my job should either be a good thing or bad thing), and a part of it was that I've had a writer's block that I got out of by writing this, and other stories... so, yeah, that's what happened.

But that doesn't mean my ideas for this story has gone away (in fact, there are lot of stuff I need to make for this, considering who the main character for IV is). Well, I've been wondering about that; should I even place him in at all? Ever?

And I have been roped into a new pairing (it's from an anime, meaning my muses need to SHUT THE HELL UP) that does relate to Italy, involves the mafia, hitman, and let me know if you are still confused as to what anime I am talking about. I'll give you another hint: said Italian is a known sadist/Spartan tutor.

So, getting back to this... this is going to be a fun ride. (And yeah, it's summer. ...and my job's going to be busy thanks to kids. Joy...)

Enjoy this chapter, guys! And yeah, it's very long chapter (meaning no, I don't plan to split this chapter since this might as well make up for the amount of time I didn't update).

WARNING: Arguing, the other thing, and... yeah. That other part. Oh, and more info about the Piece of Eden (that I'm making up AKA I don't even think it even exists in canon but oh well). Pretty much, at this point, I make people extremely out of character. ...I think. Oh, and various of butchered up Italian phrases.

"italics" = Italian, Arabic, any other language OR a flashback (depending on how it is used)

"normal" = English

bold sentences = emails, screams, or Bleeding Effect (depends on how it's used).

Part 15: Marked
"What the heck am I going to say to the other guys when they see this...?"

Desmond can't help but wonder how he was going to explain about his bandaged knuckles; it wasn't exactly the most elegant fight that he has gotten himself into (one without blades).

Then again, the times in which he was forced to fight against rowdy idiots from several bars and even at the Bad Weather can come nothing compared to what he had just done earlier.

It didn't help that his knuckles were still raw from the last time he fought with his hands; despite him being more efficient with the 'new' weapons, Desmond's hurt to no end. He can feel callouses forming; as tempting as it is, taking off the bandages and looking at his wounds again is not the best idea. And also, for the fact that he is lying down on the bed, only wearing his washed (or attempted to and somehow getting descent results) T-shirt and the pants that he was wearing meant that he wasn't in the mood to get up.

He can't help but chuckle, thinking that maybe at this time, Connor would bust in, telling Desmond to get his ass off the bed before forcing him off (it wasn't Desmond's fault that his sleeping schedule is messed up). Or if he was really lucky, Shaun and Clay would be the ones to force him awake by flipping the mattress, causing Desmond to threaten the two laughing idiots (then again, Clay and Shaun do get along... sometimes) by waking them up by placing them under the showers in cold water. But most of the times, it was Rebecca and Lucy who would wake him up and tell him to hurry up and eat before the guys take it all.

Man, he really missed those days...

...speaking of his own time, why hasn't Connor or anyone contacted him about the glitch yet? Said that god forsaken glitch should have been fixed by now... or it was still on hold, considering how much problems they have back at home now. He wasn't expecting the email debacle, that was for sure; there was no indication in which Lucy would have written those incriminating emails to Vidic, blowing their cover... right?

She was one of the people who changed her file to the 'deceased' status just to cover that she is an Assassin. Her allegiances were solidly placed a long time ago; even she honestly mentions about her doubts before understanding what Abstergo is up to (well, they barely scratched the surface about torturing their subjects to the point of delusion). And thank God she got Clay out; how it really happened, Desmond has an inkling it had to do with those series of 'blood writings' that he found while he was snooping around Abstergo.

After all, he had the Eagle Vision at the time thanks to the Bleeding Effect. Why else would he be seeing the writings of the security codes (cleverly hidden, by the way) with times and coded messages about finding the safest and quickest exit route?

Desmond lets out a heavy sigh before glancing over at his bag, which remained untouched. He came back to the safe house and it was still empty; he had set his stuff down before feeling the waves of exhaustion going through him. It wasn't from the training as his body begins to readjust getting used to the rough and massive energy usage...

...and then there were those events from a couple of nights before...

His face turns a slight red, but he ignores the gnawing feeling inside of his heart as he takes a few deep breaths before looking back up at the ceiling.

He still recalls what he told Leonardo earlier (who was the one who suggested for him to take a break and rest at the safe house), about the fight, his reasons for being stressed, about Altair and
Ezio, about wanting to impress them...

Well, there goes my composure. He narrows his eyes, also recalling the young boy he saved earlier-

Benito beams, nodding, "Okay! Promise that you'll see me again, signore!"

"I promise." Desmond chuckles as he feels the boy looping his pinky tighter before releasing it.

"Don't forget!" Benito hollers as he runs to catch up to his mother.

Desmond sighs, knowing fully well that there was... well, that small detail he left out to the artist. But even so, he feels like he is breaking a rule of the Brotherhood- rather, two important rules of the creed: Do not involve an innocent and one of the more obvious rules, don't reveal yourself to the people you may not trust.

"...crap." He mutters before letting out a frustrated groan, "Not to mention I might've looked like hell after I took down those guards..."

Speaking of those guards, Desmond's brown eyes blink back to their normal size as he thinks back about Borgia's guards, What the hell were they doing over there? I thought Borgia might have called off guards after Ezio and the others grabbed the Apple... why would he decide to remain here?

He decides to ask Connor and the others later tonight while Altair and Ezio are resting... and he can find a good place to contact his friends-

The men are standing in front of him in fear as he holds onto the golden orb, the rush of power surging within him as he-

He instantly gasps, feeling that familiar wave of sensation before as he sits up, trying to shake it off before it begins again-

At the moment he takes the golden orb from the cold, wrinkled hands of- Oh no... no no no... No...

The wall begins to wave in and out, from color to the black and white outlines and out again as he sees moving figures, columns and unfamiliar structures crashing down to his head like an old time reel played faster than usual.

A jarring headache forcefully interrupts his thoughts, causing the American to cry out in pain as he tries to clutch his head to try and get a grip as he continues to feel that he is being pulled in-

ShitshitshitshitSHITSHIT-! No, not this again-

The box was safely cradled in his left arm while trying to defend himself from the Templar who is yelling, screaming about how the Apple was his, his mission to use it to control the entire city of Venice and his intent to find others to- Crapcrapcrap No no, no, nononononono I'm not Ezio I'm not Altair My name is DesmondDesmondMILESI'MDESMOND FUCKING MILES-

Desmond grits his teeth, wanting that terrible feeling wash out and wanting to go back to sleep, to rest, not having to endure through another one of-
"I need to have a word with you. My apologizes."

Aita!?

He barely sees is the ceiling and the last thing he hears is someone calling for his name-

His body falls limp, his arm instantly drooping at the edge of the mattress as his body collapses into a pair of arms and someone yelling out his name in panic. The last things Desmond saw before falling into the white light were Altair's dark amber eyes, trying to save the young Assassin from another Bleeding Effect... and Ezio's horrified golden amber, who came too late to the room.

...at this point, Desmond knew what was coming. He lets out a groan before yelling out, "Seriously, Aita? You drag me here in this stupid Animus area AGAIN!?"

Desmond can't help but wonder whether the gods really had a grudge against him (or had something in against him) and decided to place him in... what was it called?

"The Synch Nexus, Desmond. Try to remember it next time."

He turns around to see Aita, who is walking towards him, his wolf-helm still gleaming. He walks before the ire Assassin, who was about to ask why, out of all the worst times, he had to suffer from the Bleeding Effect when the First Civilization man says, "I need to have a word with you."

"Oh God. What do you want now?" The American groans, looking at the man in ire, "I was having a moment of clarity or something when you decided to fucking drag me back here again against my own will-"

The man seems to ignore him as he glances down to see the young man's bandages, "I see that you've been doing some training. But aren't you overdoing it?"

"Ha. Fucking Ha." Desmond rolls his eyes before he sighs, avoiding the subject entirely before turning into the new one, "I sent the message; why couldn't you have done it yourself? Or when- oh, I don't know... while I was talking to my friends back at home!?"

"If I would have," Aita's face slightly hardens, "Then they wouldn't have enough time to prepare for what is coming. Your friends, I imagine, are trying to find more information about me than what they have already discovered."

Desmond opens his mouth-

"I'm starting to think that the glitch is connected to the First Civilization, which I hope to God isn't-," Rebecca mutters.

The time traveler was about to ask again-

"That guy Aita you just mentioned," He hears Clay cut Shaun off (it sounds like he is looking over Shaun's shoulder since he can hear the historian exclaim something about not interrupting him), "
He was a volunteer for one of the solutions proposed by the First Civilization members in order to preserve their souls and bodies from being annihilated from the First Disaster."

The American gapes before closing his mouth in anger, "Wait, so he was lying to me just to-

"Dude! I'm not finished!" Clay snaps, "The article says that Aita was FORCED to volunteer because he discovered something about one of the members of the Triumvirate and their involvement in another solution." A pause, "He was a close acquaintance with a few other First Civilization members like Hermes Trismigetus, Isis, and Osiris. At the time... wait a sec... Shaun, go down for a bit..." Desmond can hear clicking and some muttering before he hears Clay continue, "It says here that he was working on... Oh waaaaaait."

Desmond blinks, 'What? Tell me more, dammit, Clay!'

"...Oh my fucking God you have GOT to be fucking kidding me," He can hear Shaun curse, "Holy shit... THAT'S what they were working- Desmond! Are you still here?"

"I still am, Clay," Desmond hisses, getting a bit tired of being out of the dark now (seeing as how he was stuck in the past out of all things- that doesn't help his situation one bit), "You were saying that he was working on something?"

"Remember that map William asked for you to get?" He blinks at that question.

"What about it?" The American grumbles, "All I know is that it's supposed to be a map to the Piece of Eden hidden in Venice- where I am now-"

"It's hidden in Venice?" His voice beings to sounds incredulous.

Desmond's eyes instantly narrows as he glances to see the First Civilization man again, "...hey, Aita. I actually got a question for you."

The wolf-helmed man doesn't answer; he just arches an eyebrow, curious and ready to answer it.

"What were you working on before you were..." Desmond doesn't want to mention it again since he is a bit afraid of invoking the man's ire, but the First Civilization man has an understanding as to what he is walking about, "...well, you know."

"Ah. What my project was..." Aita murmurs as he closes his eyes, "Do you recall what I said last time about the item you are to search for?"

"Yeah, that it's an item that the Templars thought was a total bullshit, it's in Venice, which I already have an idea about, and that I'm the only freaking person able to wield it." Desmond blinks before staring at the wolf-helmed man in surprise, "...wait. I'm the only one able to wield the Piece of Eden?"

The First Civilization man chuckles, "So you did listen."

"Hey!" The American glares at the man, "Answer me and stop running around in circles! You know, for once, just this freaking once, I want a straight answer, not another one of those ambiguous answers that requires me about an entire fucking week to figure out!"

Aita just blinks before he nods, "...If you wish, Desmond. Be warned, however, of how you use that knowledge. You are not one to be vulnerable; however, your mind can be exposed at the weakest
moments."

Desmond just stares at him, *Get on with it, please...*

"The project I was working on with the other members of the Civilization was supposed to be one of the solutions we needed to prevent the Toba Catastrophe from occurring. However," Aita pauses, "After my... supposed murder, it seems as if they have changed the item to serve another purpose. One that can actually save the entire world from the danger that is about to happen in the time you are in." The wolf-helmed man looks over as the scenery changes into one of the night sky, stars and the planets faint in the background with the lines shining through.

The American Assassin frowns, trying to take it all in without making his head hurt, "...so, basically... whatever you made was trying to prevent the world from burning up that long ago?"

Aita nods.

"And now... you mean the way the item is used has been changed?" Desmond tries to make sure he is understanding what Aita was trying to say, "H-Hang on. So what does this Piece of Eden that you invented do now... and I know you mentioned that I'm one of the only few that can wield it." A pause. "...well?"

The First Civilization man arches an eyebrow (if Desmond can actually see it), "...if I tell you, then the element of surprise would be ruined, wouldn't it?"

Said novice Assassin's hand met his face in an instant.

"ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME!" Desmond roars, feeling a vein threatening to pop out from the run-around conversation that just occurred for the... well, he gave up counting after he's heard of the run-around speeches from Vidic (that damned old coot still needs to die), "That's all I'm going to get from YOU!?"

Aita just chuckles as Desmond gives him a death glare (that he only reserves for Shaun and sometimes Clay and Connor), "I'm afraid so."

"So you're not going to tell me if it's any sort of weapon or accessory?"

He just sees a sly smirk on the wolf-helmed man's face, "...like I said, it'll ruin the element of surprise. You'll just have to wait and see."

*Aita... You- ARRGGGGHHH. Fucking Dick-head, The American is very tempted to flip the First Civilization man off, but he has a feeling this would lead into a question about the gesture that Desmond would make, and then would eventually ask about if it's a Templar symbol or a gesture of the Assassins... or Aita would know the true meaning about it and yet proceed to troll Desmond as if he is clueless about the entire gesture.

...not worth the trouble nor the possible headache Desmond would receive upon returning form the Bleeding Effect.

"Any reason why you don't want to give away any useful advice or info aside the one you just gave me?" Desmond asks warily, "Or... never mind, I guess I'll find out anyway. But any other reason why you called me here besides mentioning about the Piece of..." He trails away before he clears his throat, glancing at Aita again, "Wait. I actually wanted to ask this. Did you know I would wind up here?"
Aita steps a bit forward, the single gesture of his hand changing the scenery of the Synch Nexus back to what it was before, "Do you mean in Venice?"

Desmond nods, "You know, that's been bothering me and my pals back home... well, I mean, in my time..." he pauses, "The thing is, you knew that I was here in this time, right when Ezio grabbed the Piece of Eden from Borgia. But I wasn't supposed to be here... You also knew about the map." The pieces were beginning to fall together bit by bit, but Desmond ignores the feeling that's beginning to form in his mind, "And you knew I was supposed to search for the Piece of Eden. I mean... you're helping me in some way, but," His brown eyes slightly narrows, "I'm sorry, but I've got to ask. You've been watching me for a while without me knowing, right?"

Aita grimaces, "Yes, I have been watching and I did know about your mission to retrieve the item. I also know what your comrades have done to alter the technology to make sure some events don't happen."

"Whoawhoawhoa, wait. STOP." Desmond instantly interrupts Aita, the shock still there as he waves his hands to stop the First Civilization man from continuing, "You... knew that we made that thing into a time machine!?"

"Yes."

"HOW!?" Desmond squawks, his face a bit pale, "I-I mean... I thought-"

"Despite what you think, I did mention that I am aware of what your memories hold, what events are happening," Aita frowns, "...it seems as if you humans are trying to recreate some of the technologies a few of us would refuse to allow. But for me... if it is to do the right thing," A small smile appears in the man's face, "Then I would allow it."

But there's always a catch to that, The American's eyes slightly narrow, knowing how many times he's heard that (a few times, but he's getting the idea), "So... to put it-"

"I'm not the one who messed up your technology and interrupted your return to your time." Aita bluntly states, "That... is the work of someone else who has similar powers to mine. Only," His eyes slightly narrow, "There are few of us, but to think this person would have similar objectives to mine..."

"Eh?"

The wolf-helmed man shakes his head, "It's my own musings."

Desmond was hesitant, but he nods before asking, "So... can you tell what's going right now?"

"I thought you are experiencing it for yourself," Aita frowns, but the American shakes his head, "...is it something else?"

"My own time. Where I actually came from... 2012. Can you tell what's happening in there? With my friends?" Desmond pauses, worry in his voice, "I'm... I haven't been in contact with them for a few days and..." He sighs, "Since you do know most of these things... Do you have some sort of ability that makes you look into other times? To see what's happening right at this moment?"

The shift in the First Civilization Man's expression tells Desmond that he isn't going to like it.

"...Aita?"

"Are you sure you want to know?" Blue eyes gaze to Desmond in worry, "If you're not careful
when you return to the time you're trapped in, there is a good chance of you falling into that Bleeding Effect with a slim chance of recovery."

"I'm... oh." The novice Assassin was about to say something along the lines of he won't allow such thing when his mouth snaps shut, recalling that his Bleeding Effect is caused by tremendous amounts of stress. But his concern for Connor, Lucy, Clay, Shaun, and Rebecca are nagging him, and they are his friends... "Just tell me, Aita. I need to know."

The wolf-helmed man grimaces, but he nods before giving a slight wave of his hand to change the scene.

Desmond was relieved to see that his friends are safe. But the appearance of a sixth man made his stomach slightly drop, especially with a certain glaring symbol on his... wrist...

A... TEMPLAR!? WHAT THE HELL- The American is horrified-

He sees Connor yelling at the Templar, his face contorted with anger before his right fist was about to punch the man's face when Clay holds his right arm back, possibly trying to placate the Native American from harming the man. The Templar was tied up with orange duct tape (possibly done by Rebecca- she did buy it) and was now forced back into the chair by Shaun and Rebecca, who is now holding him as Lucy is trying to stop any argument between Connor and Clay, who look really furious over some manner.

Then he sees Shaun getting angry over something the Templar must have said since he snapped and punched (Desmond was surprised said nerd can even fight) the Templar straight in the face before seething. Rebecca is now trying to prevent Shaun from storming over and beating up the Templar into a pulp before Shaun releases himself and storms over to the Templar as the five of them begin yelling at each other.

Desmond pales as he sees the Templar's expression change into one of anger, fury, and the intent to kill as his hand twitches to struggle out of the colorful restraints, Shitshitshitshit-

And right when the fight was about to reach to its peak, the five occupants in the room turn to face Rebecca, who is about to murder someone (and even Desmond's expression was in surprise when he sees that for once, the normally chirpy tech woman can stop a massacre from happening with her scream) if they don't shut up before pointing at Shaun. Then after saying something... Desmond can make out the words, 'Lucy', 'email', 'enter in her email account', 'didn't even have her iPad or iPhone on her', and then the words 'Lucy is not a traitor' which surprised him-

Wait.

*Clay mentioned last time there were emails Lucy wrote to Vidic... The American's eyes slightly widen in the new revelation-*

"She didn't write those at all!?" He exclaims in alarm, knowing that they won't hear him. He doesn't catch Rebecca yelling at Connor and the Templar, but Aita's eyes slightly crinkles into one of amusement, his mouth slightly twitching into a small smile of relief.

"Well. This is a surprise turn of events... things might be changing for the better after all."

"Eh?" Desmond stares (again) to Aita, but the First Civilization man shakes his head.

"It's nothing." And then with another wave of his hand, the current image vanishes as he faces the American Assassin again, "...they are safe, but it seems as if they are capable of catching the
Templar."

The American slightly nods from the reveal that he has 'read' from Rebecca, "I... see." He closes his eyes as he sighs in relief before opening it again, his hand forming into fists, Though to be honest, this isn't helping that I'm still stuck here thanks to that fucking glitch-

And then he freezes as his eyes slightly widen.

...hang on. How did Aita know I would wind up in Venice?

It's been bothering him ever since he talked with the others about Aita-

"Was that message meant for us..." Connor pauses, "...or was we were supposed to be conduits so the message is passed to someone else?"

The time traveler was about to respond before he freezes.

'Oh.'

'...Oh FUCK.'

Desmond's eyes widen in somewhat panic before hearing Rebecca mutter, "Guys?"

"...Yeah?"

She takes another deep breath, "I'm beginning to think that the Animus is beginning to act on its own." Another pause, "You know the glitch we found?"

"What about it?" Desmond had a bad feeling about this...

"I'm starting to think that the glitch is connected to the First Civilization, which I hope to God isn't-," The technician mutters before hearing her stop... and murmur, "...oh my fucking God."

"It's not about one of your stupid theories on what happened to your Baby, I hope," Shaun grumbles in his usual snide tone.

"Shaun, stop being a dick to your girlfriend and let her think," Clay quips, which can explain why the American can hear some quiet laughter from Lucy, an unsuccessful snicker from Clay, and some stifling snickers from Connor. Rebecca was still muttering something in thought. Shaun, on the other hand...

"Shut up, you git!" The Brit seethes, "I swear, mention that subject one more time-"

"Hey Desmond," Rebecca's voice (which is surprisingly serious for once) cuts the team off into another (if not amusing as hell) banter, "If I tell you something, will you swear you won't laugh or think I'm insane for suggesting this?"

Desmond frowns, a bit curious to know more about the technician's theory on the Animus' glitch-what caused it in the first place, anyway, "what about it?"

"Am I the only one who's thinking that the glitch is done on purpose just to get Desmond to sent a message to us or to someone else?" She asks, "...or do you think it's done for another reason?"
Desmond had responded to this in a different manner than the subject was changed into something else, but that part of conversation did stick in his mind ever since (well, he didn't think upon a lot about it then). But now...

Why did something tell him that there is a chance Aita might have something to do with it?

"Hey, Aita."

The wolf-helmed man is silent, but he has a feeling he knows what Desmond was going to ask.

"There's something else I want to know." Slightly angry brown eyes lock onto passive blue, "Did you cause the glitches to happen so that I'd end up here?"

"No." Aita shakes his head, looking concerned, "I did not send these 'glitches' or prevents to allow you to return to your own time to occur. I am not the one responsible for the Animus to force you here."

The Assassin blinks, that instinctive feeling gone and replaced with shock.

"...what?"

Aita frowns, "Desmond. I want to help you with a genuine reason. It was not my intention to send you into the same time as your Italian ancestor; in fact," his eyes narrow, "I can tell you that part of the plan- to purposely reroute your time to this one was someone else's doing."

That caused the young Assassin to gape at him in a mix of shock, horror, and... a bit of realization.

"...so, you're not the cause of the glitch in the Animus?"

Aita shakes his head, "While I am still considered to be 'alive', I never tamper with a piece of technology that should have never been conceived in the first place." He looks up and around the Nexus, "This area... tell me, when was the last time you have seen such place?"

Desmond frowns, "The last time I was here... well, it was when I met one of you guys, when I was exploring over a memory-"

Wait. A memory?

He stops himself from speaking further, but something tells him (in the back of his mind) that Aita was right; he did meet someone before-

Hang on. Who did I meet before... "You know," The American pauses, "The last person I did see in that was a part of the First Civilization was that lady named Minerva. She said something about some sort of catastrophe that would be a man-made one and-"

He sees Aita looking a bit concerned about him mentioning Minerva as he sees his eyes narrow in slight suspicion.

"Minerva, you said?"

Desmond nods.

"Does anyone else who is related to the First Civilization know of your presence when you accessed those memories?" Aita asks, growing more concerned.

Desmond shakes his head, "Not that I know... it's only that Minerva lady. No one else. Why?"
"The message I told you to relay..." The wolf-helmed man murmurs to himself before a slight sigh of relief came to his face, "...good. She might not understand the message."

"Okay, I- wait, huh!?" The American stares at Aita in confusion, "What the fuck are you talking about?"

..mond...

Desmond slightly frowns, noticing that Aita hasn't mentioned his name at all.

"You'll realize it soon." Aita's eyes slightly narrow before he sees the Synch Nexus beginning to fade, "...Desmond. Do you recall the last message I sent you?"

"About the wolf avenging his murder?" Desmond deadpans, "What about... for fuck's sake, you want me to send another one?"

Desmond!

He blinks, looking around to see the source of the voice that just called his name; it does sound familiar-

The First Civilization Man nods, a small smirk on his face, "...why, what makes you think I won't allow you to leave without one?"

The young man groans, "All right, spill it. Who's the poor soul receiving it this time and what should I say?"

Desmond!

Aita chuckles, his eyes narrowing as the surroundings of the Synch Nexus slowly fading into black, "...to the two Assassins who are with you, tell them when the time is right, use the Apple if necessary."

Desmond blinks before his face morphs into one of alarm-

"What- The Apple of- Wait, what does the Apple to do with-" He can hear murmurs of voices combining with each other-

"Do you think they would be able to understand each other and your language by practice in one day?"

That made Desmond's eyes widen-

**DESMOND!**

-before his vision is consumed by the endless white, clearly hearing both Altair and Ezio's voices.

---

"Desmond!"

He gasps, his eyes open in alarm. Looking around, Desmond can see that his surroundings were still the same, he's in the same room as before, he's in the same bed, he feels warmth on his shoulders-

Wait, what?

He blinks, getting his vision back to normal as he manages to creak out, "...what...?"
"He's awake, brat. Stop panicking."

Oh. Huh.

...CRAP!

He blinks, looking up to see a concerned Altair, whose eyes shine a bit of relief when he sees the
time traveler moving, his eyes slowly coming back into the world where he is in. Then he hears some
footsteps and someone approaching next to the Syrian; it was Ezio, whose panicked expression
changes into one of relief.

Desmond, on the other hand, pales when he realizes what situation he wound up being in... again.

Oh no.

"I bled again, didn't I?" He mumbles to himself, covering his eyes with his right hand to prevent
seeing what the other Assassins' expressions are-

Instead, he feels someone take his arm and lower it, causing him to open his eyes to see Altair's
hardened expression. If he was sharp enough to tell, the Syrian wasn't angry; he was concerned.

"You did... right when the brat and I entered in the room." Altair quietly replies, trying his best not to
let his emotions get the better of him, "What happened?"

Desmond manages to sit up (to his surprise; normally, after he has his bleeding effect, he would feel
like he's been on a roller coaster and laid back down to sleep... or even better, something actually
slammed against him and decided to leave him with a very horrible headache) before looking away,
tight-lipped about the events before the Bleeding Effect took ahold of him (rather, Aita dragged him
to the Synch Nexus again). And he knows the other two Assassins can read his emotions like a
book.

It was silent for the next second; the three men waiting to see who would make the first move.
Desmond's eyes glance over to Altair, whose eyes down towards his hands (or rather, his hidden
blade). When he glances over to Ezio, the Italian Assassin's eyes swiftly darts away from Desmond's,
a light blush on his face, but there is concern written all over his face.

The mood was awkward... and it was beginning to become like this if one of them doesn't do
something. Desmond's mouth turns into a thin line, his brown eyes narrowing slightly.

I really don't want to even be here with them... He lets out a sigh, getting ready to leave the room
regardless of what either Assassins would do-

"I'm sorry."

Well. That stopped Desmond in his tracks. Blinking, the American turns around to see Altair looking
at him, guilt written in his face.

"...huh?" He blinks in surprise, wondering what the heck brought this on-

"I... I didn't know how you truly felt about your situation then and how much you've been struggling
to become one of us." Altair glances up to meet Desmond's eyes as he glances to the young
man, "Can I ask something?"

"...sure?" Desmond hesitantly nods, "What?"
"The first time you sparred," The Syrian asks, a bit of interest in his eye, "When was it?"

The American blinks before he makes a small chuckle, "...my father would usually let me and Connor play around our home when we were kids. The first time I sparred was... with Connor." He feels a small smile appear in his face, "He and I got into a small argument and the two of us weren't exactly happy with... well, he gave a gift to a girl that I liked, and I was angry. So, the two of us beat each other up, trying to say 'I'm better than you' or 'Why did you do that?' before my father took the two of us apart and had us bandaged up. I guess after that..." Desmond pauses, "Connor and I were lectured, of course. But then my dad mentioned that it would be a good idea to try and use our skills for self-defense instead of using it against each other."

"A fight among brothers?" He feels someone sit next to him (and Altair is glaring, but it doesn't have an effect on this). Desmond can see a sad, distant look on Ezio's face, but a nostalgic smile is present, "Ah... Fredricio and I had fights like these before. All over to woo the hand of a pretty woman. We did naturally fight in front of our family, of course."

Desmond blinks in surprise, knowing that he has witnessed that event before when he was experiencing through the Italian's mind... before he mumbles, "Sorry. I really didn't mean to-"

"It's all right, tesoro," Ezio sighs, gently patting Desmond's shoulder for comfort, "Even if the pain is still there, it doesn't hurt as much as it used to."

But still... The American was about to protest to this (He's just saying this to not make me feel bad about it, his mind thought) when he feels the Italian's arm wrap around his shoulder. "Desmond, it's okay." Another murmur, "I truly am. And besides," Ezio softly chuckles (causing Desmond to involutarily shiver from this), "I'm just as bad as the elder himself."

"Huh?"

Altair shakes his head before taking Desmond's hand, "...Ezio's right, habibi. We both didn't know how much troubles you had with training and pulling off the skills the Brotherhood expects of you. And for troubles with others..." Desmond was more used to seeing Altair smile at this point, but it was strange to see that he only does it for him, "...Malik and I have some disagreements with each other, even after he forgave me for Kadar's death."

Wait, since when did Ezio and Altair... well, they have to get along at one point or another, Desmond shakes his head, also recalling that a couple of days ago, he even complains about how much those two complain about each other and want to kill each other. What caused them to change?

"...though you do remind me a bit of him," Altair's murmur catches Desmond slightly off-guard (since one of Altair's comments that day did relate Desmond to the now deceased younger Assassin and his skill sets). The young man blinks before he gives a slight grimace, not wanting to hear about this again-

"..Kadar?" Ezio asks, slightly confused.

Desmond was about to open his mouth before hearing the Syrian respond, "...someone I thought of as a younger brother." Another pause, "...and a fellow comrade that I lost to in the hands of the Templars."

Because of how he thought he would finish the mission easily and thought his skills would help the others... The young man recalls how much pain Altair experienced that day- both physically and
mentally because of the consequences from said mission

"I see." Ezio nods, no further explanations necessary.

"...but I can tell you this," Altair takes one of Desmond's hands and gently runs his rough fingers against Desmond's roughed up fingers, "I don't want to lose you. Regardless if you are one of us or just someone who is associated with the Brotherhood, I would rather see you live... and possess your faults than being perfect and lost your life to the hands of our enemies."

"The same for me, you know," Ezio rolls his eyes to the Syrian (who just closes his eyes and smirks (Smug bastardo, The Italian grumbles) as he gently squeezes Desmond's hand before slowly letting it go), his arm around the American a bit tighter, "...I've never had someone as close as you. Mario, La Volpe, Leonardo, Paola, Teodora, Antonio, Bartolomeo, Machiavelli... they are family to me. Even I think of the elder... as much as a bastardo as he is, as an older brother-" He manages to dodge the glare sent his way and a look of surprise from Desmond, "...but to you, I feel... something more. I'd hate to lose you, tesoro. Even if you are filled with flaws, I'd love them, one by one."

Desmond feels his face grow warm (he was blushing again) as the words sinks into his mind before mumbling, "...thank you." He feels

"Just... one thing. What are you two sorry about?"

That made the two Assassins look at the American with surprise.

"Did... I do anything to offend you or anything or... did I do anything to make you two say such thing?" Desmond blinks in confusion; he does see Altair and Ezio look at each other before the two sigh at the same time; Altair placing his hand to his head, shaking his head while Ezio hangs his head, muttering something about-

"-even after we heard him talk about-"

...wait.

They... heard me say what?

"Ezio," Desmond frowns, now suspicious about this, "...Ezio. What did you say?"

The Italian freezes, the murmurs stopping before he looks at the American, "...eh?"

The American's frown grows a bit deeper, "What did you overhear me saying?"

He sees that it wasn't Ezio that freezes; Altair does the same thing too. The two give a quick glance at each other (very hesitant and caught off-guard), as if they didn't realize about that.

"...Well..." Ezio meekly murmurs, "...how do we explain-"

"We don't say anything, you idiot," Altair stops the Italian from continuing, "Do you realize how much trouble we've gone through?"

Trouble for what? Desmond opens his mouth to ask what they were talking about again-

"For... well, I know that!" The Florence Assassins growls, a bit exasperated, "It's not my fault that all of these happened too, you know! We really didn't mean to-"

"Brat."
"...what." Ezio was about to ground out a threat when-

"You... WHAT!" Desmond exclaims in horror, his brown eyes widen before glaring at the two Assassins "I can't believe that you both- You overheard me!? WHAT THE HELL!"

"It was an accident!" The Italian sputters, realizing what his mouth has slipped, "...merda."

"You idiot!" Altair growls, anger darting to Ezio, "What made you say that!?"

"Wait, just how- WAIT!" Desmond couldn't believe he's hearing this- those two... overheard what he told the artist? Everything, including how he has gotten himself into trouble with... okay, maybe he didn't say anything about taking down Borgia's men (well, by accident or on purpose, Desmond doesn't really care right now), but everything about what's been bothering Desmond for the past couple of days-

They overheard me!? "

"What the hell did you two and how- never mind, forget that!" The American sputters, anger suddenly welling inside of him, "WHAT did you two hear!?"

"I don't know," Ezio was the first to respond, but frustration was written all over his face, "Even though I told you to come to me whenever you had any problems, you still chose to talk to Leonardo about everything, but not to us!? Or me!?"

Desmond grits his teeth, silently fuming before he groans out, "You don't think the reason why I was stressed was because of you two? Did you have any idea as to how much I've been stressed because of what I heard you two say about me!?! He didn't even bother to look at their shocked expressions as he continues, "Fine, I'll say it then! Like all the others, I'm pretty much someone who screws everything up, no matter what I do! Every single fucking time! I'm freaking useless to anyone! Regardless if I was an Assassin or not, there's a lot of things that-

"And you don't think whether our past opinions matter as opposed to what we think of your abilities now?" The Syrian growls, his infamous fury beginning to slowly get the better of him, "You, out of all people, should know how it truly feels to be in your former position before; what the hell made you think you were going to make those mistakes again?"

Ezio's eyes narrow, "Desmond, you heard us tell this, but do you really think we still think of you like that, not after those last few day!?"

"What the hell do you both think!? It was what you both said, and I'm pretty sure you two are still thinking about it now!" Desmond gives them no room to continue arguing as he continues ranting, not caring if his voice is cracking, "I'm a clumsy, horrible, blocky, and slow! Not enough accuracy, I wasn't even prepared- ALL OF THAT! You didn't think I'd be affected by that!?"

He doesn't give the two any room to argue; instead, he hears the roar of blood rushing to his ears before he growls, "You know what- I don't care! Even if you both did 'accidently' listen, you still listened to something that-that-" He groans, his train of thought completely derailing and crashing, "...fuck it, even my private life and thoughts aren't so private to anyone."

There was a second of silence; this time, Desmond can feel the blood rush to his ears, his face feeling pretty war. He keeps telling himself it wasn't from the flurry of emotions that are going through his head, that he's pretty peeved and angry at this reason, that Altair and Ezio had even the stupidest gall
to listen to Desmond's rant (or what should've been a private one to a friend) right when Desmond thinks he's getting... well, probably better for his training.

In terms of emotional breakdown, however, it was getting to him. He's really sick of having people taking pity for him, to apologize for things that were unnecessary and freaking useless to him--so what the hell would make Altair and Ezio so different than Connor, Clay, Lucy Shaun, Rebecca, and his father?

"...you really weren't listening to us, weren't you." Altair's eyes narrow, a part of his face shadowed by his hood as the young man glares at the two. Ezio closes his eyes, shaking his head as he gently places his hand to cover his eyes (Was it to prevent his feelings from showing? Or to placate himself? Honestly, Desmond didn't really want to know).

"To what!?" Desmond asks, exasperated before he storms up to the door, "Know what? Forget it. Fuck it! I'm going--"

He was cut off when someone grabs his left arm and is jerked back against a hard, warm body. Trying to struggle Altair's grip (Desmond knows that it's his calloused hands), the American was about to say something and shove the Master Assassin out when he instantly feels the two arms wrapped around him, holding him tight.

"Altair-"

"You are not listening to me, Desmond," Altair growls, his dark amber eyes narrowing at the idea of Desmond leaving his side again (and probably when grabbing him, Altair's hood came off, showing the ire light-haired man, making Desmond visibly shiver from pure fear, seeing his unhooded and furious ancestor, and who is speaking in English, his accent prevalent), "Listen."

The American was still trying to get out, but the fact that he's being held by the Master Assassin doesn't help his potential escape plan.

"I apologized for the way I stated these things to you, about you; I thought you did not have the potential to become one of us." Desmond's eyes closes, feeling the same sting that he felt those few days ago before hearing Altair murmur (in Arabic), "However, I was proven wrong."

Desmond groans, glaring at the Assassin (while trying... unsuccessfully, trying to get out from the Syrian's grasp) "And how exactly did I-

"You improved."

Then he feels the rough crash of the Syrian's lips against his own, one filled with more hidden emotions- filled with anger and frustration over how hard-headed Desmond was and how thick the young man was for not staying and listening... and barely contained passion for the last few days that Altair was forced to keep in for the sake of improvement on Desmond's part. The bottle of emotion Altair carefully kept contained within him has cracked and opened with a torrent, where the Syrian can finally tell his habibi everything.

...rather, present his emotions through his actions.

"A-Air-!" Desmond barely gets a word in before said Syrian pulls away, harsh breathing against his; the American's lips were flushed red before brown eyes blink in surprise and he tries to pull away again-

"You're a bit hot-headed, aren't you?"
Desmond was about to open his mouth, turning around as he sees the Italian next to him before feeling another crushing passionate kiss, this one more fiery and emotional than the other one. He tries to flinch away, but the other man holding him wasn't letting him go. And neither is Ezio, whose hand roughly grabs the back of Desmond's neck and damn guy is stubborn as fucking hell as the kiss became a bit more punishing, bits of anger even to get Desmond to at least respond-in which the young man does at the moment he cries out when he feels the Syrian bite down his neck (did he hear something that sounded like a warning in advance from him?) before he feels the Italian (barely) lets go, puffs of warm air against his face.

"Are you finally going to listen?" Ezio hisses before pressing harsh nips against Desmond's chin.

"Ah- Dammit- stop it! I'll lis- AH- I'll listen!" The young man cries out in a mixture between passion and ire when he feels teeth against his skin (his T-shirt was being hiked up when he feels a pair of arms wrap around his shoulders while the other pair was around his waist, not willing to budge); he subconsciously tries to move to at least get some space (it was beginning to get really hot and he feels his clothes are too stuffy at the moment), but it really wasn't helping with both Altair and Ezio holding him like that.

"Will you really?" He hears smooth Arabic against his ear, making the young man shiver down as he squeeze his eyes, "It seems as if you aren't really that compliant."

Desmond just wants to tell Altair to shut the fuck up and just talk already, but his emotions and lust were on haywire; it came loose once he feels some unbuckling and something that sounded like fabric beign taken off before feeling Ezio impatiently tugging Desmond's T-shirt (in which he does take it out quickly when he feels Altair let go of him before feeling the Syrian wrap his arms at Desmond's waist, pressing burning kisses at his spine, causing the young man to gasp and shiver at the new contact.

"Another thing I just realized," This time, Desmond feels Ezio's rough hands gently caress his cheek before gently pressing a kiss, this time against the American's temple, "You... are not useless. Never."

"Why-" Desmond manages to croak out, feeling something that he formed for the past four days break down in him as he feels Altair's arms around him him tighten as Ezio continues his kisses and gentle bites against Desmond's neck (the left side, he realized, was Ezio's favorite area...).

"Stop thinking so little about yourself, habibi," Altair murmurs as he unties the pants that Desmond was wearing while gently kissing Desmond's ear, the right side of his neck as he gives a gentle bite, leaving another mark to show who Desmond belongs to, "Out of all people...you are one of the most precious people. But never... never have I given as much of my heart as I do to you."

The young Assassin's breath hitches-

"As the same for me, amore mio," Ezio whispers, kissing Desmond's lips as warm light amber meets his brown eyes, "...you are far more important to me than the women I've been with as they have come nowhere as close as you."

The American blinks away tears before the Italian brushes it away and cupping the American's cheek before kissing his eyes gently, "Feeling better?"

"Y-Yeah..."

"Good." With another reassuring kiss before being steered to the bed, Desmond gets captured in
another passionate liplock; Ezio's anger and fury from before was gone, "...then I can't hold back anymore, tesoro."

"What- Ah-!" Desmond gasps as he feels the Italian wrap one arm around his waist as the other steadies him by holding his shoulder when Ezio gives Desmond a long, possessive love mark on his neck. His body is wracked with shivers as he feels the Italian suck on the patch of the newly branded skin, his tongue licking to soothe any sharp pain that could've harmed the young man.

"Mio..." Ezio murmurs, releasing his bite and giving a gentle kiss where his love mark was made, "So that no one else will get the idea and take you by force."

"H-Hey!"

"Not if I can help it, brat," And he was suddenly turned around to see Altair (naked... like his and Ezio's current state) before the Syrian kisses Desmond before going directly for the right side of his neck, "He belongs to me too."

"Tch. Stubborn stronzo. I might have to fight you for him one of these days." Ezio grumbles beginning to lightly run his hands (slowly) down Desmond's side as Altair bites (not gently) to give the American his mark, causing the young man to cry out in slight pain.

"Altair-!" Desmond can't help but groan as he feels the Syrian slowly release his not-so subtle mark and lap any blood that might have seeped out from that bite, "That actually hurts..."

"Forgive me," Altair murmurs before kissing the love mark, "But I can't help but lost control when it comes to you; you're mine, habibi."

That made Desmond blush a bit more; it was bad Ezio's possessive remark made him blush earlier. He can also see that his back has been bumping into a very hard part of Ezio's body while his own hardened area was against Altair's- He squeaks when he sees how lust-hazed Altair look when he sees the dark amber eyes shadow when they roamed at Desmond's body.

If that's what Altair's like, then Ezio's reaction might be a little bit like this... Argh, that's making it a bit worse!

"Ah!" He gasps as he feels something wet being slipped inside of his entrance before looking up at Altair, who just smirks as he sees the reaction from the young man as Ezio prods his wet fingers hear Desmond's entrance, "E-Ezio, wha-"

"Perfumed Oil. This... was the stronzo's idea." Was all he can hear from Ezio as the scent of something flowery reaches to Desmond. Rose-scented- really? REALLY!? The American can't help but mentally groan, but that somehow wound up changing into a satisfying moan as he arches his back when he feels Ezio thrusting two fingers in, wrapping his arms around Altair's neck, who, in turn is holding his hips to keep them steady.

"Better than using nothing," Ezio slightly snaps in reply as he releases his arms, allowing Desmond to slightly face him in worry, "...Are you all right?"

"Y-Yeah," Desmond nods, still moaning as he feels the Italian slip a third finger in and keeps thrusting, "A-Ah-!" And in an instant, Ezio pulls the fingers out, causing Desmond to whimper at their loss before feeling something else, much thicker enter inside of him as he cries out in sudden pain.

"Tehedin, habibi, tehedin..." Altair murmurs as he kisses the young man to relax, "...are you-"
"M-Move, please..." The American manages to command, can barely take it anymore as he wants the discomfort to go away (despite him going this a couple of times already), in which Ezio began slow as he feels Altair press heated kisses around Desmond's neck, chin, and his chest before pausing, something in his mind before mumbling something before sighing, muttering something that sounded similar to 'Screw it'.

"Habibi. I apologize if this hurts you in advance."

"Hn-Huh?" Desmond can barely look at the Master Assassin, who is leaning towards him, something gleaming in his eyes, "W-What are you- Ah-aaah! A-Altair, what-!" Desmond cries out when he feels something else inside of him (it wasn't a finger), which is causing him a lot more pain than usual down there-

"Calm down." Altair whispers, knowing pretty well that the young man is under a lot of pain as Desmond squeezes his eyes shut, feeling the new amount of pain that is searing through him,

"...habibi, stop moving...!"

"S-Sorry, but it hurts-!" The American manages to hiss at the uncomfortable position (or what he can barely handle) as he tries to adjust, "Just how- But- A-Ah! T-Two!?!" (He's heard of it, thank to Rebecca and Lucy who have been 'innocent' into asking about it, which eventually lead up to a very awkward conversation about sex that night).

"What-" Ezio can't but wonder what the bloody heck is going through the Master Assassin's head before the said man shoots him a glare.

"I got really tired of waiting." Was all Altair said as he carefully adjusts himself to Desmond, "It'll hurt, Desmond."

"I-I had a feeling-Ah!" Desmond sharply gasps as he grabs onto the sheets for support.

"Take deep breaths- cazzo, tesoro...!" Ezio can barely keep his restraints in control (as it can snap it any moment) when Altair gets to the position (burying inside the young man to the hilt) as he places his hand on Desmond's hips before pressing a gentle kiss when the young Assassin turns to face him, "...are you okay, Desmond?"

"B-Barely," Desmond whimpers, wanting the pain to away already before beginning to cry out as he feels the two slowly thrusting in, forcing the young man to barely grab onto the bed sheets for support. When he feels one of them hit his sensative point head on, that was when he feels the intense pain turn into pleasure, causing him to cry out into moans and whimpers as the numbing ecstasy takes over his body, "F-Fuck! A-Altai- AAH! E-Ezio!"

As if the two men knew what the young man wanted, they began to thrust a bit faster, gaining some speed as the sensation continued to burn through. Desmond's cries and moans starts to become faster as he tosses his head back; Ezio's desperate burning and moans as he kisses hard and passionately against the young man's neck, whispering words of possessiveness and love in his native language as Altair leans a bit forward to capture Desmond's lips, grunts and moans of Arabic filled with love, claiming, and passion are murmured.

Desmond cries out, barely managing to even form coherent thoughts as he feels some tears come from his eyes from the pleasureable pain, the coil in his stomach and in that area beginning to tighten as he feels the friction of their skins against each other before feeling Ezio take hold of his neglected member and begins to pump it while kissing Desmond's temples, causing the young novice to cry out and wrap his arms around the Syrian as their thrusts got faster.
"Ah- E-Ezio! A-Ahh- A-Altair-!" The young man moans, almost at his limit, "A-Aah- I-I'm-I-I'm gonna-"

Desmond manages to muffle most of his cries by gritting his teeth and trying to cover it with his fist, but instead, he buries his mouth against the Syrian's shoulder when he comes, feeling the white, hot sticky release all over his stomach. As it happened, Desmond can feel himself tighten as he feels the two continue to thrust within him, hearing them cry out before feeling their limit, causing Desmond to buck as they release deep within him, causing him to weakly moan at the new sensation.

Harsh breathing fill the room as Desmond collapses against Ezio's chest, trying to recover from the amount of the energy spent while feeling sticky from the mess. He can feel the Italian place his head against the young man's shoulder, trying to recover before Altair pressed their foreheads against each other, trying to take in silent breaths before slowly pulling out (causing the young man to wince in discomfort).

"Just relax." He hears the Syrian quietly murmur in between gentle kisses as the other man pulls out of him, a silent apology in the form of a kiss at his shoulder.

"...'s going to hurt the next day." The young man mumbles as his body falls limp, before- "Owww..."

Desmond can't help but whimper, feeling his hands burning from the heat and the sweat that went through his bandages and into his wounds as he closes his eyes, "...shitshishitshit...

"Desmond?" Altair's voice was slightly out of breath, but he sounds worried before sitting up with the slight bit of energy he has remaining, "Are you okay?"

"It didn't hurt that much, did it?" Ezio asks, "...well, we did warn you what was going to happen."

Both Desmond and Altair stared warily at the Italian, knowing pretty well it could have been one of Ezio's idea, but they chose not to argue that point. "What's done is done." Altair mutters, blushing a slight red at the previous moment before noticing the bandaged knuckles, "...it's this, isn't it?"

"Ah-" Desmond blinks, looking down at the now slightly loosened bandaged hands before nodding, too exhausted and numbed from their love making, "...yeah. It is."

Altair gives an airy chuckle, "...I suppose you also need medication for tomorrow when you walk, no?"

Desmond's blush couldn't get any darker as Ezio rumbles in laughter, his arms still around the young man as Altair mutters something about leaving in ten minutes to gather enough energy (he was still spent) to find any spare bandages and medicine for his habibi.

"Your knuckles. What happened to them?"

Desmond can feel Ezio gently run his thumb over the American's newly bandaged left hand; throughout their moment of intimacy, not once did the two Assassins mention anything about Desmond's bandaged hands (or knuckles). At least there was one good thing that came out of it; those two didn't hear how his hands are in their battered and bruised state. Altair wasn't happy seeing how Desmond's knuckles are raw and torn, but knowing that he has more of the knowledge of medication than the other two (Ezio couldn't even bother to learn how to even treat a fucking sword wound. Desmond... well, technology at his time did the work). The Syrian was only clad in hastily placed pants as he continues to wrap a new layer on Desmond's right; the other two
were still situated in the bed. Some candles were lit, giving Altair some light since the sky was turning dark.

"...well..." The young man pauses, trying to find the right words-

"You got into some form of fight, didn't you," Altair manages to tighten the wrappings a bit, causing Desmond to wince as Ezio glares at the Syrian, "What were you doing?"

The American knew he really couldn't weasel out of his way through Altair's interrogation, "...I was gathering stuff for Leonardo when I encountered some men who were harassing a kid. And, ah, well, as you can see from what happened, while I did manage to get those guards..." He made a small gesture with his right hand to indicate the injuries in his left hand. Altair's right eye slightly twitches before forcing Desmond to let his right hand to stay still- causing the young man to wince from the pain- as he continues to patch it.

Ezio frowns, glancing over at the slightly open window (to allow some cool air in), "I did hear some whispers about a scuffle between some of Borgia's men and someone earlier today. Was it... perhaps, related to you?"

Damn, I really hate how fast word travels in here. Desmond mentally groans, his head hitting against Ezio's shoulder, who naturally, took it as a 'yes'.

"You need to be careful around his men," And he feels the Italian's hold on Desmond tighten (the one around his waist, which reminded the young man that he and the Italian are still naked while Altair is the only one... minimally clothed, making him lightly blush... and the fact that they had a moment of passion not too long ago made his blush a bit darker), "It seems as if you need some form of supervision wherever you go from now on."

"Fantastic... what's next? Giving me a bodyguard?" Desmond mutters before snapping his mouth shut, knowing how true this statement is, "...right." And another pause, "...I'm sorry for yelling at you two for... earlier." He slightly bows his head to avoid seeing Altair and Ezio's reactions. Then he hears a sigh from the Italian behind him.

"It's perdono, Desmond. Just promise that you'll come to me or... that stupid elder," He can Ezio grumble about something else, but Desmond gives a small smile, "If you feel like you need to talk about something that has been bothering you."

"Okay." The American nods, closing his eyes as he adjusts his position to rest for the night (Ezio had to move, of course). When he feels the third person of the group joining in, he feels the Syrian loop his arm around his chest area, hearing Ezio protest before grumbling a curse. But that wasn't what caught Desmond's attention; he can barely hear Altair say something and make it out (it was possible that he was speaking in Arabic).

"...come again?" Desmond faces the Syrian, who has a look of guilt in his face.

"Ana asif, habibi," Altair murmurs, closing his eyes as he presses a kiss against Desmond's lips, who initially, looked confused at the saying... before his eyes slightly widen, realizing what the Syrian just said.

"You-"

"I misjudged you, and for that... I am sorry." Another kiss and Altair murmurs, "The first time I sparred against you, your movements were similar to that of Kadar's; you had potential, yet you were steering it the wrong way. I thought if you continued that way, you would eventually..." A
slightly shaky sigh before the Syrian closes his eyes, Desmond understanding that Altair would have thought Desmond would eventually end up like Kadar; and perhaps, like the younger Altair, who was reckless and thought he was the king of the world by ability alone.

The guilt was still within the Master Assassin; it was his burden. But Desmond experienced it, though not in person. The feeling, however, was too familiar.

"...it's okay." Desmond murmurs as he squeezes the Syrian's hand against his own, "...I've felt the same thing." A pause, "...I even saw it happen." He sees Altair's eyes shift, knowing that he had an invisible witness to his feat of arrogance and immaturity and turning point to his downfall before he rose again to become Master of Masayf.

"And?"

Desmond blinks, looking up to see the Syrian looking at him before the American pauses, "...to be honest, we're human. We do make mistakes. But in the end, we have learned our mistakes. I've done it before, my dad's done it... I've learned my lesson. And in the end, it seems as if you've learned it too." A small smile, "Ezio too... I bet he's been learning his lesson as well." He can see the Italian close his eyes, a small nod as he feels the Italian bury his face against the crook of Desmond's neck. Altair's dark amber slightly widens before something like relief and something slightly lifted from his shoulders.

"Thank you for not judging my past."

Desmond blinks before he lightly blushes, eyes looking slightly away from his slight embarrassment, "W-Well... that's one of the few things I learned in life... Especially when I was in New York...and from home.

A small chuckle escapes Altair's lips, "...You are the only one who keeps my demons at bay... had I wouldn't have to share with that stupid brat to do so."

"I can hear you, coglione," Ezio's slightly exhausted deadpan voice slightly surprised Desmond as he glances over at the Italian. Altair shakes his head before whispering, "Ana ahebak, habibi. Rest... tomorrow will be important for all of us."

The American visibly blushes, having an idea what those first three words mean as the older man brushes his lips against Desmond's before wrapping his arms over Desmond's chest.

"Desmond?"

"Hm?" This time, another arm wraps around his waist and he feels Ezio against his back as Altair grunts in Arabic, something about the Italian being annoyingly possessive before closing his eyes from exhaustion, "...Ezio?"

"Mi dispiace, tesoro... no, amore mio," The Florence Assassin gently kissed Desmond's neck, making the young man shiver, "I had a feeling you had potential; you just needed a small push. ...though it wasn't the way I hoped would motivate you to be better with your techniques."

"Too late for that," The American mumbles, but he can feel Ezio's arm slightly tighten.

"You did surprise me; that was something I wasn't expecting from you," Ezio's voice changes into one of seriousness, "Every time I saw you, you've been improving with your will. You never seem to give up, no matter what obstacles come in your way. I'm impressed; you might even impress Mario and the others when they finally see you. And you..." He pauses, "...no. You do have the potential to be one of us; a part of the Brotherhood."
Desmond's blush grows a bit darker, but he pauses, "...hey, Ezio?"

"Hm?"

"Earlier, you said that you and Altair have something that could help me with my fighting. What was it?"

He hears the Italian slightly hesitate before muttering, "...I was going to Leonardo and ask him to make final adjustments for it when we..." Another incoherent murmur before he sighs, "It was supposed to be a surprise. The elder has it hidden somewhere; I'll ask for him to show it to you tomorrow."

"Oh.. okay," Though to be honest, Desmond was actually curious to know what the two Assassins thought would benefit him; was it a new weapon? Or some additional armor to his clothing to protect him from other forms of attacks?

"I can't wait to see it." He whispers, a curious smile on his face. Ezio blinks before a small smile appears and presses a gentle kiss to his tesoro; this time, gently tapping the young man before lightly brushing his lips against Desmond's.

"Ti amo, Desmond. Tu sei mio, amore mio..."

And this time, Desmond was more clear-headed (and not flustered to get the idea of what they just said) as Ezio slowly drifts into his sleep; Altair's steady breathing indicating that the Master Assassin was already in the dunes of his slumber.

I love you.

He can't help but admit, it did tear him up (a bit). Even though he knows what familial love was and felt like (he knew how much his dysfunctional family cares about him, no matter how messed up Desmond got thanks to Abstergo), this felt different. The same feeling that overwhelmed him whenever he is around those two...

"I... love you. Both of you."

Maybe something can happen tomorrow...

...wait, tomorrow...

Desmond's eyes are drooping, but he knows that the Assassins have to meet up tomorrow, regarding the Pieces of Eden that was in Venice, about Borgia's men (he'd have to talk about it eventually to the two Assassins), about Aita (no, he hasn't forgotten about that man's message to the two of them), and about...

...the Apple of Eden. Yes, he knows Ezio has one (he's seen it in person), but how the hell did Altair have it in his possession? In fact, does the Master Assassin even have that artifact on him?

Whatever the case is, Desmond would have his answers about that tomorrow. Maybe I might get something from the other guys back at home... he finally slips into slumber.

...I just hope things don't go wrong tomorrow.

End Part 15
GAAAHAAHHHAHAHAAsdfghdjfkg.

And this is finished around 5:45 in the freaking morning. God help me.

...even I feel like I'm embarrassed to write that... passionate part in. Even Ezio's stupid sappy speech... ahahahahahaha oh good god. I read too much manga/romance/(don't know what possessed me to write those godforsaken sappy scenes) for that.

*groans* I need to get out more.

And yes, there is such thing as... AHEMthatposition.

On the other hand, it's not Aita who sent the glitch. Keep guessing, people. Though the choices should've been limited by now.

And I need help (since like I've mentioned a few times, I have never played the games...); can anyone please tell me what statues are in the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari and what hidden areas are in there? Also, can anyone tell me if there is an altar in the Frari?

What's next: You get the feeling when you overlooked something? Those poor guys back in the modern times did that and on the plus side, it did get them closer to find out who sent the emails to Abstergo...
Caught Up

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: In no way do I own this. Ever.

So, this is to break up what's going on with Desmond, Altair, and Ezio (it's been about... like, what? Four to five chapters?), let you know what the hell's going on in 2012, and to give you guys back to the plot (and to give a small push to... not saying. Yet). But this chapter is a breather from what's happening over at Italy... and something that I hope will now be one of the few things to get the plot rolling.

Because I was wondering, I was calculating the ages of the main cast. ...and then it comes down to this: Desmond is around 25-26 in this story. And in the order from youngest to oldest, I found this out: Lucy (24), Desmond (25), Ezio (27), Rebecca (28), Shaun (28-29?), Altair (29), Clay (30), and Connor (31). And yes, I have seen 30-year old men act like idiots and immature (I have friends in college that are around that age and it is... well, I'll let you judge).

This fic takes place before Altair gets to know Maria a bit better and before the attack on Forli for Ezio. I actually considered this (but I guess you all know by now about the points in their lives that I placed them in. ...or to get even more creative, draw your own conclusions).

Oh, and you know which character was bound to appear at some point. It was bound to happen anyway. And no, it isn't Edward Kenway.

Enjoy!

Warning: Just a lot of chaos. And because I don't know about Shaun's age at all (it doesn't give his birth year out, unless someone knows about this), let's just go ahead and assume either he is in the same age as Rebecca or a year older than her. And yeah, the flashbacks are meant to be backwards. Read them in the actual order if you want... I'm going to warn you that you're going to be confused as hell. I think.

"italics" = Italian, Arabic, any other language OR a flashback (depending on how it is used)

"bold italics" = over the mic and phone

"normal" = English

bold sentences = emails, screams, or Bleeding Effect (depends on how it's used).

Part 16: Caught Up
Rebecca can feel her left eye twitching as she looks at the scene before her.

It's been about three days since Desmond last talked to them (or even contacted them for the matter-the only person who knows about it more was Connor and knowing him, he won't say anything unless it was extremely necessary) and it's borderlining to the fourth day.

And she is in the midst of an argument between these four... no, wait. Scratch that. Make that five idiots. And the saddest thing about this is that not only is she one of the younger member of said group (if comparing all of the guys in terms of age), but she is perhaps one of the more hyper members of the group.

...right now, she feels like she is stuck in a room with five immature people who don't even comprehend the term 'settling differences aside before discussing them in a calm manner'. She lets out a silent groan, hearing the voices getting louder (and one of them is tied to a chair with duct tape for crying out loud) before she grits her teeth in irritation, her patience wearing really thin.

Rebecca just wants to hit something with her iPad so bad. But she honestly can't (since it's going to waste a lot of money, force her to back up her scattered info, which will eventually cause her to do the following thing and... it's just too much to find a way to create some iPad look-alike. Buying one was too risky at the moment). It was especially after she witnessed Shaun punching the prisoner earlier- well, she wasn't surprised since she knows how much strength the Brit has despite his appearance that she actually wants to stop their stupid argument and-

Oh fuck this! She closes her eyes, deciding at this point, all logic might as well throw itself out of the window before turning her attention to the squabbling group, her ire, anger, and fury all welled up and mixed in one.

"WILL YOU GUYS SHUT THE HELL UP!?" She yells on top of her lungs, forcing the said arguments to stop abruptly at her screaming.

Rebecca takes a few deep breaths to calm herself down as she sees Shaun, Clay, Lucy, Connor, and their tied 'prisoner' stare at her in surprise.

"Rebecca-" Shaun was the first to mutter, but the black-haired technician cuts him off.

"I can't believe I am even saying this, but do I have to do everything myself!?" She exclaims in ire (subconsciously how Desmond must feel whenever something is burdening on his shoulders) before pointing at Shaun, Lucy, and Clay, "Look. Lucy didn't write those emails, no way in hell did she even enter her email account those days, she didn't even have her freaking iPad or iPhone on her! I was there for half- I mean half- of those days and all we had was a freaking clunky old cellphone because we can hide the signal better and we had a shopping list, for crying out loud! In other words," She huffs before glaring at Shaun, "Shaun, shut up and agree with Lucy and Clay for just this once. Lucy is not a traitor, even I trust her. Shut it.

Then she glares at Connor and their prisoner, who were about to say something, "And you two! Oh God, I thought Desmond arguing with William was just as bad as I thought, but noooooo, you two are much worse! Connor, I thought you said you wouldn't do anything to beat up the poor guy, but here you are, right now- Oh, for God's sake, Connor, you're just as worse as Desmond!" And then she points her finger (more like jabbing it) to the prisoner, "And you! Do you know much trouble you're causing around here!? I can't believe I'm even going to ask this, but do you even know what Abstergo is up to?"

The prisoner frowns, his eyes narrows, "No. And frankly, why would I even tell you brats? By the
time you would figure out-"

"Too late. We already found out." Shaun taps the now inactive (rather, a dead Animus 2.0) chair with the screens and mentally gleefully takes in the horrified look on the prisoner's face, "Wasn't that much to figure out, really." He glances over at Rebecca, as she sighs, nodding as she is agreeing with the British man.

"If Desmond would've seen this right now, he would've wondered why you guys are just as terrible as him when he's trying to negotiate a lot of problems with William in the first place," She mutters before seeing how shocked the prisoner looks, "...hey. Earth to-"

"I was wondering," The man's eyes narrows, getting over his instant horrified look, "Perhaps maybe-"

"If you are trying to get my family and my friends involved in this stupid Crusade, take-over, or anything similar of the sort just to get the objectives of your **fucking stupid Templars** completed," Connor seethes, his left hand itching to take his hidden blade and just stab the man in front of him, "I'd suggest you begin your last prayers."

"Connor!" Rebecca groans, earning a frown from the said eldest Miles brother, "You are **not** going to kill him!"

"Yeah, but that's going borderline now," Clay shakes his head before he warily glances to Shaun and Lucy, who are also on their guard for a possible homicidal Connor, "...hey, Con, do you think we can have that hidden blade of yours-"

"No." Connor's eyes narrow as he clutched on his hidden blade.

"...damn."

"Connor, just give it." Rebecca groans, glaring at Connor as she extends her hand for his hidden blade, "Do you even recall what happened yesterday, the day before, and the **DAY** before that one!?"

---

**Yesterday**

"**I hate** you."

Connor glares at their prisoner, who is sitting against one of the beds (the one in which the Assassins know that has no access to any sort of power or internet... it was the result of an experiment of one of the Tech that actually worked).

Clay, Shaun, Lucy, and Rebecca were tense, not wanting to even disrupt the oldest Miles brother from his... talk as they glance over, wanting to make sure Connor doesn't even try to beat up the man they are talking to.

Or what was supposed to be a small 'chat' between him and their prisoner-

"I can gladly say the feeling is **very** mutual," The prisoner glares back at Connor with equal amounts of hatred, "Joining with my enemies was something I was **not** expecting from a son of mine-"

"I am **NOT** your SON!"
-has quickly turned into another argument between them.

"Hey, you two! Shut it already!" Clay groans as he steps between the two adults to prevent another argument (rather, a beating up session after what happened two days before) before glancing at the prisoner, "There's an actual good reason why we kept you here in this room, you know."

"I heard, from one of you," The prisoner rolls his eyes, "That this room has absolutely no reception and is supposed to leave some sort of psychological effect by placing in no windows or no form of entertainment except-" And he holds up the dingy black book that is written in Italian, "-the Bible. If I recall, isn't this supposed to be for people in isolated prison?"

"Yeah, yeah, know-it-all," The blonde rolls his eyes, "Look. Maybe it'll be a good idea if you can finally explain to us about why the hell you decided to sneak into our supposed hidden HQ-"

"I don't ever plan to tell you twits anything."

That made Clay's eye twitch slightly, but unlike Connor, he sighs, shaking his head before shrugging, "...well, I tried."

"That was just from one question!" Shaun sputters before glancing at Connor, "Oi, you might want to stay back and let us handle this-"

"I said I would be able to handle it," The Native American seethes, but obviously, this causes the others to be a little more wary.

"Well, your mood says otherwise," Lucy shakes her head before she glances over at the man, "I'd rather stay away from him for a while. You being here... it's not such a-"

A bark of laughter escapes from the prisoner, causing the others to face him with slight alarm, "Oh, sure. I doubt it'll happen soon, traitor."

Lucy's blue eyes narrows but Clay steps in, placing his hand on his shoulder as he glares at the prisoner with murder written in his face, "My girlfriend, you asshole, is not one of you." Another pause, "Do you even recall the threat I made about a few days ago when you first showed up? I'll gladly carry it out if you want."

The prisoner frowns, "I would rather get my blood spilled in a honorable fight than in the hands of you Assassins."

Connor grits his teeth, trying to contain his anger in.

"You are really talkative today- are you seriously asking for a death sentence?" Clay continues, not liking this man's behavior, "And no, we are not going to give you the 'one' phone call that all prisoners are allowed to give. What the hell makes you think that after we managed to capture you?"

The prisoner chuckles, a dark one, in fact, "Maybe, we can make a deal." A pause, "If I tell you one thing about what we, the Templars, plan to do at the motion for prosperity and peace for others around the world-" Cue rolling of eyes from some people as one of the more obvious one mutter 'Templar bullshit' from Clay's right, "-and in turn, perhaps you can shed some light into something that we've been looking into as well."

It was really tempting. It seems like a perfectly good deal-

"Not going to fall for it," Clay deadpans, glaring at the prisoner, "Do you really think that we can actually agree for something like that? Fuck you, you old man!" And another pause, "And you know
what?" I know Connor's gonna kill me for this, but to hell with it all, Connor's all pissed off anyway- "I bet your wife didn't even have actual feelings for you at the moment she realized who you were working for!"

That made the room fall into a tense silence; Lucy, Rebecca, and Shaun look at Clay in horror as Connor's eyes narrow at the mentioning of his deceased biological mother. The prisoner, on the other hand...

...his eyes widen before they instantly narrow, anger now seeping into them as if he was being stung with a slow-acting poison.

"You... thought my feelings for my wife were all false? Even after she discovered my true allegiances?" The prisoner growls, his glare all to Clay (and to Connor since that was an awful focal point in their tension), "My wife- no, wait. Let me rephrase this- Ziio was the only person I have actual feelings for- even if I was a Templar and didn't care about anything else aside going something that I believe would be for the greater good for this world! She actually tried to make things work between the both of us- I even made up records into saying I was missing from the Templars since I ached to be with her, to be with my actual loving family- something I never got the chance to since my entire family disappeared before my eyes that day!" He seethes, standing up, "She actually didn't care if I was a Templar or not-"

"That's not true!" Connor finally growls, stepping forward as the arguments shifts to him, "Mom would have never accepted you in the end! she knew what you were up to-"

"That was because they found out my actual location, you stubborn brat!"

"I don't care if they found out or not! Mom was actually crying that day when she found that letter from- oh, what's that fucking bastard friend of yours called? FUCKING CHARLES LEE mentioned that we were worthless compared to your goals and 'What is right for your life and your true desires' and telling that we are a block to your obstacles-"

"That was not my intention!" The prisoner's eyes narrows, "Do you actually believe that I would possess that enough sensibility to kill your mother that day!?"

Clay's mouth slightly tighten as he feels Lucy tense. The two were the first ones Desmond told about how Connor became a part of the Miles family (and Connor did mention it to the other before); Connor came home early from school because he got a call from someone that claimed to be his relative when he saw his mother being killed in front of his eyes. He thought it was his father since he has seen it through the crack of the door (that was leading up to the room where his mother and father were); his voice clearly accused Ziio of being a worked for an Assassin before her body collapses from a sharp blade-

It was the same day Connor was adopted to the Miles family (well, unofficially).

And knowing Connor, he was pretty sensitive to that particular subject or anything relating to that day.

"Yeah, I think you would have some fucking nerve to stab my mom that day," Connor's voice suddenly gets really cold and steely, "You accused her. You said that she was working for the fucking enemy. The very one that I'm working for right now. My biological family died that day."

The prisoner's jaws were slightly tighter than normal, "...that's the version you're going with. Did
"My father William Miles has gotten it from one of his sources that you were responsible for my mother's death," Connor continues, "And made my life a living hell until I got a new one."

"And yet, you will never get the chance to hear what I have to say about it!" The prisoner manages to seethe before narrowing his eyes, "I did not kill your mother that day! I wanted some questions from her because she did mention about that letter from Charles Lee-"

"Stop it." Connor's voice stops the man from continuing, "Shut up, shut up, SHUT UP!" He storms over the prisoner and while the man was sputtering about how unbelievably rude his 'son' actually was while he was in the middle of explaining something, the eldest Miles brother manages to slam his hand against the man's neck, causing the man to give a slight gargled groan before collapsing at the bed, unconscious.

That, naturally, caught the others' attention as they gawk in horror.

"Connor!" Rebecca manages to exclaim, "What did- Did you just-"

Connor sighs, presenting his hidden blade, which remained tucked and clean, "No, I didn't kill him if that's what you all were wondering. I just made him shut up for a while."

"By... knocking him out with a neck hit." Shaun dryly comments (though he looks visibly shaken from what just happened), "Wouldn't that just hurt the back of his neck and affect his brain in some way?"

The Native American sighs, "We'll see. All I did was shut him up."

The tense silence was still there in the room as the other four look at each other uncomfortably, not sure what to say until Connor sighs, "...sorry. I just... the way he was saying all of that bothered me. I want to stick that he did kill my mother that day. On the other hand..." He slowly trails off, "...I wanted to know myself if he was really responsible for my mother's murder like he said."

"But the fact he's a Templar bothers you," Rebecca frowns, crossing her arms as Connor nods.

"It still does. And I can't deny it; I truly despise him for doing this to me." A pause before he glances over to the others, "On the other hand, I would say it was an actual blessing since I did manage to find people who are able to accept me as a new family." He gives a small smile, "Des's going to kill me when he finds out about this, huh?"

"He would hate to talk to him as well," Lucy glances over to the prisoner, who is still against the bed, "...like you, Clay?"

Clay sighs, leaning against Lucy, who manages to sigh in relief, "Yeah. I'm glad you did that, Con-I hated talking to him!"

Connor rolls his eyes, muttering something like, 'Now you know why...'.

"...so," Lucy grimaces, staring at the unconscious prisoner before glancing over to Shaun, Rebecca, and Clay, "Now what?"

Connor lets out a sigh before looking at them with clenched teeth, "...sorry."

"Dude, Connor, it's fine," Clay lets out a sigh of defeat, knowing that letting the man without some form of restraint was out of the question before his eyes stray towards one of the metallic chairs (that
will make a noise regardless how silent someone even dared to sit or move from that damn seat), "I think Rebecca's right from her suggestion from yesterday. Maybe tying him up sound like a really brilliant idea. Leaving him here would... well, result in something like that and what happened earlier."

"With what, exactly?" Shaun asks, exasperated as he looks around, "Using some ropes are out of the question, unless you want him to break free-"

"We took his hidden blade away... remember?" Rebecca waves her hands in ire, "It's not like he has another knife in his wrists, shirts or... anything, right?"

"Actually..." Lucy took out some items from the box that labelled DO NOT TOUCH EVER in the crudest handwriting before managing to fish out several other knives, his own phone with the batteries cleverly taken out, a gun that is now locked and the bullets in a separate bag, and the Templar's version of the hidden blade, "...We took your advice and looked through his jacket, pants, and well... his shirt. Well, rather, Rebecca, Clay, and I did it while Shaun was telling us what to do. And we managed to find all of this."

"Damn," Connor mutters in alarm as he lifts up the hidden blade, "You guys did well."

"At least we have a clue as to what the hell he was hiding all this time," Clay huffs, we managed to take his jacket towards tech, you know. For other hidden crap, just in case."

"Which begs the question that I'm about to bring," Shaun frowns, "I'd hate to be the bearer of bad news, but what would happen when our prisoner-" He glances over the unconscious man, "-when he decides to wake up and sees all of this..." He makes some hand gesture to the box, "...junk?"

"Well, we'll hide it," Rebecca takes the box away from Lucy and closes the lid, "I'm actually more concerned if this man actually wakes up and tries to do anything to get close to us."

"Meaning...?" Clay asks, a bit confused.

"We need something to tie him against- well, anything that's too heavy and won't move," The technician continues before pausing, "...wait. Do you think if we tried anything like tieing him against a bedpost-"

"Dead God, you can't be that indecisive as to where we're going to tie him!" Connor groans, sounding a bit exasperated before pausing, "...and if we did tie him to the bed post, he'd find a way out in no time."

"Well. Fuck." Clay frowns before glancing over at a chair that is next to the bed post, "Hey, what about that?"

"The... chair?" Shaun warily asks as Rebecca and Lucy stare at Clay as if he was insane. Even Connor was wondering what the hell was going through his younger brother's mind, "You are kidding."

The blonde gives a wary grin, shrugging, "Think about it; do you want the guy to get loose? And if we can place his hands behind his back against the rails instead of placing it over them, he would probably have a harder time getting out as opposed to having his hands and arms in a free space where he has the chance of getting out."

It didn't take the others long to agree, wanting to avoid any sort of argument when they are actually pressed for time. As Clay and Shaun are trying to grab the unconscious man and drag him towards
the chair (rather, lifting him up) and complaining about how heavy his body weighs, Connor is scanning the room to try and look for something...

"Something up?" Rebecca asks Connor, who frowns slightly.

"Is there some sort of rope or string that we can hold this guy with?" The eldest Miles pauses when he sees the two girls shake their heads, "...really? Then what did we use yesterday?"

"It was that cable ties Shaun had on him," Rebecca frowns, "...we just ran out of them. But..." She takes out a roll of duct-tape that she hands over to Lucy, who blinks before shrugging.

"Oh well. Better than nothing." She lifts the duct tape roll for Connor to see, "Well, we were planning to use this to bind the boxes, but we can use it for something else."

Connor stares at the duct tape before looking back at the grinning two women, who were not joined by a complaining Shaun and a cursing Clay, "...Please tell me you're joking."

Lucy just smiles, shaking her head as she nudges the item over to an incredulous Connor, who can't help but gawk, "...Who the fucking hell bought this color!?"

"Me!" Rebecca grins as Shaun groans, facepalming, "You like it?"

"It looks..." Clay trails off, holding onto the roll of duct-tape, "...bright."

"Well, it was between that and a really neon pink color," The black-haired girl and Lucy shared a slightly evil grin, "And there are these handcuffs that tech built as a sample."

"You mean the one they decide to use on us to see if it was a viable bond so our subjects can't escape?" Clay deadpans, "Who made this and the color...?"

"Some at tech who thought of this idea and no, it wasn't a kinky idea, if you want to know," Rebecca mentally shuddered at the mental image it produced, "...so. Which one should we use to tie this bastard up?"

"I'm... thinking handcuffs?"

"And considering that the damn bloody key to these handcuffs at a relatively safe distance?" Shaun dangles the handcuffs in front of the others, pointing at the chain in which the keys to the handcuffs were securely attached, "And if that fails, there is such thing as getting out of these piece of crap with a hairpin." He sees Connor opening his mouth and asking how the hell it was possible- "Ask your brother. Not me."

"It took about ten minutes to get out of those pieces of shit." Clay deadpans, recalling the hilarity that ensued when he and Desmond first got these handcuffs while Desmond was taking a break from the Animus, "...wait, should I have told them it took about ten seconds for Des to break out of them?"

"...seriously?" The eldest Miles brother's face turns into one of exasperation as he stares at the handcuffs, "So... duct tape. What can we do with them?"

"You can make those into rope or something so it'll be harder for the guy to get out," Rebecca shrugs, "...well, it's your choice, Connor."

"It was either that or using handcuffs that has the keys attached to get out with." Lucy deadpans.

Connor's expression tells the others he is debating between using a stupid (and too bright) colored
duct tape and managing to burn his wrists or using a handcuffs and having their prisoner break out before they can transport him to the new HQ.

"...fine." He sighs before holding out his hand, "The Duct tape, please. So that I can find a way to bind him without having him escape."

Rebecca can't help but crack a grin.

Shaun then looks over at them while hearing Connor rip out a piece of duct-tape, "That's all dandy and all, but there's just one other problem I was wondering about... and it's about William and how we're going to:"

"Wait a sec, hang on," Clay frowns, "Didn't you call him yesterday? What did he say then?"

The Brit grimaces, narrowing his eyes as he takes off his glasses, "Heh, you won't believe what he said..."

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The Day Before Yesterday

"So? What do we do about him?" Shaun asks to William, who is rubbing his head against his forehead. Rebecca was in the room, now keeping watch of the prisoner, who is glacing at the two warily before letting out a defeated sigh.

"I have been deliberating it with the others here," William was grumbling over at his end, "Heather and I have brought his name up with the others."

"And...?"

"We have nothing." Another pause, "Some of us are arguing about it."

Shaun, Clay, and Rebecca let out a groan or irritation.

"Even Desmond would have made up a plan on the spot, even if it was a stupid one," Rebecca mutters to Shaun, who can't help but nod in agreement; having a plan is better than none.

The prisoner scoffs, making the two glance over to where he is.

"Really now. Even William's boy might have a better idea of what to do with me?"

Shaun narrows his eyes through his glasses, "To be fair, we just told our leader that we managed to catch you since you were one slippery git. And it was near the night when we caught you!"

The prisoner lets out an amused chuckle, "How long exactly did it take you all to discover my presence in here?"

"Not until Connor decided to... well, activate something that allowed us to see you in here." Shaun was about to continue when Rebecca clamps up his mouth to shut up him from revealing anything else about Connor.

"Which, by the way, how the hell did you even know we were in here!?" Rebecca asks, her eyes slightly narrowing as she glares at the prisoner.
"If I had to say that I disguised myself to be like one of your... ill-mannered comrades," The prisoner replies, "Would you have discovered my presence then?"

"Not exactly, but some of us could've detected you through a different method," Clay deadpans, narrowing his eyes as he eyes the prisoner with suspicion, "That guy's ID you took in order to blend in. How did you do it?"

"I should be asking how you managed to catch me just when I thought my cover was blown," The prisoner's eyes narrows, "Tell me- why did William leave you all here?" A sneer appears in his face, "Was it to make you lures for the rest of to come over and capture you?"

"Shut it!" Clay was about to snap when he sees Lucy knocking on the door before she glares at the prisoner, "...Be right back you two." And with that, he left the room (his fists can't stop shaking, dammit) with a concerned Lucy in front of him before she turns around, stopping their walk, "...what?"

"You're still not okay," The blonde woman's lips were pursed into a tight line, her hands gently touching his fists.

"Oh? Oh... yeah." Clay grimaces as he unclenches them, seeing the light red indentations that were left from his fingernails, "Sorry. It's just-" He takes a deep breath, "Every time that guy opens his fucking mouth, I just have that urge to- to... argh, you know!" He throws his arms up in the air in exasperation, "You know when Des first saw William again?"

"Yeah?"

"Just like that. Minus the hugging and the welcome home crap." The blonde man pauses, trying to think about what could possibly equal to the situation he's in now, "...along with the urge to kill growing every single minute."

Lucy sighs, closing her eyes before placing her forehead against Clay's shoulder blades, which makes him slightly surprised, "I can't blame you. But at the same time-" She lets out a slight shudder of breath, "...he might be right. I'm just not that trustful because-"

"Lucy."

And with that, she feels two warm hands holding her by the arms and her gaze meets Clay's, "Yeah, I admit, there are times, which I did wonder if you wrote those emails to that fucking coot or even tried to ally with the Templars, seeing as I know your history with William since... well, no wonder Des hated William."

"But you and Connor?" Lucy can't help but realize that the two treat William as an actual... father figure than Desmond did (well, at least he gave credit for having William as his father), "Did you two...?"

"I think we both got the better treatment than Des, seeing as how Des was the biological son than we both were," Clay pauses, "We both were adopted; Con's family was gone and my dad could give two-cents shit about where I went, seeing as the two of were different in what we want for each other. William probably was the person who made sure the two of us got better than we had before. And for Des... I think he wanted to make sure Des was on a path that could've made him into someone better."

"I guess we three talked about this with our folks- and even when Des brought everyone we knew into this conversation, and yeah, that included you Luc-" He softly chuckles, seeing her surprised
reaction, "...and while you were right- William did leave us to fend for ourselves and some of us did feel betrayed- he did regret doing so when Desmond pointed out that he was just as bad than some of the bastards over at Abstergo; Vidic was one, the other... what's his face who is the head of Abstergo..."

"Alan Rikkin," Lucy manages to say his name, but she still feels disgust for what he did to her friend, "That bastard... he ordered Leila to be killed."

"Did you managed to find out why?" Clay asks, seeing the blonde woman's slightly guilty look written on her face, "That's what I've been wondering about- I mean... it was one of the few reasons why you decided to stick with us, right?"

"William eventually told me; he was in tabs the entire time, even when I didn't know about it," Lucy gives a small, bitter laugh as she recalls the shock and revelation on that day, "...I thought it was because Leila was in an accident. It turns out she was too deep into something Abstergo was going to do with the Pieces of Eden and the Animus Project, which lead up to the New World Order movement and what Vidic was really up to with my project."

She doesn't see Clay's eyes slightly narrow at this as she continues on.

"That night she died, you know what happened?" She pauses, "Leila called to let me know she was going to be late to our dinner meeting because she was caught up in something over there. And a couple of minutes later, I get this call from her- panicking, asking for my email address and saying something about 'don't trust whatever Vidic says' and all of that. I thought she was insane; she hated Vidic to begin with. But just the way she was trying to tell me something was wrong..." Lucy takes a shaky breath before glancing over at Clay, "...do you think I did the right thing by calling you guys and asking if you guys looking in Leila's death?"

"Even though there were some of us thinking it might be a trap?" Clay sighs before he closes his eyes, hugging her again, "I told William to give it a chance, seeing as maybe it could've have to do something with the Templars. Guess I was right when we did take a deeper look in to it, by using some idiot's ID and all. You're not a traitor to anyone. And fuck the Templars and Abstergo," He gently pats her head before giving her a small kiss on her cheek, "Yeah, William's gonna be a hard-ass sometimes and will do shit like that to us. But we do have to stick with each other. And that's all we need right now if we need to get through that new disaster Desmond found out about."

The blonde woman smiles warmly as she feels Clay's hug tighten a bit, "...Thanks."

"Love you too, Lucy," The blonde man chuckles before pausing, "So... what do you want me to come with you for?"

"Oh, about that," She pauses, "It's Connor."

Clay blinks before he sighs, "...lemme guess why he wants me to talk to him."

"You want me to tell you why it's such a bad idea to talk to him!?"

Clay wants to smack someone's head (preferably, his own older brother's) against something pretty hard to make sure he wasn't joking, "I thought you were gonna ask me to do something else like- call William again since Shaun told me that they're still thinking about what to do with the guy or try to stand in guard to make sure that bastard doesn't do anything stupid to Shaun and Becca with Lucy. Or even better, trying to figure out what the hell Desmond is up to since he's still in Italy and trying to get in tabs with him. But-" He takes a deep breath before asking again, "Con. Just what the hell
makes you think it's a bad idea to talk to that Templar?"

The Native American slightly grimaces, looking slightly down, "I've been thinking about it since yesterday and... well, you guys saw me when we found him."

"You nearly beat up that guy to a pulp, Connor," Lucy shakes her head, "That's one reason why you shouldn't talk to him."

"Another one being anger issues?" Clay grumbles before looking back up at the two, "Look, Con. I know I should be the one who is... well, normally, I'm not the voice of reason between you, Des, and or William whenever you three get into some bullshit argument about family and personal crap, but somehow, I get involved in one way or another-"

"Clay," Connor's eyes narrow, "Tell me if I should talk to that guy or no. You've already listed off two reasons why I shouldn't."

"You mean me and Luc?"

Connor arches an eyebrow, trying to tell them to continue with it.

"...not to mention you have a bunch of anger issues that needed to be resolved."

That manages to get Connor's glare and Lucy trying to tell Clay to shut up, but Clay shrugs it off, "It's true." And he pauses, "You also wanted to murder the guy when you first saw him too, you know. But..." He pauses, "If you do find a way to get that anger issue and your... problems with that Templar guy, then maybe I would suggest you... eh, just... you know."

"...know what?" The said guy asks wryly as he stares at his brother in suspicion, "Just tell it to me straight and don't even dare run around in circles-"

"I think what Clay's trying to say-" Lucy manages to cut in before she gives Clay a glare before turning to face Connor, "-is that maybe, you can do a simple, small talk with the guy and trying not to get pissed off or angry over anything."

Connor stares at the two... before he lets out a defeated sigh, glancing over at Clay and Lucy, "...guess a small talk with him wouldn't hurt. Maybe he'll give us the info that we need about what Vidić and Abstergo are up to."

"That's the spirit!" Clay grins, cupping his brother's shoulders, "I'm sure Desmond would've been glad for you not to try and beat him up."

"Hopefully..." Connor sighs, placing his forehead against his hands, "But I got a request."

Clay and Lucy both blink, looking a bit wary at this before Clay lets out a small sigh (he is worried since this is Connor, out of all people. He is not exactly the best person to be talking to their prisoner in his current state of mind).

"Fine. What is it?"

The Native-American tightens his jaw, "I'm going to be the one who's going to talk to him."

And with that, he opens the door closes it behind the two other blondes.

Couple of seconds later and after hearing a lot of loud noises and angry comments (and some
yelling), Clay and Lucy were about to drift asleep (they're gotten used to these noises) when they hear someone kick the door open. The two manage to scramble in alarm, trying to straighten themselves out when they see a silently seething Connor storming out of the room and making his way back to the general direction of the Animus 2.0. And there was no mistaking it; there was a cut on Clay was about to ask what the hell happened when they heard a loud cursing (courtesy of Shaun).

"Goddamnit, Connor! You could've warned the two of us if you were planning to use that same gas on that guy!"

"Yeah, he knocked the prisoner out again," Lucy groans before the two enter inside the room to see both Rebecca and Shaun trying to get the unconscious prisoner to prop up and lie back down on the bed. Clay winces, recognizing the faint smell of the knockout gas used on the prisoner.

"Did Con use the entire can this time?" Clay winces as he manages to cover his mouth at the lingering smell of knockout gas, "Dude, let's get outta here before we get ourselves knocked out."

The four manage to leave the room after getting the knocked out prisoner into a comfortable position in the bed (that won't leave him in aches or pains) before shutting and locking the door behind them. As soon as they were able to take some deep breaths of oxygen in, Lucy manages to gasp out, "What- what did Connor do?"

Rebecca cringes, "All I know is that the prisoner said something about the Assassins being the bad guys and all and the next thing we knew, Shaun and I were trying to get Connor to calm down and stop beating up the guy before Connor used knockout gas. And that bastard-" She cocks her head towards the door they were standing in front of, "-is really good at angering Connor to no end and insulting us."

"So, we have a homicidal Connor on our hands..." Shaun winces, "...and Desmond's not around to see it."

"Fucking great. Crap." Clay groans, hanging his head, "You sure that it's a good idea to let Connor out of all people talk to that guy? Because, all of us have seen him pissed before and just now. It wasn't pretty."

"So... what would you do if he gets a bit out of control?" The blonde woman asks uneasily, a bit more worried about the prisoner's life than Connor's.

The blonde man sighs, running his hands through his head, "If we have to, I'm thinking of using duct tape to tie up Connor against another chair to try and restrain him."

"We did that before, remember?" Shaun groans, recalling the unpleasantness of that particular memory, "And do you recall how that worked out? Even Desmond had to try and placate him before Connor finally got his mood under control!"

Clay opens his mouth before he winces, "...never mind. Scratch that idea." And then he glances over to the closed room before looking down to see Connor's closed room, "...should we just watch over Connor instead and try to calm him down if anything happens?"

"That seems like a better idea," Rebecca quickly nods, a slight fear setting in within all of them as they all face the knocked-out prisoner (whose arms and legs are spread on the bed), "...though I have to admit, my skills with knocking people out are getting back to me."
"You might need it more, Becca," Clay quips, "It might come in handy."

"...really? When?"

Shaun, Lucy, and Clay points to the prisoner again, causing the black-haired technician to mouth an "Ohhh... I get it" before she nodded.

"Let's just hope Connor doesn't kill him when we get the chance to talk to the prisoner tomorrow."

Lucy winces, with the other three nodding in agreement. And then she pauses, "...wait, do we have any more of those knock-out gases left?"

"Just a couple in my room, why?" Shaun's face then pales, seeing the slightly panicked reactions to her question. The Brit heaves out a groan, shaking his head before cursing about having a certain Miles brother as his roommate, "...I'll hide those buggers to make sure Connor doesn't go near them."

"And the gun," Rebecca rubs her head to soothe for the incoming migraine that was going to run through her head over the various precautions they need to do to handle Connor's wrath while Desmond was gone, "...please."

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**The Day Before that One**

"I'll be right back!" Lucy calls out from the kitchen where she can hear laughter coming from her comrades. Turning around, she makes a brisk walk over to her computer when she double-clicks on the Brotherhood's database for emails and communication.

*It's been a while since I last saw them,* The blonde Assassin sighs, giving a mental groan about the incoming pour of emails that were bound to show up in her box, *Especially since some of them regard grocery shopping and whatever stuff William has emailed us more about in terms of the other HQs in the world...*

She easily types in her passcode and her ID before waiting for the database to load; and lo and behold, a flurry of unread emails appear before her.

"Fantastic," Lucy mutters to herself as she begins to click and look at the email responses that are clogging up the database in her laptop, "Let's see: Shaun, Shaun, Shaun, Becca, Clay, Clay, Becca... Connor, Connor, William, Clay- wait a sec."

Scrolling back up, her blue eyes slightly narrows as she sees William's email address blaring in the screen before she asks, "How the hell does William know my email? I never told him anything about it!"

Double-clicking on the email, she waits for the email to open before her eyes widen, reading the contents of the email. Her face is paling in slight fear as she rereads the email again...

...only this time, her mind is racing with fears and shock.

*I never sent these!*

With a frantic mind, she gets out of the email and manages to type in the email address this 'William' supposedly used for emailing someone who was masquerading as her. And sure enough-

"...shit." Lucy mutters in horror as the results turns out more than what she really didn't want to see.
There were in total, about seven to eight emails sent to the person who calls himself William Miles.

"This- No way," Lucy manages to read the emails that 'William' has sent to her email, "No absolutely fucking way. This- This isn't even sound like William!"

"Of course it isn't. Why would you think we've been wondering about it the entire time?"

Turning around, she sees Shaun, who is looking a bit tight-lipped (and rather pissed off) while a worried Rebecca was with him, holding her iPad as she looks over to see her friend on her laptop. From the looks on their faces, though, it seems as if the two weren't that shocked to see her discover them.

Well... obviously, this is Shaun and Rebecca I'm thinking about, She mentally reminds herself, knowing too well how smart and brilliant these two are; Shaun is the brains and the ones who connects the dots to every event; Rebecca's the hacker, the technician who builds and finds anything.

"How did you know about this?" She asks, her blue eyes slightly narrows as she gently taps on the laptop screen.

"Asano gave Rebecca a flash drive with the copies of those emails, saying that William has gotten these and he was wondering why these sound too much like an observer's report," Shaun immediately responds before Rebecca got the chance to, "We thought that, since it came from your email address..." 

"...that I would've been the one to send them," Lucy finishes the sentence before she relooks at the times of the sent emails before she frowns, "Hey, there's just one problem with this."

"And what's that?" The Brit arches an eyebrow, mentally challenging her to try and refute the claim that since these are from her email address, that she would have been the one who wrote it.

"These times in which I should've written these," Lucy continues, presenting the times that record her email activity, "...I was out on those days. All of the times I was with either Clay and or Rebecca and with Desmond; I didn't even bother to bring my phone or my iPad with me."

That must've gotten some sort of shock from the Brit, "...come again?"

"I just opened my email!" Lucy is beginning to grow frustrated at how somewhat slow Shaun is at understanding things, "And I just got this now! I didn't even look at my emails for a while! And all the times I would've written all of-" She gestures to her laptop, "-I don't know, some bullshit about retesting Desmond and all when we should've been dropped off the radar- I was out with the others! I don't want that to happen to all of us again! I don't want Desmond to get captured by Abstergo, I don't want us to get killed or captured, I don't even want to see any other Templars right now!" The blonde woman sighs in frustration, her hand running through her hair, "I hate this! Why the hell would I do this!? I don't even write to William since I don't know his email!"

Shaun and Rebecca look surprised before-

"See, I told you so!" Rebecca sighs in relief, her hand over her heart, "Thank the fuck God!"

That confused Lucy, "...huh?"

"Well, assuming that you would have done any other action than what just happened a while ago," The red-hair Brit gives a small smile, "There were no indication that you actually thought of a terrible excuse; and those days, we did cross-check with all of our schedules. You are right; you actually
didn't bring in your phone or your iPad or any other electronic devices."

The blonde woman sighs in relief, sagging in her chair as she closes her eyes, "...thank god."

"But still," Rebecca frowns, indicating to the laptop, "William said that those emails don't even sound like anything he could've asked for... who are they for?"

A round of silence was heard as the blonde looks over the emails again... before she gasps.

"These are addressed to someone over in Abstergo," Lucy replies, her face pale as she rereads the emails again, "The way this person responds by mentioning that Desmond needs to be retested again, the fact that he or she know that we still have the Animus; those are things someone in Abetgergo would have asked..." She then trails off, "...wait. I don't think this person knows about how we used the Animus..."

"But it's already bad enough these... emails blabbed too much about what we found through Altair's and Ezio's memories," Shaun grumbles, looking over at the iPad that has the email copies.

"At least we know now that you weren't the one responsible," Rebecca quietly replies as she looks to see the blonde woman relieved, "And there wasn't a mention of the Animus in the emails."

"That's... somewhat of a relief," The Brit grimaces as he sees Lucy looking at him in concern, "...what?"

"Who else knows about these aside you two?" Lucy asks, a frown on her face, "If I know anything from you both, you wouldn't keep all of these to yourselves."

"Me and Con do."

The three look up to see Clay and Connor walking into the office; Clay having an energy drink in hand with his hidden blade strapped on while Connor was just pocketing his cellphone. Shaun, Rebecca, and Lucy were about to ask about how much they have learned-

"We heard it all," Connor replies, managing to sit down at his desk, "While I'm pretty sure Rebecca and Shaun do believe you, along with... Clay," He rolls his eyes as he sees Clay gently taking Lucy's hand and kissing her knuckles, causing said woman to lightly blush, "I'm still not convinced about a few things."

The five of them glance at each other, tension filling the room before Connor takes the iPad from the table and opens to reread the emails once again.

"Lucy, you said you didn't write these emails. You better hold onto your word about it." He doesn't look up, but Lucy sighs in relief, her hand against her heart. But the distrust in Connor's eyes were still there; they narrowed once they see her relaxing.

*The trust issue is still not going away, meaning this might take a while,* She reminds herself of what would happen now these emails have been leaking information to Vidić, *What the heck are we going to do about the Templars if they find out where are?*

"Connor, I was thinking about something," Clay cuts in, "Can you reread those emails again?"

"And why would you want me to do that?" The Native American stares at the others as if they are insane, but from the way Rebecca just shoves her iPad to him, Connor sighs and rereads it again--before his eyes visibly widens as he reads it to himself.
Then he glances to Lucy, "Hey, can you say something for me?"

Lucy blinks, her blue eyes in confusion, "...huh? Say... what?"

"Say that we are working for a computer programming gig and we had just come out of a meeting for trying out something new for a computer and you were to report something that you saw," Connor continues, "And what we witnessed was a program failing because something went wrong, but all of us haven't noticed it. And what went wrong was that the item had a faulty programming or had a virus stuck to it. What would you say?"

"Me?" Lucy ponders for a bit before she responds, "If I would... say it out loud, I would say it as 'Hey, don't you think there should've been a scan with the program or look at the programming?' But, if I wrote it out, I would've said something something like 'If we want this product to succeed and become our number-one best selling item, we should take a closer look at the programming and see if there are any faults like viruses or incorrect programming.' Why?"

"Knew it," Connor's eyes narrows as he looks at the report, "...okay, one more thing. Remember that night Des had those nightmares that wouldn't end?"

Who would forget about that? The blonde woman winces, recalling how sleep-deprived all of them were; including said guy who had the nightmares, I think we canceled an Animus session because of it.

"How... would you have written out this email?" Connor can't help but grimace, but he holds out the version that the person wrote to... Vidic.

Lucy frowns, her eyes narrowing, "You do realize that I'm not that stupid to even try and email Vidic, right?" She grimaces, "And even so-" She takes the iPad, taps a couple of things before she hands it over to Connor, "This is what I actually sound like in my emails!"

Connor takes it and reads out loud, "From... Lucy Stillman. To... ...Rebecca Crane."

Rebecca shrugs as Shaun and Clay stares warily at the two females, "...well, I don't mind. For one."

Connor keeps reading, "...Subject... That One Time With the Italian Ape." He stares at the email before he silently reads the email before looking up at them (ignoring the snickering from the two females and the slightly baffled looks from Clay and Shaun), "...really? You want me to read this without keeping a straight face?"

"Hand me that," Lucy takes the iPad before reading it out loud, "Shaun's going to find some way to get out of going into town this week since he's still complaining about that guy who has tried to murder him and Clay on site from the grocery store. I did ask him if he wanted me to hold his hand and protect him from said guy, but, knowing him, he said: "Fine. But when the brute eats my pancreas you'll be without a lead data manager..." I'm starting to think that maybe it's better if you went with him on the next following trips since it's clear that he and Clay are babies. And well, Connor... well, he's not interested in going without leaving Desmond behind since I'm guessing he has a brother complex." She can't help but have a grin on her face as she hears Rebecca stifling in laughter while Clay, Shaun, and Connor have looks of murder on their faces, "So maybe we should just suggest the two of us go instead? Lucy."

"You think that we're babies!?" Clay manages to exclaim when she hands Rebecca back her iPad as the two woman immediately burst out laughing, "And really! That guy was going to murder us with the way he was talking!"
"It's so true though!" Rebecca cries out, her giggles not stopping as she sees the Brit glaring at her and Lucy, "Oh come on, Shaun! It's better to admit you were scared!"

"Like I said, I would've loved it if I didn't go into town that week- was that the reason why you took so damn long in answering your email that day!?" Shaun tries to change the subject to Lucy, "And I am not a baby!"

"Said the guy who said called that man the 'Italian Ape'," Lucy grins.

Connor glares at Lucy and Rebecca, "...and you two think I have a brother complex to Desmond?"

"Well..." Two pairs of eyes glance away from him as laughter escapes from them. Clay groans and facepalms himself, muttering something about blocking up some sites from Rebecca and Lucy to get their stupid ideas from.

"I don't want to know where you both got that from," Connor shakes his head before sighing, "Well, that confirms something."

"Which is?" Lucy calms herself down to try and hear what he has to say.

"...this isn't the way you write emails." The Native American sighs, "You don't write down a head letter; not even to any above officer. Though, tell me... what do you call Desmond's father?"

"William," She frowns, "Why?"

"It doesn't sound unusual to you?"

"No..." The blonde shakes her head, "...why would you ask?"

Connor presents another email to her, "This one begins with the writer mentioning how... odd it sounded when using William's name. And you don't even find it odd to call our dad William since it's normal around here."

"So finally you realize this!?!" Rebecca exclaims in ire, "Good God. No wonder you're dense! Did you not hear a single word I said about this earlier?"

"Sorry," Connor mutters, still reading through the emails a second time, "I was too busy thinking about something else."

Lucy silently chuckles as she hears the black-haired woman huff and mutter something about Desmond being right about Connor being a stupid block-head.

"One more thing that's been bothering me this entire time," Clay frowns, pausing as he glances over at the laptop, "Since you just read out one of your emails, the way you speak in your email sounds just like you. But these emails sound different." He indicated Rebecca for her iPAs, who gives it to him with the emails in tact.

She blinks, slowly asking Clay, "...what does this mean?"

"This person write as if he's still stuck in some frilly revolutionary war time or something," The younger Miles brother hands the emails over to Connor, who indicated that he wants to read them again, 'The way he mentioned Desmond... he said that he was a 'foolish boy'. And he sounds like he's older than anyone at our age. And the way he mentioned about the Bleeding Effect meant that he doesn't know what... some of the damn benefits... to the Bleed are."
"Meaning if you, Lucy, didn't write it in this... language..." Connor narrows his eyes in silent fury as he faces the emails again, "Who the hell wrote these?"

"I think it's someone who hacked in Lucy's account and wrote those emails?" Rebecca deadpans, "It wasn't that hard to find out."

"But nobody in the Brotherhood knows our passcodes," Shaun frowns, "I don't think even Desmond would be this dense to try and attempt something like this."

"I don't think he even has the time to write emails," Connor's eyes narrow, "...Clay, do you mind?"

"Eh?" Clay was about to ask what when he sees his oldest brother flash his eyes with the eerie gold; the same ones that Desmond would sometimes use for practice (before he complains that his head hurts), "...really? You're using this now why, exactly?"

"Just for-" The Native American freezes before his golden eyes narrow, "...hang on a sec." Standing up, he quickly walks to the door before he turns around to face them, "Don't leave this area. And to let you guys know what color you all are, you'll all blue." And with that, he left the room in a quick sprint, leaving the four others in confusion.

"What the heck was that about?" Rebecca finally asks before she takes her iPad, "Whatever, I don't know what set Connor off."

"So, what are you going to do about your emails now?" Shaun faces Lucy, who sighs.

"Well, for one, I'm going to change my passcode and ask someone from Tech for a new email," She can imagine the annoying pain this was going to take, "And probably going to use my phone for anything important from now on until my new email takes place."

"That sounds like a good idea..." Clay trails off before his eyes narrow, "...wait."

The three Assassins turn to see Clay's expression change from confused to concentration... and one of ire.

"Clay?" Lucy manages to ask before seeing the blonde gesture the three to stop their movements, "...is something wrong?"

"Yeah," Grey-blue eyes narrow as he closes his eyes... before flashing the slight golden color Connor has and looks around. He stops when he reaches to one of the more crowded areas (the one piled up with boxes) as he indicates the others to keep talking.

"Er- Right! Well- wait, actually, I want to know something," Shaun frowns, glaring at Lucy (out of the corner of his eyes, he can see Clay silently making his way towards the boxes, his hidden blade already out and prepared to strike), "What the bloody fuck made you think telling Rebecca about that Italian Ape was a good idea!?"

"Well, I thought it might be a good excuse to place you two in the same shopping trip together one day," The blonde woman grins, "Even Des thought so too when I told him. Oh, and he said he can't wait to see you meet that 'Italian Brute' that you managed to piss off."

"Great! Lovely, now I have two idiots to deal with on my hands!" The Brit receives a glare from Lucy, but that didn't prevent his blush from appearing, "...still it would've been nice, just the two of us."

"Well... were you?" Rebecca blinks, looking at her friend, who grins in return, "Wait, w-why-"
"Because Connor, Des, and Clay were having a standing bet whether or not you were doing it and you both looked like you are having tensions with each other," Lucy shrugs, "...well, you were begging to be their unlucky victims."

Shaun groans, his blush a bit deeper as Rebecca's face flushed full red, "...remind me to get back at them for this one of these days-"

"GOT YOU, YOU BASTARD!"

Clay's angry voice manages to catch their attention and they have a feeling something was off when they began to sprint over to where their fellow Assassin was. After going through the boxes, they manages to see some empty boxes fallen over, some crushed from footsteps... and Clay, who is tightly holding two wrists and holding his hidden blade towards the man's neck.

The man, on the other hand, looked like someone the three don't even recognize; he has dark-grey hair that was tied back in a low ponytail. The jacket he was wearing was black with the dark blue shirt underneath it (it was a button-up); the dark beige pants has on a black belt with the Templar insignia, branding the man's obvious allegiance.

On his left hand, parts of a hidden blade peaked out; the red cross insignia blaring out to the other three Assassins.

"A- Shit! How did you-!" Rebecca narrows her eyes, "Clay, how did you-"

"This fucker was sneaking around this area and thought he can escape," The blonde man's angry eyes narrow at the man's laugh, "What!??"

"Well, well," A disheartened chuckle escapes from the grey-haired man as he glances his eyes towards the five, "You managed to find me. Impressive."

"Shut up and state your name and purpose, asshole!" Clay demands, his hidden blade close towards the man's neck as he tightens his hold on the man's wrists (and forces them on his back, of course).

"Argh! Fine, fine!" The man growls in ire before muffling out his name. The blonde stares before frowning.

"Oi. We can barely hear you." Shaun crosses his arms, impatiently waiting for a response, "Look, you arse. You've caused enough trouble as it already is and right now, we don't want to waste a lot of time trying to interrogate you, finding out what your bloody name is."

"Look, I've already told you who I am, assassins!" The man exclaims in ire, but this time, Rebecca is the one who grabs his wrist and rapidly takes out the band that contains his hidden blade.

"Wait a sec..." Lucy blinks before her face blanches, "This is from the Assassins. How the hell did you get your hands on one?"

A small chuckle, "Resources, miss. You should know, since you were once working under Vidic before you defected-"

He instantly gets a swift kick at his shins before Lucy grabs his hair, forcing him to wince in pain.

"I've been defecting against Abstergo a long time ago, moron," The blonde woman seethes, glaring her blue eyes at the man, "I didn't realize how serious Rikkin and Vidic were about their goals until I finally stumbled across the actual reason why Laila was murdered. And then I recalled that I had a choice between placing the man I love and my friends-" She can't help but feel slightly elated at this,
"-and the men I thought trusted me and believed in my research. I thought I chose the one that will make me a better person. And you know what?" She glares at the man, "I'm actually really happy I stuck with being an Assassin."

"You... traitor-!" The man grunts as Clay pushes his hidden blade close to the man's skin.

"One more fucking word about how you think Lucy is a traitor to the Templars when in reality she was working for us," Clay seethes, very close to stab his hidden blade into the man's neck, "And I'll say my hidden blade 'slipped' into your neck and silenced you before you got the chance to talk-"

"Clay. Let me handle this bastard."

Connor's steel voice cuts through as he walks (borderlining storming) towards where the man is. Clay stares at Connor, ready to ask if it was okay when he pales, seeing the angry look in Connor's eyes.

"What the... Con?"

The eldest brother doesn't say anything before raising his brown-gold eyes to pierce at the man who recomposes himself. The man frowns before his eyes narrows, recognition flickering in his eyes.

"...well, well. If it isn't-"

And Connor's right fist met the man's left cheek, forcing the man to gasp out in pain as the others gasp in horror.

"Shut up," Connor seethes, his eyes still filled with unbound fury, "Do you know how fucking long it took for me to finally realize you were the one responsible for my mother's death?"

"You- Ratonhnhakéton-!" Another punch, this time, it was harder and it landed on the man's stomach. The man groans, some blood spilling from his mouth as he look at the eldest Miles brother,

"Connor!" This time, Rebecca, Lucy, and Shaun run up to see how the man is while Clay stands in front of the man before Connor can land a third powerful punch to the man, "Dude! What the hell's your problem!?"

"Do you know..." Connor growls, his anger still there, "...who this bastard is!"

"Uhh, no. And If Des was here, I'm pretty sure he'd ask the same damn thing," The blonde man glares at his older brother.

"Are you trying to kill him, Connor?!" Lucy exclaims, seeing as the man is coughing up blood, "What do you-"

"That... man, that bastard-" Connor seethes, glaring at the man, who manages to look at Connor with equal amount of ire and fury for beating him up. The Native American takes another deep breath, trying to get rid of his anger before looking at his confused comrades, "...the man responsible for my birth mother's death."

Another deep breath, this time, one laced with anger and fury as he grips tighter, "...my biological father. Haytham Kenway. A Templar."

He doesn't miss the shocked look on everyone's eyes... all but Haytham, who can't help but bitterly chuckles before looking up to see his Assassin son face-to-face.
And now... the current time and situation.

Shaun taps his fingers, waiting for William to respond before he glances over at the others—well, rather at what is happening right now.

It has been a while after the others manage to get their tempers and mood under control (and the man did manage to shut up when Lucy sweetly threaten to castrate a certain part of a man's body); said blonde and Clay are keeping track to see if Haytham would try and escape while Connor is sitting at another chair, his eye at the prisoner and at his comrades to ensure their safety. Rebecca, on the other hand, manages to connect her iPad with the iPhone before looking up at Shaun.

"Do you think there's anyway for Connor to calm himself down by the time Desmond... you know..." She mutters, her voice low for the others not to overhear. There was a look of worry in her face; possibly embarrassment and mortification from her enraged outburst.

Shaun sighs before dropping a kiss on top of her head, "Rebecca, you managed to stop us from having a scream fest worthy of attracting that stupid Italian Ape. Thank you for not making me feel like that brute... and possibly preventing a homicidal killing spree."

"You're welcome," The black-haired technician mumbles as she leans her head against Shaun, "...at least I did something good today."

The Brit makes a mental note for Rebecca to take a break along with him; he is beginning to miss her all-too cheerful mood and personality. Even his snarky side has to agree; a serious Rebecca is making her depressed. He knows a partial reason was because they have gotten no word from Desmond (since he's still over in Italy... at this point, they aren't ready to call it quits, seeing as how persistent Connor is about trying to contact Desmond). The other reason might have been stressing over if Lucy really did write the emails ('What if' scenario would be if she was the one who wrote the emails, Shaun's eyes narrows as he thinks about this a bit further, I will honestly not hesitate to use the gun I have and shoot her on the spot. Even if Rebecca did get furious with me, at least it was for our safety.)

Now, it might as well be trying to find out why Haytham- aka the Templar and well- Connor's birth father- would even try to sneak in as one of them.

"Hello? Shaun?"

William managed to answer the phone, that bloody fucker.

But Shaun wouldn't mention about that to the leader of the Assassins (and not to mention that he never wants to give Desmond, Clay, or Connor the advantage to irk him further), "William, it seems as if our prisoner- as also known as Haytham Kenway-"

"You managed to research about me? Well, this is amusing as hell," The said subject can't help but guffaw, causing Shaun to glare at him, trying to suppress a possible murderous urge.

"...ignoring that," The Brit clears up his throat, "...I'll make this quick. Before Connor decides to kill him before any one of us does, are you going to talk to the guy or not?"

"I'll talk with him," William sighs, muttering something about impatient kids or what not, "...considering the others back here haven't exactly gotten to the final decision of what to do about him either."
Shaun and Rebecca stare at each other, an exasperated look on their faces.

"One other thing," The leader's voice is then lowered into a whisper, "...where's Desmond? Can I speak to him?"

Shit! This time, Shaun and Rebecca face each other, panicking before they turn around, trying to think about an excuse to prevent William from finding out that Desmond was still stuck in Animus limbo (AKA still in Italy), "Well, the thing is-" Rebecca was about to say.

"About that..." Shaun said at the same time-

"So, what does the high and mighty William Miles want to do with a Templar?"

For once, thank God for Haytham butting in. And William's eyes drop down into a glare as his left eye twitches, his face turning into a scowl of ire to the Templar.

"...put that thought on hold. Let me speak to him."

"We'll be glad to," They see Connor lifting up the iPad and iPhone gently before setting it in front of their prisoner, who gives his son a withering stare before glancing at the screen... and a look of amusement crosses his face.

"Well, this is an unlikely scenario, isn't it?" Haytham chuckles with mirth as he glances over at the iPad screen, "...hello, William."

"Haytham." The other man glares at the tied up man, "...orange duct-tape? Really?"

"It was either that or using handcuffs that we can all use a freaking hairpin to get out with, Father," Connor deadpans, causing Haytham to glare at Connor in bewilderment before glaring at William, this time with contempt.

"Well, knew that thing was useless from the beginning..." Lucy sighs, shaking her head as she feels Clay wrap his hand around her shoulder.

"...You're now his son!?" Haytham exclaims, glaring at Connor, who just shrugs.

"And I don't regret it." Connor flatly responds before glancing at the screen, "So, what do you want to talk to Haytham about?"

"I'm pretty sure you got a few questions out from him..." William trails off before frowning, "...right?"

"We tried." Connor, Shaun, Clay, Rebecca, and Lucy deadpan at the same time as Haythan rolls his eyes. The Brotherhood leader groans as he shakes his head.

"Let me handle him then." And a pause, "Connor. Can you take the rest of them out of here for a moment? You'll know when to return to the office."

"Are you..." Connor then nods, seeing the look on William's face as he faces the other four and motions them to leave the room.

For once, even he doesn't know what the leader of the Assassin has planned; he eyes Haytham, who is glancing over to see the others leave before leading them to another area that doesn't have a lot of area for eavesdropping, his eyes narrowed to the screen where William is talking from before
walking towards the other room.

What are you up to, anyway?

Haytham doesn't like where this is headed.

After seeing the five Assassins out of the area (and possible out of hearing distance), the Templar turns to face a grim-faced William Miles, the leader of the group he's trained to go again, the very man who adopted his biological son and trained him to be an Assassin.

"So, you're the one who's been reporting to Abstergo about Desmond?" William's voice meant business, but there was also a touch of anger in them, "Just how much did you see, Haytham?"

"Enough for me to see how useful it was to us," Haytham sneers back, his dark eyes narrows, "Your boy Desmond is really difficult to track down and find. Clearly, while some of the other Templars and Vidic are dimwits, they seem to rely on us more than ever, seeing as how difficult it has been to track all of you."

A small smirk appears on William's face, "One ripple can change anything, Haytham. Know that."

"What the hell do you want from me?" The Templar wasn't pleased at how he was caught in the Assassin's hands, especially at the hands of his own damn son, who was one of his enemies, "It's already bad enough that I've been compromised- not to mention how many times I've been knocked out and feeling something ran over me. So what else could you want from me?"

William's eyes narrow through the screen to the prisoner in front of them.

"All right, since you want it quick and obviously simple, Haytham... What do you know about Eye-Abstergo? Or do you know anything about it at all?"

End Part 16

So, aside introducing Haytham (which you all knew was going to appear in the story at some point), this is how I'm going to leave this...

What's next: Desmond finally gets the chance to look at Leonardo's letter about the Piece of Eden, causing the three Assassins to solve the riddle on the map, which leads to their meeting with the others... oh, and let's not forget that two chapters ago, some of Borgia's guards were killed. Let's just say things get a bit more complicated.
Translated

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: ...no.

Hey guys, it's been a while. I really apologize about the delays and the long as heck update; I have work (my job is tiring me) and then other events took place, then ACIV came out, and then things went wrong in personal life (it's getting better), and things just went wrong that I had to rethink about a lot of things. It's all sorted out (it's getting better); the only thing that is going out of hand is my sleep schedule- which if you are wondering why this chapter is all unusual, it's because I'm just getting back to write how I did before (or at least a bit better) and I am lacking in sleep (so my mind may be a bit deprived of actual rest at the moment).

And about the recent game... I read up on ASC IV. Why the freaking heck am I not surprised to see all of that happening? (That = a certain thing about a certain god that I...ahahahaha. Even I got the description about that guy wrong, but eh).

But the point of this is... this is canon divergence (by a lot) and at this point, I'm going to say this story does not contain the ending to ASCIII. For me, it was really disappointing (for those of you who already know by now what happened) and I'm not going to go on as to why that ending sucked. Though it did provide crucial points for ASCIV and to its story, I just thought the story could have gone a different way.

To sum it up (and I'm pretty sure most of you know at this point that this story is also slight Alternative Universe/Canon Divergence), I've said this at the first chapter, this is a 'what if' story that just began with: What if the Animus was made into a time machine instead of a DNA memory movie projection/experience?

And then it got to this point and I am actually really happy a lot of you have stuck with this story, despite me being gone for a really really long time.

Thank you guys so much.

So, after the warnings and indicators, I won't keep you guys waiting- enjoy!

Warning: Aside the usual (spoilers, OOC moments), this plot is finally moving (slowly), so this means there are small romantic/fluff moments between the three, but not a whole lot. And also, the usual butchered up Italian. ...again (groan).

ADD: Now that I'm rereading this, there are SOME heavy moments. And that this is a pretty slow chapter.

"italics" = Italian, Arabic, any other language OR a flashback (depending on how it is used)

"bold italics" = over the mic and phone

"normal" = English
Part 17: Translated

It was around the early morning when Altair was the first to wake. Silently sitting up, he can see the sun hasn't risen yet (he's too used to this back at Jerusalem) before looking at the figure his left arm is looped around.

Desmond was still sleeping, but his expression is one free of stress as he is much calmer than his expression was yesterday (and yes, that unexpected Bleeding Effect did have some affect too). A soft chuckle overcomes him before he presses a kiss down his habibi's temple; this stirs the young man awake as he sees brown eyes flutter and slowly open before glancing up to see Altair.

"Hey." Altair brushes his fingers against the young man's hair; despite its coarse appearance, his hair was soft and strangely smooth, "You've woken at the slightest touch; I'm surprised."

"Morning," Desmond sleepily murmurs back before adjusting his face to face Altair (after all, the Italian is still sleeping and he's holding onto the American; something Altair was a little miffed about), "...'s always colder in the mornings."

"I can tell," The Syrian can't hold back his smile as he sees the young man shiver before glancing down to see the blanket draped against his waist, "...Desmond."

"Hmm?" Brown eyes meet amber-brown.

"I'm sorry... for what I have said to hurt you." This caused a slight surprise to blossom on the young man's face. The Master Assassin lays back down (but not to sleep) before he lets out a small sigh.

"You said that last night."

"But I haven't gotten your forgiveness."

That might have caught Desmond's attention before he stares at the Syrian, "I... already have. Remember?"

"I know." And this time, a teasing smile appears as Altair swoops to kiss the American, "I just want to hear you say it again."

Desmond's face flushes a bit red and was about to get up when he lets out a small wince, immediately forcing his body back on the bed, "Owowowow... As much as I would absolutely love to, my body is aching." All he heard from that a murmur of 'I told you it would hurt' as the American groans, placing his head back on the pillow to try and sleep off the pain (it never works), "...and yeah." This time, a soft smile appears on Desmond's face, "I forgive you, Altair." And a pause, "...just go gentle on me next time?"

The Syrian can't help but shake in amusement, "Perhaps. It may depend on your behavior today- or perhaps even now, habibi."

"...eh?" And then a soft pink color dusts Desmond's face before trying to bury his head back on the pillow, "I-I- Oh God no! I'm just trying to sleep, Altair! You woke me up!"
“Maybe I shall...” Altair’s lips were curved in a slightly wicked grin, “…persuade you to get awake, Desmond.”

Desmond was about to ask Altair something (the older man could guess that it was alarming (for his habibi) to hear himself suggest something dirty yet really enticing- okay, said American was getting flustered and trying to say that maybe they should wake the hell up and not bother the other man in bed) when he lets out a groan before wincing, feeling someone’s arm tighten his hold on the youngest Assassin, "Owowowow- Ezio!"

“Try not to sweet talk without me present, bastardo,” Ezio’s sleepy voice manages to slightly quash out any secret motives Altair had in mind before swooping down to press his lips against the back of Desmond’s head, "Morning, sleeping beauty."

"If you’re trying to suggest a quick wake up call through what we did last night, I’m aching."

Desmond can't help but grumble, his face getting darker at the moment he mentioned what happened last night. Altair's glare dissolves into laughter as he sits up from the bed as Ezio glares at the Master Assassin.

"...You are going to-"

"I understand, brat," Altair wasn't that stupid- he knows pretty well what medication to get to help Desmond heal- or rather at least get through today with minimum amount of pain, "...also, forget that you need to train." He says this to get the message across to the two men, who are now trying to wake up in bed- well, Ezio manages to ease himself up; Desmond is slightly wincing as he sits up. The Syrian's eye slightly twitched as he sees Ezio's arm lazily draped around Desmond's waist, but it didn't bother him as much-

"So, perhaps you can grab the medication while I can stay behind to help dress tesoro mio, hmm?" Ezio murmurs as Desmond was grumbling something about dressing himself up, thank you very much.

-scratch that. It still bothered him. And yes, he was jealous. What more is there?

Altair's eyes narrow before shaking his head, slightly thrwacking Ezio's head. Much to his satisfaction, he can see the Italian brat cursing as he was rubbing his head.

"...you will never learn, can you, brat?” Altair grumbles, shaking his head.

"Shut up, stonzo!" Ezio mutters back, sending a glare at the elder before scowling, "Damn, your aim is sharp and yet it still hurts..."

"Would it make it feel better if I would just dangle you from the window then?"

"FUCK YOU!"

Desmond just chuckles, this time feeling a lot better than the past three days before he laughs, "C-Come on, you two. Can’t we just go and get it together?"

That reaction didn't go missing to the other two Assassin, despite the glares they are giving each other, are just relieved things are back to (somewhat) normal.

It was amazing how much improvement Desmond has presented; from being a clumsy novice-status
Assassin to what he is now; a more experienced Assassin. When Altair suggests that he duels with him with the sword, even the elder was amazed at how faster and accurate Desmond was (despite Altair being the one who won in the end, he comments on how on par the American was at blocking and knowing the attacks that Altair was using). Ezio was just relieved to see the young man's skills becoming sharper; at least Desmond can take down a couple of people in just a few strikes.

...even though said American was still scowling over at the occasional complaining about the lower half of his body (and how it was aching... for a bit), even after he took the medication needed to ease the said pain.

On Ezio's behalf, he was impressed as to how much more agile Desmond was in hand-to-hand combat. Because Ezio was more used to close quarter combat, the two managed to get into a spar while Altair was preparing the weapons for actual usage. In turn, the Italian has observed that maybe some of Desmond's techniques of fighting could possible help him. Dodging and delivering quick, sharp and accurate jabs before taking down the opponent was something he congratulated Desmond on utilizing in the sparring session. At the same time, some of Desmond’s unorthodox techniques have caught Ezio off-guard, but once he realized Desmond's pattern of fighting, he manages to overcome him regardless.

The little novice has finally begun to spread his wings.

Aside his training, that wasn't what brought the three Assassins to Leonardo's place; he has heard from one of Leonardo's messengers about how his friend has some news with the Brotherhood-lately the artist has been a bit more proactive into helping them out. It was a good thing for Leonardo to aid them; it was good to have some guidance and try to dispel any sort of spell the Borgia had over Venice (had they have one in the first place) and throughout all of Italy.

To be honest, it was a bit nerving that it took Leonardo very little time to figure out what was really going on with Desmond's predicament (Ezio finally got over that Desmond has consulted his good friend without trying to ask him first- well, his tesoro did have a really good reason for trying not to talk to Ezio first). But the translation has been a bit overdue- that was aggravating Ezio and Altair for a while. Desmond seems to be very patient with this- had he encountered this before?

The Italian made a mental note to ask Desmond much later as to how the time traveler managed to create a great well of patience.

So far, Ezio hears about the news of what the other Assassins were doing; their actions aren't being obvious, but it was too risky to meet up in person, especially after Desmond's bout with the Borgia guards yesterday.

His uncle and Niccolo had now gotten wind of the whispers about a group of the Borgia soldiers that were now killed in the plaza- their reactions were pretty much what Altair would expect from novices (pretty much being pissed off was one), but they did also congratulate on whoever did a good job on taking down a few of Borgia's men in such a discreet manner. The Florence Assassin has a suspicion that La Volpe and Paola placed in a good word on Desmond's behalf- rather, covering it up. Leonardo's mouth was tightly shut when Ezio had asked his friend about this issue-though he did see a small grin on the artist's face.

That doesn't mean guards should be shied away from the Brotherhood, however. Antonio and Teodora are now much more alert; Antonio through his group of thieves and Teodora through the goodwill of her ladies. Desmond was mistaken for Ezio, however, which was something that made the two Assassins more concerned; if this was the case, then both Ezio and Altair have to be careful.

Which pretty much says that all of the Brotherhood and their allies have to be on guard, especially in
Florence.

"...and now?" Ezio wanted to know what Mario's news to him were; the fact that he wasn't there yesterday to receive his news from Paola did try to relay (and that he and Altair overheard Desmond talking to Leonardo), "What did my uncle want to tell me?"

"Ah, the message Paola was trying to get ahold of you for." The artist pauses in his writing before continuing, "They did indeed mention about a meeting tonight over where you were made to be an Assassin," Leonardo nods in confirmation as he looks up from another translation of the Codex pages Ezio has provided, and Altair has been nice (begrudgingly) enough to help the artist. Desmond had requested for some paper from the artist and was doing something at the other work desk. Ezio makes a mental note to check on the young man later.

"I'm guessing my uncle finally has an idea where the Piece of Eden is in the Frari," The Italian sighs in slight relief before glancing over to Leonardo, who just shrugs, "...or not, I assume." His relief swiftly changes into a groan as he sees his friend's uncertain expression.

"Keep in mind what happened when your scuffle attracted the attention of the head of Borgia over the Apple," Leonardo frowns, gently tapping his quill pen on one of his open sepia ink bottles, "And the consequences of it. Do you think Borgia would even try to allow an opportunity for a possible location for another Piece of Eden would pass?"

Ezio opens his mouth before letting out a grunt of ire, knowing too well that this was one of the other (if not aggravating) reasons Borgia had planned to take over where the Assassins were bound to be, "...knowing that bastard, he would even be inhuman and try to take one of us prisoner and torture us until we speak."

Leonardo hums as he continues to write before handing Ezio two papers, "Here, another Codex page. Just wait until the ink dries before you can roll it up. The page that I translated from is behind the one I wrote."

"Grazii, mi amico," Ezio quickly scans over the translated page before looking at the original page before sighing, glancing over to Altair, who is now leafing through some pages of one of the books Leonardo has lying around in his tables. At least I am grateful Altair wasn't an oaf who doesn't understand how to write in various languages. Well, His frown grows slightly as he glances over at the wooden box that he took out earlier (the one that holds the damned Apple), ...with the help of that blasted orb.

He can't help but wonder if the Apple of Eden is truly a curse since it made a horrible reaction to Desmond... or if it was a blessing because of the vast amount of knowledge that it held- preparing whoever wields it for a world of technology and 'magic' that will be created beyond mankind's beliefs.

The Florence Assassin sees that Desmond is still concentrated on whatever he is doing with the sheet of paper and ink (What is Desmond doing? He wants to come over and see what the young American is up to), but a tiny blurb in the translation caught his eye... before he groans and walks back to Leonardo and tapping on his shoulder, which makes the artist look up.

"You are writing in that absurd writing of yours." Ezio frowns, not liking the fact that he can't even read the writing (as beautiful of a craft it is), "...for the fifth time while you are translating the Codex."

"Ah, mi dispiace, Ezio," Leonardo grins, obviously not sorry at all to see his friend confused, "Would you like me to tell what I wrote?"
"Forget it, I gave up that endeavor long ago when I tried to translate it. It brings me a massive headache beyond all belief." The Italian Assassin glances slightly over before grumbling (which catches Desmond and Altair's attention), "At least it's much better than the handwriting of the elder's."

Despite how low he was trying to say that comment (and nearing Leonardo squawk in horror before going back to his writings), Altair's dark amber narrow at the comment as he faces Ezio, "...what was that, brat?" And then, with a promise of murder, "I dare you to repeat what you just said."

"About- Oh... about your handwriting." Ezio pauses before grinning, "Like I said- it's much worse to read the writing of one who has been drunk and decided to write a decree of order."

Desmond just wants to smack his head against the table after hearing that. Ezio was just digging himself deeper in that grave of his, isn't he?

"...WHAT?" Altair growls.

"I can barely read your variation of our native tongue," Ezio continues, a smirk in his face, "Though I could barely make out a few words of that chicken scrawl of yours-"

The American closes his eyes, wanting to get away from attempt number hundred (he might be overestimating) from Altair wanting to get his hands and strangle Ezio. He's just as terrible as Clay on hyper mode... That, and Clay's mental grave was much deeper than the Italian's. Shaun and Connor might have told Desmond they have a list of the different insults and pranks Clay has pulled on them.

He just hopes Ezio makes it out alive.

"And you're calling your handwriting legible?" This time, that was Leonardo who can't help but get a word in as he sees Ezio glaring and Altair's eyes growing a bit amused. Desmond has finally looked up and blinks in confusion, seeing how there was already another banter in the area, "Whenever I read whatever notes you send, I can barely translate it without having Teodora present. I wonder half the time if-"

"SHUT UP, LEONARDO." Ezio's face is turning slightly red when he hears Desmond snickering, "One more word about it-

"Ah, so the brat isn't any better than me. Well, well, I wonder who is the better scholar of the group?" Altair is now smug and is smirking at this new relation (despite the small hint that he wants to murder Ezio was still there and that he's going to enjoy every minute of it). The Italian's red face is growing darker before shooting a death glare at Atlair, wanting the older man to shut up.

"At least Leonardo's handwriting is more legible than yours!" Ezio manages to growl out before trying to glare daggers at the artist, who is shaking in laughter.

Desmond manages to get across where the three are, trying his best not to laugh. Okaaay I think we reached the limit point. He can see Ezio and Altair's right arm twitching to unsheathe and stab each other with their hidden blades.

"Hey, l-look, if it makes you feel any better, Ezio," Desmond places his hand on Ezio's shoulder to try and calm down the Italian, "My handwriting sucks- well, when it comes to any other language. I don't think you would want to see it. And," The American sees both Assassins opening their mouths to speak- "Let's not destroy anything in here... please?" He waits until the two men sighs, their shoulders sagging away any sort of murderous attempt onto each other.
"Hnm. But only because you requested it," Altair sighs, seeing the concerned look in Desmond's eyes. Then they turn to the Florence man, who was holding his breath until sighing, his anger going away in one breath.

"Fine. Only for you, tesoro," Ezio mumbles before sheepishly grinning at the youngest Assassin before walking over to begin reading the translated Codex page. Desmond sighs in relief before talking over to Altair and gently patting his arm to calm him down.

"Do me a favor and try not to get any killing intent on Ezio today..."

"I will try my best, Desmond. But I can't honestly guarantee that I will strangle him if he insults me again." The Syrian grimaces before turning his attention back to the book he was reading. Before Desmond releases his hand from the elder's arm, Altair gently lifts Desmond's hand and brushes his lips against the palm, making the American blush. "Just don't harm yourself with those today."

Ah. The hands. They were still bandaged- the two managed to work with each other on that.

"R-Right," The time traveler manages to squeak out before rapidly walking over to Leonardo, who has begun to resume his work in the now quiet room, "...hey, you're writing in that code of yours."

"I know," Leonardo nods before sighing in relief, "Thank you for preventing another tempest take place in this room. It was similar- well, perhaps I was underestimating it- about to be worse when the two were in yesterday."

"I had a feeling that was the case..." The American grimaces, having a feeling that their 'surprise' gift for them might have came as the result from various disagreements and arguments. His eyes take a quick sweep over at the notes before seeing the pictures that were associated with them, "...wait, aren't these your artist notes?"

"Oh, yes, those," Leonardo nods, not looking up from his writing, "So that blasted so-called artist Michelangelo will not understand my secrets and how I create the things I call art and my inventions. It's honestly a frustrating thing, having to deal with the gossip and secrecy in this city."

Desmond can't help but agree as his eyes take in the notes-

-wait.

His eyes retake in the notes written in Leonardo's code, his brown eyes looking over at it before he frowns, noticing that it looks really familiar- and no, it doesn't have to do with when he was reliving Ezio's memories. It was something else, something that bugged him about the language it was written in...

*I have seen this before...

"Hey... Leonardo?"

The artist doesn't say anything, but Desmond doesn't care- *Where the hell have I seen this before? I think I have recently*... "Quick question. Do you write this code with your left hand?"

"Si, and it took a lot of practice to do so."

Desmond's mouth tightens into a thin line before closing his eyes, trying to think of where the heck he would've seen that type of writing before. *No, definitely not the Codex translations, not from Shaun's crap nor the others, not from the internet, but it was on something that looks like an old piece of paper*...
"...Desmond?" Leonardo frowns when he doesn't hear a response from the younger man as he puts his pen down, "Hey, are you all right in there?" He knows the concern catches Altair's attention as his eyes look up from the book the oldest Assassin was reading; Ezio's eyes quickly face Leonardo as if he's asking if Desmond wasn't falling under another one of his spells.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm... just thinking for a sec," Desmond murmurs in response, obviously not paying attention as to how suddenly anxious and tense the room got. His mind was still trying to think, wondering if he has seen the backwards and written in reverse code before-

*The inscriptions. On the map Altair had with him.*

Desmond's eyes widen suddenly before he glances over to Leonardo in alarm, who is confused before asking the American what was wrong-

"Leonardo, can I ask something?"

The blonde artist nods, a bit worried about the younger boy's sanity for the moment, "Go ahead. What is it?"

"Do you remember the map we gave you a while back?" Desmond pauses, "You said you managed to translate the inscription."

"I did... and I did mention what was in there," Leonardo glances over the two Assassins, who manage to pay attention to the conversation, "It speaks of what the item really is."

"...really?" Desmond blinks before pouting, "And you guys didn't tell me what the heck it was!?"

"We would, except we were distracted," Altair was the one who replies, causing Desmond to slightly jump where he was standing before glaring at the Syrian. Ezio has joined his friend as he pulls up one of the artist's stools and is sitting next to the table, "The Piece of Eden that... it is confusing. Are you sure you want to know what it exactly is?"

"Just say it," Desmond mutters, a bit more impatient as his mind keeps reeling in on the past events in his mind pertaining to the said missing Piece of Eden, "...at this point, nothing could surprise me anymore." ...I hope that's the case.

"It's supposed to be... an object that changes its appearance upon contact," Altair tries to recall what the artist told the two that day before glancing over at Leonardo to confirm, which he got (in the form of a nod), "It is supposed to possess some sort of mind of its own- that it chooses its owner instead of the owner choosing it."

That got another reaction from the time traveler as he groans, slapping his head against his hand, "Fucking hell- another Apple!? I'm getting sick of those things!"

A small laugh escapes Ezio, "No, tesoro, it isn't the Apple." One questioning look and then Ezio responds, "This item is also known to other people as a stone, an elixir, or a liquid."

"...ha?" Desmond's eyes are slightly wide, hearing this new bit, "...what the hell? A Piece of Eden as a liquid?"

"It's not possible, as all forms of the Pieces of Eden are all solid and could be used as weapons," Altair's eyes narrow, knowing pretty well that he had held the cold, solid and heavy mass in his hands and it was real, "What does this all have to do with the inscription?"

The American grabs his bag from the table and begins to rummage through it before fishing out the
folded up map and gently opening it before presenting it to the three other men in the room, "...here." His finger points to the inscription that was written on the left side of the map, "This. The writing looks similar to Leonardo's code."

It was there- all backwards and written from the right to left. The blonde artist's eyes widen in alarm as he gently takes the map and slowly looks at the inscription before his eyebrows twist in confusion. Ezio looks over his friend's shoulder before his eyes widen.

"Merda. It is like that writing."

Altair is also looking over at the inscription before narrowing his eyes to Desmond, "...how did you recognize it as such?"

The American sighs, glancing over a look of forgiveness to the artist, "Well, the thing is... in my time, we have uncovered these notes after Leonardo's death and this was long after"

"...If what you say is true," Leonardo stands up to find something from his desk before fishing out a small shining item in his hand, "Then perhaps you can try to reread it for me."

Desmond nearly falls off his position before looking at the artist incredulously, "W-What!? But I thought it's in Italian! Wasn't that how you got the description of the Piece of Eden?"

"I did, but it has altered by itself for some unusual reason, and I do not understand how it did that all on its own." The blonde artist deadpans, handing a small mirror to Desmond, "However, despite the amount of knowledge your comrades have given to me regarding the language that is now modernized as English," He points to the inscription that was unreadable before, "It would be much better to read it for yourself."

The American blinks, taking a moment to register what Leonardo just said before he manages to ask, "Altered by itself?"

The artist nods.

"...what?" Even the two Assassins were starting at the artist as if Leonardo grew a second head and conversed with it as it was normal.

"The inscription changed to what it was from before." Leonardo emphasizes again in Italian, "Before, it was fully scripted in Arabic and in Italian- the way you presented it to me and when I managed to hold onto it after we met with the Brotherhood for the first time. Now," He gently pressed his finger at the inscription again at the map, "After I handed it to you, Desmond, the inscription has somehow altered the language into the English language. I can't read it- even if it is now written in the same code I have always done in my notes."

Desmond gapes before looking over at the map and shifting his eyes back to Leonardo.

"Paper and maps don't change anything by itself."The youngest Assassin can barely believe this.

"I know."

"Are you sure that you're awake?"

"I had plenty of sleep, thank you very much," Leonardo deadpans, a bit offended about being asked if his sanity was still sane (as compared to other people like say some insane monk wanting to begin a cult- which wasn't unusual in Venice).
Ezio manages to read over the shoulder before his face twist in slight confusion, trying to mouth out some words before grimacing and looking up, "He's right. I can't read this either- what the hell is this- this nonsense?"

The Syrian picks up the map and slowly reads about one sentence before handing the map over to Desmond, who reluctantly takes it, "Even I can't understand a single word."

Desmond stares at the older man before looking back at Ezio and Leonardo, who nod at the same time, and then he looks at the map (his right hand still has the small mirror). The more times he reads the inscription, his face contorts from confusion to ire to just pure shock.

...oh god. They're right.

He pales as he slowly holds the mirror edge to his right, the inscription that was once unreadable he can read with his very own eyes. It was handwritten to cleverly look like someone from the medieval times has written on the map; it was much shorter than what it looked like when Desmond first retrieved it.

Come to think of it, didn't that inscription look blurry to him before? Could it be the same one that Leonardo translated from and handed to Desmond earlier? (Most likely no. Desmond mentally reminds him to check the translated Italian version Leonardo gave him).

Whatever, think about that later, Desmond narrows his brown eyes as his eyes read the now readable inscription, this time as a whisper to himself:

'To the bowl of the savior of the Mother,

A single drop of the liquid that gives life.

The stand where the Mother stands opens

For the ones who have the eyes of the Eagle

May the Immortal Stone be safe in the Chosen's hands'.

"Got it," He turns to face the two Assassins and the artist before placing down the map and handed the mirror back to Leonardo (who swiftly places it back in his hiding place), "Do you have something I can write with?"

"What about what I gave you?" Leonardo arches an eyebrow in confusion, but Ezio hands the American a scrap of paper and a pen, which Desmond takes and quickly writes it down in English (Maybe that's how they can understand it, He thinks) before straightening himself up, slightly pushing the translated inscription to the three.

"Here. This is what it reads."

It was Altair who first takes the inscription- he can read it, which also confused Desmond since the Syrian should not have learned to speak and read English this fast (the same for Italian as well).

...Wait.
The Immortal Stone?

Desmond blinks, frowning to himself, *I've... heard of that name before.*

"...The Immortal Stone. It does bring a familiar ring to my memory," Ezio pursed his lips, his eyes narrowing as he glances over at the books on the shelf, "But I do not know what exactly it is."

"It's just more confusing for me," Altair holds the inscription in his hands before looking at Desmond, "Habibi, are you sure you don't know what this means?"

The time traveler shakes his head, "...no. It sounds familiar for some stupid reason, but I don't know what the hell this... really means-"

He finds himself thinking about a certain conversation that stuck out in his mind, replaying by force in his mind-

"There are already several Pieces of Eden found in the time you are in," The wolf-helmed man explains as the images of the Apples, a golden Ankh, a Golden Sword, various Crystal Skulls and orbs, a jade bracelet, a scepter, a ring-like object, the Shroud, and the Stave of Eden are shown to Desmond, "I'm pretty sure you have seen these items."

Desmond nods, not sure what to say.

"There are some that were claimed to be the Pieces of Eden, but they are not," Aita presents the images that Desmond saw: The Chalice, the Ark of the Covenant, the two stones that contain the Ten Commandments, the robes Jesus wore. From what he recalled, the supposed items that were associated with the prophet were not the Pieces of Eden (with the exception of the Shroud). Looking at the images again, he blinks, realizing that one other item wasn't present.

Wait, why wasn't the supposed lance in there? Desmond was about to ask, but he decided to keep his mouth quiet. He doesn't see Aita glancing at him before a small smile appears on his lips.

"Do you have something you want to ask?"

The time traveler hesitantly nods, "Yeah... what are you trying to say?"

Aita then projects the map that Desmond had before he gave to Leonardo to translate, "This. I presume you already know of its purpose?"

"Yes..."

"Then what I am here to tell you," The man from the First Civilization's eyes harden into a concerned one, "...is the Piece of Eden that is located in this area is one of those you mankind believe to be a legend."

"And that's in Venice?"

Aita falls silent before nodding, "It was hidden for a very good reason... it used to be in Jerusalem before someone used it; the potent effects on it were too much for a normal man. Only it chooses who can wield this particular item."

The time traveler frowns, "A few people can- wait, what the hell is the item then?"
"He hears a floating chuckle, "Impatient, aren't you?"

"It's better than saying a riddle and running around in circles!" Desmond grows exasperated, "What the hell is it? And why tell it to me? Why not to... Altair or Ezio or anybody else?"

"Why?" Aita's eyes change from amusement to concern in an instant, "Desmond... you are the key to saving the world from ruin."

**Oh GOD. Like I've never heard that one before,** He groans, "Not this 'save-the-world' bullcrap again-"

"I am not finished," He looks up to the First Civilization man again, "**You** are the only one who can wield the Piece of Eden. Not even the member of the Cross can wield such artifact as powerful as this one."

His eyes slightly widen. **That** part of the conversation with Aita when he got into a terrible Bleeding Effect while he was with the Brotherhood...

It begins to make sense in the young man's mind now. There was something, however, that made the poor Assassin confused.

**But the inscription clearly states that the item isn't a physical weapon- so it can't be the Lance of Longenius!** Desmond wants to go back in that damned Nexus area again, wanting to demand to Aita to tell him once for all what the item really is- since it's not a physical weapon (this really wasn't the case- nor was the idea of return to the Nexus a pleasant one). **So- what the fuck is it supposed to be!?**

"Desmond?" He feels a hand on his shoulder, causing him to see Altair looking worried, "Are you all right?"

"Huh? Oh... just thinking about something," The American quickly manages to save himself from explaining to Altair that he was rethinking the conversation he had with Aita. Looking at Altair, he sees how concerned and unconvincing the dark amber eyes look as they pin him down with his stare. Desmond shudders at the thought of Altair pinpointing through his dodges at the question.

"I see."

**The Syrian quietly murmurs before taking his hood down and placing his forehead against the back of Desmond's head, "...I will be honest, habibi. While helpful your translation was, it is not helpful in terms of where it is located in that church- it is called the Frari, was it?" He makes a face, trying his best to mouth out the Italian Church name correctly (only to slightly butcher at it).**

Desmond lets out a small chuckle, a small smile gracing his face, "Hey, you got it right. Slightly."

Altair lets out a small chuckle, closing his eyes as he gracefully pulls Desmond closer to his warm body, his chin now placed on the younger boy's right shoulder, "At least I am improving."

The room has now filled itself with murmurs from both Ezio and Leonardo; the two were obviously debating about something as they also look at the map and the scrap that held the translated inscription. The American blinks, slightly shifting to at least look at Altair and ask him what was going on.

"They are debating whether or not to tell the Brotherhood- it depends on them since they know more about the Italian Brotherhood better than we both do. It might... take a while." Altair replies, a bit solemn in his words, "...despite us being Assassins and our loyalty as Assassins, Desmond, we both are outsiders."
He has a point.

The American slightly nods, feeling a bit left out, even if he isn't alone, "...I guess that's how you felt when you first came to be an Assassin, huh."

He sees Altair look at him, his eyes in slight surprise as his mouth is about to inquire what did his habibi mean; Desmond can't help but wonder if catching Altair off-guard (with his hood off and all) is a good thing. Then again, he can feel his face flushing red as he begins to look away, a weak laugh escaping him.

"Sorry. I... I thought it might be because of the way you were treated back at Masyaf and... argh, forget I" I HATE YOU VERBAL DIARRHEA."

"No, it's okay." And this time, his left hand is being covered with Altair's rough left hand, warmth instantly enveloping his cold hand. It does not help about the way he was speaking in English even-damn. Desmond can't help but wonder how long did Altair's voice sound just as lulling and ...damnit, he can't help but admit that the Syrian's voice was freaking sexy. And as it went, he hears Altair chuckling with a teasing tone, an amused smile on his face, "You seem to do this every time I speak like this to you."

"...h-hey!" The younger man squirms in his position before groaning, "Damn. You just killed the serious mood!"

"Just finish what your thought was, habibi." Altair murmurs, bringing Desmond back to the previous question, "I want to know."

Desmond blinks before sighing, "...if you even get at least bit offended, I'm going over to ask Ezio what's going on." He lets out a squawk as he feels his hug being slightly tighten.

"Forget that child for once." A huff of indignation, "I just want some time with you."

The American looks at the other man in slight surprise, this time seeing a light blush dusting over Altair's face- wait, was that a pout? A chuckle escapes Desmond before placing his right hand over Altair's left (the one that's around his waist), "...well, I honestly don't know what you were really going through then, but with your... father being executed and your mother gone at an early age and knowing how much Al Mualim had..." He trails off, but Altair urges to continue, "...used you, I really don't like saying that, but still... he was your father figure..."

He takes on a sigh, "You've really went from being an outside to one of the greatest leaders in all of Masyaf. I don't know how you managed to keep it up, knowing that you had a lot of enemies, including those really close to you." He subconsciously squeezes his grip on Altair's hand, "I can't help but really want to help you so much- especially when you had to begin again from bottom up. But you know, there really was a time when I really wanted to smack you from being too aggorant and prideful."

That got a slight jerk- Altair looks at Desmond in surprise.

"That was around my age- well, a bit younger than me, but honestly, I wanted you to pay attention to what you were doing." Desmond replays the moments that Altair had gone through while he was witnessing everything in the Animus- from the childhood to the arrogance Altair wore when he was rising the ranks for the first time to the entire mission that went all wrong to retrieve the Apple of Eden in Solomen's Temple, "...and at the same time, I honestly thought you were an asshole for
putting Malik through the grief of losing his brother. And for Abbas... I wanted him to turn out for the better, but he was worse off later on, so I didn't even bother. But the thing that annoyed me a lot was you were one horrendous hypocrite. You managed to break all three codes and still managed to try and fend for yourself... God, you were worse than me. Even I was careful enough to cover my tracks at your age then...

"But I guess my thought of you changed when you actually began to realize what you were doing- when you began over again. When you also begin to listen- well, that was when you actually got better as someone I would admire." Desmond pauses for a second, "...well, at least in terms of who you are as a person. In some way, you also did some things that were actually reasonable. I can understand what made you do the things you did- and to be fair," He lets out a small chuckle to himself, "Al Mualim was a bastard. And what he did was pretty selfish himself- wanting peace and yet craved power by using the Apple. He also did create a group from the Assassin who thought he was doing a good thing... and you did too. You managed to make a lot of people loyal to you. I actually was surprised- you did use the Piece of Eden pretty well, considering that you didn't go off the deep end.

A pause, "In a way, I admire that part of you; being a protector to the people, to the Assassins. You also changed- Malik began to view you as a brother. The Order looks up to you now. You even managed to make peace with the King of England during the Crusades." He feels himself smiling, looking up at the ceiling in the room, "You're really different from me, Altair. Yeah, I hated you when I first saw you in the Animus- a bit like me, too. But then you began to think more, understanding the reasons why we do the things we do, and better at what you do- at your craft as an Assassin. You... are more human than you think. You also managed to make yourself included, even though like you said before, we are outsiders. But you're always the influence of a lot of people."

He can feel the Syrian breathing, but he clearly wasn't saying anything. So to Desmond, it might be that either he is still paying attention after Desmond said all of that, or that he was sleeping. Letting a sigh, the American continues anyway.

"I envy you, you know. From being someone isolated to a leader," Desmond sighs, closing his eyes, "But know what? I actually admire that about you... you're everything that I'm not. You got there with your own efforts. I just see things the way they are. You... You're incredible. That's it. That's all there is to it." He pauses, beginning to feel a bit sore where the Syrian was holding him and his hands are beginning to feel a bit heavy, "...Altair?"

The arms around his waist tighten him enough (not to choke him or suffocate him), but he can feel the man behind him shaking. Desmond was about to ask if said man was laughing-

-hang on. The wet spot that suddenly formed at his right shoulder- were those from tears? His breathing got a bit harsher too...

"H-Hey..." Desmond is now the one stammering. Normally, he was the one breaking down and other people would comfort him- hell, even Connor of all people broke down at one point and Desmond had to comfort him (would saying absolutely nothing and just holding his crying older brother constitute as comfort?) before said guy calmed down.

And another thing- aside very rare moments in Altair's life (that Desmond would rather not even think about touching a nerve on, thank you very much), not once did he see said Master Assassin break down from within his own walls of his cold, alert, and calculating personality.

...so what now?
It didn't exactly help that Ezio is still conversing with Leonardo- okay, the definite stares and glaring at Altair (as if he wanted to rip those arms off and take Desmond for himself) were most definitely not helping. Leonardo was just pretending the two were not having a moment in his studio (in fact, he can tell Leonardo is deliberately engaging Ezio in a conversation that might involve something that could've interested his friend. Desmond makes a mental note to thank Leonardo by giving him a handmade sketchbook as a gift just for all of the trouble the artist had to deal with).

Desmond blinks as this time, he can hear Altair mumble something that was very incoherent through the thickness of his- breakdown? ...Atlair. Crying?

...shiiiiiiitshitshitshit- The American slightly pales, not even expecting this. In fact, he was very much unprepared for that sort of reaction from the very last person he expected to happen.

"Altair?" Desmond asks, a bit hesitant to even dare ask 'Are you okay?' (From experience, that question seemed to strike some sort of nerve in select people. It seems this was the worst question to ask a powerful Assassin right now).

The mumble was in very incoherent Arabic.

Great. Thank you, Arabic 101 for telling me what I can't understand.

"Um." Desmond can't help but pause, getting a bit more awkward as to how the hell do deal with this, "...do you want-" Another shudder and then the embrace shifted to a tigther (although more comfortable) hold, "...never mind." He sighs, looking really worried, especially since he can feel that part of the shoulder getting damp (not that he really minds) and Altair just... well, this is the Master of Assassins in Masayf he's dealing with. And he thought he really didn't have this side within him. It wasn't until he hears the Master Assassin talk (more coherently) that causes Desmond to jolt in alarm.

"Desmond. I wish you were there in person when I first began as a novice."

...eh?

His eyes manages to shift over to see Altair burying his head in Desmond's shoulders in confusion.

"A lot of those events... did bring me to ruin. It also brought me into question about my actions." He can hear a shaky sigh, "You were there to see me at my worst, as my silent witness. I was afraid of what you would say about it- I thought there was a part of you that would hate me because of it. I didn't think you had all of that in mind..." Another shaky sigh. This time, Desmond can feel the elder trembling; he gently squeezes the older man's hand to comfort him- which works as he can feel Altair loosen up a bit, "How... can you think of me like this?"

Wasn't that the question that any Assassin would ask for their loved ones? Even he hears most of the people in the hidden HQ ask this everyday- even Clay, Connor, and Lucy would ask him this, since they were his friends, his make-shift of a family. Rebecca and Shaun don't take down lives, but they do have some sort of indirect involvement. He can recognize this- in fact, it's been something he knows all too well: guilt. He lets out a silent sigh, knowing pretty well the response to this- he's said this couple of times to himself.

"We're human, aren't we?" Desmond murmurs in response, "I make the worst amount of mistakes. And then I learn from it, making a few better decisions, but there are still some to be done. You're... honestly like me, you know." The young man softly smiles, gently kissing Altair's ear, which did also begin loosen his tight grip on the American, "You're a much better person in the end. That's what made me admire you, Altair."
"Desmond..." He can see the older man lift his head from Desmond's shoulder to face him. He sees his face, which was tear-stricken and the amber eyes were slightly red. His light brown hair was a bit messed up, but it can be easily smoothed out. His voice, normally stoic and serious, was thickened with emotions.

"Are you okay?" The American quietly asks, gently bringing his left hand- which was now freed from Altair's near death grip earlier, "...feeling better?"

"I am feeling better, habibi." A soft smile graces Altair's face as his forehead meets against Desmond's, "Thank you, ya malaki al'ghaliya... no, ya hobi al'ghaliya." When the young boy's face blushes, his face grows a shade darker when he feels the Master Assassin shake with laughter, "...I will give you a hint, if you want to know what it means. Al'ghaliya means precious."

"Precious-" And then Desmond's face grows a bit darker, "...at least you didn't call me precious 'fledgling'."

Altair smiles before gently kissing Desmond again, "...Desmond. Ana ahebak."

"D-Dammit, Altair..." The young man was going to say that he still hasn't found out what those words mean (he still recalls that Ezio got irritated when he asked the Italian that before he got- FORGETTHATIMAGE DAMMIT DESMOND! He mentally screams at his mind to shut the hell up) when he feels the Syrian trying to shift up. Desmond allows Altair to sit up before grimacing at the pain from a combination of sitting for too long and from last night. Said Master Assassin on the other hand was stretching before finding a wash cloth and a pitcher of water before quickly rinsing and drying his face to get rid of any traces of any tears, "Are you going to be okay for the rest of the day?"

Altair nods, allowing his hood to stay off as he walks over to Desmond, "I will be all right now." This time, he whispers to the young American, "...we'll talk about this later, habibi."

Which, for Altair, means that he was going to find out how the hell the person he cares for the most managed to easily tear apart the solid walls he has built up to prevent any sign of vulnerability. Even Malik wasn't this perceptive.

He can see Desmond's burying his face in his hands, embarrassment evident as he flushes and mutters something like "I-It's honestly just crap I just said lots of times..."

That is not the case, Altair calms himself down before facing the artist and the Italian brat, You've... you've somehow cured me of a slow disease that has been there for a while.* And yet... He closes his eyes, knowing his painful he knew it was for his beloved, ...what is it that I can help you with personally?

He opens his eyes, seeing Desmond take his arm and giving it a gently squeeze, indicating that he's open to talk to the older Assassin at any time- just not now as this was beginning to get more important.

"Ah, finally," Leonardo sighs with tremendous relief as he sees Desmond and Altair making their way to where he and Ezio have been conversing (actually, they did manage to talk a lot- well, Leonardo has mostly been listening to Ezio talking- seething more like- the Master Assassin), "Altair, I need to ask you something about the map." When he presents the map again, Altair has a feeling that it had to do with the inscription that had altered by itself- which shouldn't have happened ever.

"What did you and the elder talk about?" Desmond looks over to Ezio, whose expression looks
indescribable. His jaw was a bit tightened, his arms crossed and a glare directed to the elder.

The time traveler lets out a mental groan, Didn't you two just get along last night...? "It was something a little bit personal," He murmurs in reply as he runs his hand though his hair (which was getting a bit longer), giving a sheepish smile as he looks away, "...Ezio."

"Hm?"

"I care a lot for you too, you know."

That made Ezio lose his silent fury as he lets out a small sigh of frustration, "I do not like being a jealous man. And seeing you with that insufferable person out of all people..."

He wasn't expecting Desmond to give him a small peck on the cheek (with his childish response and all, and yes, despite how Altair and Ezio are... slowly getting along, their competitiveness over Desmond is still fueling their rivalry). "Calm down, Ezio. I just want to get through this day without any fights between the two of you, okay?"

...as if we can last that long for the day. But that doesn't stop Ezio from smiling, feeling the place where his tesoro kissed him. Perhaps maybe he shouldn't be jealous of Altair- Desmond does care for the both of them.

Though the situation now really isn't giving him much time to dwell on such thing.

Ezio can't help but feel his elated feeling return to one of dread as he sees Leonardo talking to Altair about the map. He was mentally debating whether or not he should tell about how the map managed to alter by itself- by all laws of nature, anything written down in paper should never change.

Merda. He frowns, What I want to know is what unusual force causes the map to change by itself...?

He doesn't see that the box that contains the Apple is faintly glowing before slowly fading away to its dormant state.

"...so what can we tell your uncle," Leonardo looks down at the map, "...about this?"

The room was filled with uncomfortable silence as the three Assassins look down at the same piece of paper (well, two) sitting in front of them.

"Perhaps," Altair grimaces, not wanting to resort to it, but it could be useful- for once since there are more allies close in this city, "...we should consider consulting with some of your allies about what to do with the map, Ezio."

The Florence Assassin groans, "And how are we going to explain how the map managed to change the words on its own?"

Ah. That.

Desmond grimaces, not wanting to mention something else-

"Remember that map William asked for you to get?" He blinks at that question Clay asked him.

"What about it?" The American grumbles, "All I know is that it's supposed to be a map to the Piece of Eden hidden in Venice- where I am now."
"It's hidden in Venice?" His voice beings to sounds incredulous.

"Did you not just hear me a second ago!"

"Hang on a sec," That voice wasn't Clay; it was Lucy. "The map is telling you the location of the Piece of Eden is where you are?"

"Yeah. I looked at the map contents myself."

He can hear another round of silence-

"Okay. Well. Things just got a bit more interesting," Connor's voice was wavering between awe and irritation, "So... anything else you can tell about the map?"

"Ah... about that," Desmond pauses, "Umm..." The time traveler sighs, running his hand through his hair. He knows the others were expecting a response; might as well give them one, "Right. About that... it's written in a different language. Leonardo da Vinci's translating it right now."

Rebecca was the first to ask, "Leonardo... da Vinci's translating it. What language is it written in?"

"Arabic."

"Let me guess. Ezio's idea?"

Desmond nods, "Altair agreed with it."

"How... what the..." He can hear Rebecca gape in surprise, "I thought those two hate each other to eternity."

"And so did I," The time traveler lightly blushes, knowing pretty well how those two can get along when it comes to him-

"Why am I not surprised?" He can hear his oldest brother grumble in irritation, "Okay, Des... new plan. Until that map is fully translated, you're stuck here. As soon as the map's translated, let me know and we'll find a way to get you out of here."

The time traveler bites his lower lip, realizing that it wasn't just Altair, Ezio, Leonardo, and the Italian Brotherhood that knew about the map.

He just needs to know when it would be the best time to talk to the others back home.

"You decide not to tell it to your comrades?"

He looks up, at least a look of surprise in his face as he hears the surprised expression in Leonardo's face; Altair's was more serious- his eyes narrows as the Italian nods, providing the answer to the obvious question.

"It is too risky." The Florence Assassin responds carefully, "Their knowledge of the Apple was already too easy for Borgia to discover what we were up to. I believe that if we keep the actual description of the Apple away from the Brotherhood this time, then we can perhaps hide the presence of the Piece of Eden away from the Templars."
Desmond was about to say something when he frowns, knowing too well what Ezio was implying: had Borgia captured someone else aside the three of them, the Templars would have done something to realize and piece together some physical description as to what the Assassins were searching for. That wasn't new; in fact, the point of the Animus (for Abstergo, that is) was to do a more indirect (if not potentially life-threatening) approach to this technique.

"That sounds like a good idea." He quietly nods, his fingers gently tracing over the map before taking the paper and handing it over to Ezio, "...what do we do about this, then?"

"Ah. You can hold on to it," The Italian Assassin holds his hand to prevent Desmond from handing it over, "After all, wasn't that the reason why you crossed time in the first place?"

His brown eyes slightly widen, alarmed that all this time, Ezio would still remember-

"My memory is still sharp, you know," Ezio chuckles, seeing how surprised Desmond looks, "Something I have intact despite my personality."

Which is honestly a good thing, Desmond grins, placing the map away in his bag. Altair is looking at Ezio with an incredulous look as if he was going to ask the next obvious question.

"Unlike what you perceive, vecchio," The Italian glares at the Syrian, "I do retain my memories. I am not a dull person nor am I that imbecile to make some decisions to compromise missions, the Assassins."

"...I see." Altair still wasn't convinced, but he does take Desmond's written translation and looking at the unlit candle sitting on Leonardo's desk, "If you do not mind, Leonardo-"

"I know," The artist knows too well what Altair was going to do before taking the candle, walking over to the fireplace and placing the candle before swiftly walking back to the desk, candle lit. He nods, "I will just say I was burning some areas on my paper for some sort of effect on my work."

Altair mentally thanks Allah that Ezio did indeed choose a great ally to be on the side of the Assassins.

"...at least there is one part of the mystery about this new Piece of Eden solved," The Master Assassin quietly mutters, his sharp dark amber eyes narrowing before placing the inscription near a candle that was burning on Leonardo's desk, "However, this information must be stayed in this room. We cannot let anyone- not even other members outside of the Brotherhood, know of this."

"And if they try to interrogate?" Ezio's eyes narrow, knowing too well who might try to ask.

"We say nothing." He turns to face Leonardo, "...for you? You are an outsider of the Brotherhood."

"Yet my loyalty and secrets stay with the Brotherhood. It still stay with me and never leave my lips unless absolutely necessary," The blonde man responds, his lips on a firm line before tapping on his notes, "...my notes. Ezio knows why. I refuse to let anyone look at my notes and decipher them in order to realize why I think, why I do the things I do. The secrets of the Assassins and what they do," He smiles, "...I never reveal them to anyone I deem as a stranger."

The three shift their glances to Desmond, who sighs.

"You... do realize I have my ways of keeping my mouth quiet, right?" The foreignerdeadpans, "After all of the crap I went through, I'm not exactly the best person to try and ask for any sort of secrets." Despite the amount of skeletons in my closet. He doesn't want to try and reveal that. And from the looks of things, prying into the past is the very last thing Altair or Ezio would dare.
The roaring silence accompanying with the nods from the three men in the room affirms their promise as the translated inscription Desmond wrote burns instantly before turning into ashes on the candle base.

It was while Altair was going around to check for a much faster route with La Volpe (said person had some in to let Ezio know of news from Florence before mentioning one of Mario's concerns: finding a swift, efficient route to the Frari without getting the Templars' attentions) to get to the Frari that Desmond finally remembered why he had the sketch in his bag. Earlier, the Syrian really wasn't happy about letting Ezio guard Desmond, but the American can't help but promise Altair that he'll get the chance to talk to the elder much more, which Altair can't help but sigh before telling him to be careful and that he'll take care of Desmond later... in which Desmond wanted to shout that he wasn't some damn porcelain item to be handled gently, but a smirk from Altair told a much different story.

The time traveler wanted to know why the hell he had this much luck.

That was the case before the Master Assassin shoots a glare at Ezio, in which the Italian just grumbles curses under his breath (that, before La Volpe smacks Ezio for saying something even more insulting). And hence why the two were sitting on top of Leonardo's roof (the artist had kicked the two out, saying that he needs to concentrate on his sketches and his work before the meeting in which he plans to attend, offering his assistance to them).

And when the two left in a certain direction, it hit Desmond a bit before he remembered the young boy he rescued yesterday.

"Oh damn." He groans, hanging his head as Ezio blinks, facing the young Assassin.

"Is something wrong?"

"Yeah. I was supposed to give something to someone." Desmond then catches himself from saying something further, but like his motor-running mouth, it was a bit too late. Great. Another reason I want to duct-tape my mouth.

That catches Ezio's interest as he leans over to see the novice groaning at his own dismay, "Ah, is it a lady, then?" Well, the jealous tone was obvious.

"No." Desmond instantly shoots back, glaring back at the Italian, "It's to a kid." And then he pales before turning away, covering his mouth to stop himself before blabbing in too much information, Like, oh, I don't know. How the mother had kissed my cheek in gratitude? ...I'm pretty sure Altair will also enjoy that sight. He wants something hard to slam his head into.

A pause. Then-

"So, it's to a young child." Ezio was saying this as if this was something new to him, "...what is his name, tesoro?"

"W-What!"

"You heard me," And with an arm wrapped possessively around his waist and another around his shoulder, Desmond can't help but shudder (from nervousness, he tells himself, Oh my fucking God is Ezio going to kill me!?). "And no, amore mio," He sighs with exasperation when he sees the incoming fear in Desmond's fact, "I am not going to kill you for talking to a young child. I just want to know and... naturally, I thought you were consorting with another person."

"You mean," Desmond groans, "...you thought I was trying to flirt with someone yesterday." He
groans, hanging his head as his head hits Ezio's broad shoulder, "You are seriously as bad as an angry Altair."

"That vecchio and I-" Ezio then blinks before groaning, "...are we that bad?"

You're seriously asking me, the reason why you two are acting like assholes to each other? He takes a drink from the waterskin to try and gather his thoughts before responding to Ezio's earlier question.

"To answer who the drawing is for, there's a boy... his name was Benito," Desmond pauses after taking another drink from the waterskin, "I saved him from Borgia's men yesterday. I promised that I would see him... and I would like to do it before I head out on for the meeting tonight."

Ezio blinks in surprise before he chuckles, patting Desmond's shoulders gently (he knows pretty well that his tesoro was marked on that area), "So do you want to give this..." He taps the bag, which contains the small parchment that contains the drawing, "...to the young boy?"

"Yeah," The American glances over to the door, "...and besides, running around the city once more should give me a better idea as to where I'm going for tonight."

"And perhaps look over at the place where you have taken down the guards to see if there were some suspicion?" The Italian Assassin also hit that nail; Desmond can't help but nod. There was a part of him that told him it was a very bad idea to see whether more of Borgia's men showed up or not, but the American chose to ignore it or take it into mind.

Either way, he was somewhat screwed (considering at this point, he took down a bunch of guards that can already rouse some suspicion in Venice- more likely to Borgia's men).

This should be better than dealing with Abstergo by a long shot, The American grimaces, At least those bastards aren't carrying around syringes or anethetics to hit me with.

"Yeah... something like that," Desmond nods, glancing to Ezio, who slightly frowns, "...well, I was hoping to do it by myself since it seems like you and Altair are busy."

The Italian purses his lips for a bit as if considering Desmond's case-

"And also," The American Assassin pauses, "You might have some stuff to take care of before the meeting tonight! ...well, just in case, that is. And I'm trained and... you've seen me around the city a couple of times, I know my way around, I won't get caught-"

"Like how your hands were yesterday?" Ezio points out.

"...that's an exception. But-" He sees the Italian frowning, knowing pretty well how it got battered (it still hurts, dammit), "I can take pretty good care of myself!" He looks up at the older man, "...please? Let me do this in my own?"

If Desmond didn't know anything about it, his face looks like an adorable pout.

...Dio, that face... Ezio closes his eyes, trying his best to cover his slightly darkening blush before muttering, "All right, fine."

Yes! Desmond was about to fist-pump in the air in relief-

"Only in one condition."

Desmond resists the urge to groan and smack his head against the wall because he wants to know
what the **hell** was up with people these days and catches-

"That only I get to come along with you." Ezio chuckles, seeing the flustered look on Desmond's face.

Said young man stares at the Florence Assassin before he hears his *tesoro* ask, "Are you kidding me!? Hang on, wasn't the entire point of this is that I'm the one going alone!?"

And leave him to deal with something similar to the events from yesterday? Not to mention risking losing Desmond to another one of his Bleeding Effects or- well, the worst possible situation is that Desmond has found a way to return to his time... That creates a tight pang in his chest. It also didn't help that it was a bit worse than earlier when he sees Altair embracing Desmond desperately as if he doesn't want to let go. What did they talk about anyway that made the elder react so unusual? Did it have to do with Desmond leaving here?

*Do not dwell on that now!* Ezio mentally reminds himself before shaking his head from his incoming doubts, swiftly coming up with a more plausible reason that he wants to tag along.

"I know, tesoro, but I'm afraid that won't happen soon, since you might have caught the attention of Borgia himself. As for... how do you say it in your language? Someone who is greatly annoying and you want to kill him."

"...there are lots of words to describe anyone like that," Desmond deadpans, his eye twitching over one certain old coot he wants to gladly get revenge on, "Who are you talking about?"

"Altair, for reasons that regard you, Desmond."

Ezio's swift answer makes Desmond groan, wanting to smack his head against a nearby wall. *Oh. Right. Ahaha. Damn. I forgot about that.*

"Don't call him an asshole, Ezio," Desmond sighs, slightly sagging over that he has to deal with two Assassins who are greatly jealous of each other- well... being in a relationship (Just what kind of relationship is this, anyway? Some sort of love triangle or... a three-person relationship? Desmond honestly doesn't even know how the hell to describe it) with... him. "I know Altair's a bit brash, but he's honestly a nice guy..."

"And what of me, hm?" He can't help but groan at this stupid question.

When Desmond first saw Ezio in the Animus while he was going through the memories, his first impression of the Italian (aside the admiration of what he has done for the Brotherhood and the great annoyances for his stupid playful antics to women)... it was honestly looking at another version of a playboy back in college. Now? Well, it has **slightly** changed.

Slightly being the key word.

"...I'm not going to say anything about that," Desmond grumbles, rolling his eyes before getting up before seeing Ezio's still inquiring look, "...all right, fine. I thought you were a grade A asshole who just sleeps around with women and doesn't take the Brotherhood seriously." Seeing the alarmed and shocked look from the Florence Assassin, Desmond sighs before sitting back down to place his hand on Ezio's shoulder, "But you know, after the entire incident with your family and how you began to improve, you weren't so bad."

"...this is the **honest** answer, si?" The Italian asks, his dark amber eyes swirling with slight suspicion. Desmond lets out a huff of slight irritation before blushing and giving Ezio a small peck on the
cheek, causing the said Assassin to look at Desmond in surprise.

"Maybe after you became much more of a great Assassin later on," The American can see Ezio's suspicion being replaced with surprise as Desmond lets out a small, nervous chuckle. Goddamnit. It's like every time I bring up something with his past, I always get the feeling that he might hate me for bringing it up or something. The same when I trusted his comrades before him...

He takes a deep breath to calm himself before feeling his face burn, looking slightly away as a small smile betrays his rambling thoughts, "...okay, let me rephrase that. You and Altair both- you two are the best Assassins that the Brotherhood could've asked for. And for you- well, you made the Brotherhood more proficient, even went through hell several times and you managed to get through it all, with all of the feuds and various problems with other people. You even manage to help lots of others and gain more loyalty than you thought and... well," The American lets out a small chuckle, not wanting to see the older man's face at the moment and not wanting to reveal to Ezio what he did later on that made the Italian so famed in his time now, "Now that I've met you in person, you're not the person I had witnessed you to be in the Animus. You're actually the opposite of what you're rumored to be through all of Italy."

The blush gone and nervousness ebbing away slowly into tension again, Desmond can barely see Ezio's face before asking, "...um... Ezio?"

He most likely wasn't expecting a gentle hug from the (normally) quick-to-the-point and passionate (and touchy, now that Desmond's thought about this more) Florence Assassin (who is supposed to be the future leader of the Italian Brotherhood).

"...Desmond. Oh God, Desmond. You have no idea how much that..." He feels Ezio kissing his temple before giving him a gentle brush of the lips that for once, doesn't feel like being possessive or playful; the rare ones only in moments with his tesoro, "...Desmond. Dio. Ti amo, ti amo... Senza di te non sono niente- no, no. Solo tu mi capisci- Vorrei annegare nei tuoi occhi. Tu sei troppo onesto... forse è una buona cosa."

Desmond lets out a small smile before closing his eyes, gently wrapping his hands around Ezio's wrists, "I don't even know what the hell you just said, but it sounds too romantic." And add in a small blush with a shy smile, "...it's working, dammit."

"I'm glad to know that my charms are finally getting to your heart, tesoro," Ezio murmurs with a small amount of pride swelling in him. He glints with amusement as he sees Desmond's shy expression whiplash into a deadpan stare.

"...yeah, right." The blush betrays it, "What if Altair finds us gone from here?"

"Leonardo knows we have other things to do, so we'll leave him to whatever he needs to do," And with a swift jump to the ground and a quick kiss on the lips to the American, Ezio can't help but smirk once he sees the slightly embarrassed look on Desmond's face, "...after all, I just want to have some time with you before we head out tonight without the elder barging in on us."

"On... christ, seriously..." The young man hangs his head as Ezio laughs, clear and bright.

"Not what you would like it to be, that is-"

"EZIO!"

And this time, with his slightly worked up English (after all, he has picked up on a bit from Desmond and has been training on his own... without him managing to understand what his tesoro was
saying), Ezio presses another kiss, this time against the young man's cheek.

"Let's go and visit the boy, shall we, Desmond?"

It didn't take long for Ezio to realize where Desmond met the boy; it was in the courtyard near one of the larger plazas. After all, Venice is one of Ezio's playground-like areas. For once, his hood is off to relish the feeling of the breeze from the noon air. Desmond, on the other hand, has his hood on for reasons Ezio knows too well.

*He did kill some men yesterday, after all,* The Florence Assassin takes a small glance over to Desmond, who is swiftly running from one roof to another in an attempt to catch up to Ezio. While he knows Desmond is making his persona that of an Assassin, a part of him makes him wonder about whether or not the American feels terrible about his hand in taking another person's life. Seeing as how he has lived his life as someone who wanted revenge, Ezio has a (somewhat) legitimate reason to take lives and be the person he became. Altair is raised to be such person.

But Desmond was a different story. Well, it seemed as if he was raised in a similar manner at the two of them. Yet Desmond manages to escape, to taste the temporary rush of freedom before having it taken away in one night... only to return where Desmond left off.

*I guess he isn't so different after all,* Ezio sighs, his eyes slightly darkening with concern, *Perhaps, if his life wasn't full of deaths and attempts on his life..."

"Hey,"

Ezio blinks from his thoughts to see Desmond looking at him with concern, "...you okay?"

"Hmm?" Of course, *tesoro mio,* Ezio sports out a grin before stealing another kiss from the young man, "Is something the matter with you?" His grin grows a bit wider, seeing a small blush appear from Desmond's face.

"I'm not the one deep in his own mind, thank you," Desmond grumbles before looking down at the plaza, "...there. That's him."

"Hm?" The Italian's eyes glances over before seeing the young boy sitting on one of the benches while the crowd is filled with people and various shopkeepers. There are guards that are from the neutral side (Ezio's eyes flashes gold and scanned the area, just to make sure), there are some spotty blue figures.

No reds in the area though.

*I will let you know if there are any guards out to get you,* Ezio mutters to Desmond, pulling hood up before seeing Desmond take out the folded drawing from his bag, *Be careful."

"I will, don't worry," Desmond gives off a small chuckle, giving Ezio a wary smile, "Besides, what's the worst that can happen?" And then he jumps down into the alleyway (soundlessly) before managing to smoothly enter through the plaza.

*Lots of things can go wrong, Desmond,* Ezio's eyes follow the swiftly walking figure as soon as he flashes his Eagle Vision to follow the blue figure that was walking into a white figure of a young boy, who suddenly turns into a pale shade of blue.

*One such that can worry me...* His eyes never leaves Desmond, even as he sees him sitting next to the young boy, *...is of you leaving.* The feeling returns slowly, except he shakes it off, wanting to see
what Desmond would do.

Desmond can see Benito's legs jumping up and down in anticipation - it seems as if the young boy was really keeping onto Desmond's promise a while back. Thankfully, his mother wasn't there - the foreigner was worried if the mother would see him, then... well, to put it simply, he would get hell from Ezio. And then from Altair (if he finds out, that is).

Giving a small smile, he manages to swiftly turn around before silently sitting next to Benito. He mentally congratulates himself for surprising the young boy by saying, "Hey, kid."

"Guardian angel!" The boy's eyes grow slightly wide in surprise before it morphs into happiness, "I knew you'd come back!"

"I came for my promise, like I said," Desmond chuckles, giving a small smile, "How are you?"

"A lot better, signore," Benito relaxes as he too begins to lean back against his bench like Desmond, "My mother - she is happy again. The guards do not show up and harass her like before-in fact," He grins, "A really nice woman with a pretty face- and a really nice red dress too - said she wants to give my mother and me a better place to live with her and her famiglia over at Florence!"

Paola, huh...? Desmond was not surprised to hear that she probably talked to Benito's mother, Damn. I owe a lot of people here so much for their help.

"That's really good," The American replies, "Are you planning to leave soon?"

The boy nods, a bit sad, "We leave in a few days. My mother is relieved to leave this city. But I'm sad to leave here..."

"Why's that?"

Benito looks at Desmond, "I don't have you to watch over me anymore."

Ah. Desmond blinks in surprise as he turns to Benito before giving a sigh before ruffling his head, gently messing with the young boy's hair. He can feel the boy shaking, as if he is going to cry. "...hey, hey... I'll still watch over you."

"...but how?" Benito whimpers, looking at Desmond, "I won't be able to see you anymore."

Desmond takes out the rolled up parchment - the one that Leonardo gave to him earlier that morning when Desmond requests for some sketching materials. It was gently wrapped with a red ribbon. The boy looks surprised as he gently takes it, about to ask what it was-

"Open it and you'll see." Desmond's scarred lips give a tender smile, "It's a gift."

Eagerly and gently, Benito unfurls the bow to unroll the drawing before his eyes widen, seeing the drawing on the scroll. If Desmond recalls correctly, he has drawn an angel ascending to the skies - wings stretched from his back to unfurl their white glory, wearing the ancient Greek toga while brandishing a sword in one hand, an olive leaf branch in the other.

It was a pencil drawing that he just made up on the spot - the sketch lines were barely visible as the bolder lines outline and present the angel in his battle-wise glory against the sky in the image.

Underneath it were the words: Per Proteggere Gli Innocenti.
"Oh wow..." Benito's words were barely a murmur before he carefully wraps the drawing and tying the ribbon back, "Thank you- this is really good!"

"It's yours," Desmond chuckles, relieved that the boy loves the drawing, "Just know that there will be one watching over you, wherever you go. And for me," He places his hand in the young boy's chest where his heart is, "I'll always protect you from here."

The boy nods, "I know." And then he pauses, "...and in turn, can I help you?"

The foreigner blinks before frowning, "Did you do something wrong?"

"No!" Benito shakes his head before darting around the plaza before whispering,...It's about yesterday." And then lower, "There are new guards asking about you, signore. They want to find the person responsible for taking down the guards that were bothering my mother and me."

Desmond's eyes narrow, his suspicions confirmed. Crap. I knew this was coming.

"No one has said anything, though," Benito continues, "In fact, they do not want any more of Borgia's men here to cause any more trouble, so the Italian government has sent some of their guards to stop Borgia's guards from doing anything."

The American takes this all in as he leans forward, silently taking this in, So we have very little time before it'll take them to realize I was the one responsible for taking them down. Fuck. I have to let Ezio and Altair know... even the others here in Venice.

"...did I do good?" Benito whispers in nervousness, "I only heard it from some of the new guards that showed up yesterday."

"You did well," Desmond nods, gently patting the young boy's head, "Really well." He has a feeling that this new information is going to cause more trouble than he thought, "...thank you."

The boy beams before smiling, "I'll hide this from them. Thank you again, signore angelo."

"It's no problem," He nods, "One more thing, Benito."

He knows the boy looks shocked to see that Desmond knows his name-

"Always remember- the best place to hide is in plain sight." He smiles, "Good luck."

Then swiftly as he came, Desmond silently blends himself into the crowd, quietly returning to join the person he came with that was waiting for him.

Benito blinks, his mouth still slightly open before nodding, his eyes now filled with a resolve that will continue to fuel him for years to come- the one of someone who knows what to do. He looks up to see another man- this time garbed with white and red. He had a feeling that they were being observed- he and the man who helped him- but Benito was surprised the man didn't say anything. In fact, it seemed as if the man was also being protected by someone else. Someone who looks like one of the famed Assassins that he's been hearing rumors about.

Which explains why the man who saved him yesterday did a good job of rescuing him and his mother.

He decides against telling his mom about the Assassin and the help- the picture he should hide from as well. But there's a part of him that says that his own father wore something like this before- his
mother was helpful to him. He knows that everyone has shielded him from the truth, but that day made him piece together some things about his family, about what was going on in Venice, in Florence, in all of Italy...

...it finally made sense. And now?

*I got that, signore Assassin. And I will help those like me- to be with the Brotherhood. He tightly grips the scroll, ...I promise.*

After all, he won't fail the man who saved his life from the Templars.

By the time Desmond manages to reach up to the roof (in somewhat record time), he sees that Ezio gives a smile of relief as the two manage to get away from the plaza through the rooftops. And then-

"*That boy told you something important, didn't he?*

Desmond stops at a clearly shaded area- hidden well since there were barely anyone to hear. Ezio has too stopped, but he was the one who just commented on this- his serious and concerned look said it all; he saw Desmond's reaction to the boy's information.

"...they're after me." Desmond sighs, running his hand through his hair as he takes his hood off, "Or, at least they're trying to find out who killed their group of five guards yesterday."

"*At least we anticipated this,*" Ezio places his hand on Desmond's chin, causing him to look directly at amber eyes, "*...Desmond, are you really all right?*

No names of endearment? He sees how concerned the Italian Assassin really is.

"To be honest, no." The American can't help but keep talking. "That boy's going to be a part of the Assassins one day- the way he said that information and how he was able to react when I took them down yesterday..." He doesn't say anything as Ezio takes Desmond in his arms and hug him gently, calming him down slightly.

"*It is his decision. We can't help it. Perhaps there are other reasons that is making him go down the way of the Brotherhood.*" Ezio sighs, "Even if you want to protect even the most innocent from any sort of peril, there is a point in which you can't cover their eyes for too long."

*Like Connor and Dad,* The American closes his eyes as he nods in agreement, having a feeling that this comment is too true, "*Ezio and Altair have endured similar treatments or situations like most Assassins; I guess I've been exposed to it for too long.*"

"*Though I might have seen that boy's father before,*" The Florence Assassin frowns, which makes Desmond freeze slightly in mid-step. Then he stares at Ezio before sighing, shaking his head.

"That might explain why he didn't freak out when I sat next to him like that," The time traveler groans, hanging his head, "Great. Did you know?"

"*Not until I saw that boy in person for the first time,*" Ezio teasingly smiles, his eyes glittering in amusement as Desmond lets out another groan of dismay, "*...so, now that you got that out of your way, did he enjoy it?*

"Enjoy what?" He hears Desmond ask before he realizes, "Oh, the picture? Ohhh yeah... He actually liked it. Even though the picture was pretty bad."
"Ehi, not you too..." The Italian man groans before kissing Desmond, which did cause a squeak from the young time traveler, "Didn’t I tell you to stop doubting yourself and your abilities?"

"For when it comes to the Assassins' abilities, I know not to stop myself," The brunette grumbles, "I'm talking about the other things."

Ezio blinks before arching an eyebrow in interest, "'Other' talents...?" The American can't help mentally ask himself whether he should stop talking since it seems to have caught Ezio's attention, "Is drawing one of your many talents, tesoro?"

Desmond grumbles to himself, cursing his motor mouth, "L-Let's talk about that later. I'm more worried if Altair's safe or even if we can find a way over to the meeting place tonight." He then pauses, "Where is the meeting place again?"

"The clock tower over there," Ezio points to a more prominent building that Desmond can see behind him- he saw it as St. Mark's Clock Tower, "Campanile di San Marco. It's one of the vantage points we use to look around the city, to see what others can't." He pauses, "Perhaps we should begin making our way over there-" He looks up at the sky, the sun is starting to get to the highest point, "...soon."

"So we begin making our way from the Clock Tower to the Frari you were talking about then, brat?"

Had Desmond would've been alone, he would've yelped (or screamed) from fright. Instead, what happened was that the two of them attacked their 'intruder'- who turned out to be a prepared Altair, who just immediately blocked their attacks- Ezio for his hidden blade, Desmond with just a simple elbow hit.

"Y-You scared the crap out of us!" Desmond wheezes in relief as soon as he edges away from a smirking Altair, "What the hell took you so long!?"

"Finding you two after Leonardo explained what you both were up to," Altair replies before sighing in what seems to be relief, "At least you were not hurt, Desmond. The brat-" He smirks, seeing Ezio, "You really must have gotten your guard down, huh? Your senses must have dulled."

"Coglione! Ti faccio un mazzo così!" Ezio snaps, really not amused by the surprise as he begins to seethe, "What the FUCK!"

"I'm seeing that he's glad to see me too," Altair was really not sorry for scaring him, wasn't he? Desmond immediately went between the two of them and places his hands on their chests.

"Stop." He deadpans, glaring at Ezio first before glancing at Altair, "We have something to do tonight and I don't plan to spend most of my energy trying to calm down an argument."

That must have wrung out any incentive for any sort of argument from both men, but the looks the two give each other gave Desmond a silent mental note to try and prevent any sort of argument (or worse, another fight) between the two Assassins if any of them broke out tonight. "So, did you guys find a way to get to the Frari?" He manages to ask quickly before the two of them would say anything else to insult each other, "I-I mean, just for any sort of idea or help..."

Altair lets out a silent seething mutter in Arabic, which surprises him and Ezio, who asks, "Wasn't La Volpe with you?"

"We did try to find the quickest route from the safe house, from the meeting place, and then from the
Clock Tower where the meeting will take place tonight." The Syrian gives a slight uncomfortable glance, "...unfortunately, aside by foot and stealth, there is no other way to get there except to encounter any sort of Templars on the way. La Volpe and I barely got through midway to the Frari without trying to maneuver around some of the guards."

"Ah. Fun." Ezio grimaces, "Getting to the Frari was much easier when I first made my attempt."

What attempt have you made recently? Desmond stares at the Italian, baffled as he was about to ask if Ezio is really insane, but Altair was the one who asks something similar.

"What route did you take to the Frari?" The Syrian flatly asks, arching an eyebrow in ire, "Never mind- we'll be finding out soon."

"Tch, stronzo." A pause, "...what have you and La Volpe found out?"

While Altair begins to explain his discoveries to Ezio, Desmond gives out a small sigh as he glances over to the direction of the Clock Tower before glancing back over at the Frari. Maybe, if the meeting does take place, it could be a possibility that they would go straight to the Frari, retrieving the Piece of Eden. That would be the case, knowing how the Assassins worked.

And hopefully this means we can find out what the hell the Piece of Eden we're looking for is... His brown eyes flicker back to his bag, which still contains not only the original map, but now also Leonardo's translation that he gave to Desmond a few days ago. He is tempted to look at the version Leonardo read, but there was a part of him that says it wouldn't be the best idea- that now wasn't the best time to read it.

What bothered him more was the inscription that he has received from the map- should he even think about the map as a legitimately source now that it actually changed-

Just how the hell did it change? I mean it's not like someone decided to make it so that I couldn't read it deliberately-

His brown eyes widen at the possibility of such thing-

Aita was the only person who showed me the map while I was in the Nexus... He knows too well that the man of the First Civilization wouldn't try to meddle into his affairs-

...would he?

He shoves it in the back of his mind, thinking about something else, or rather...

"The Immortal Stone, the Liquid that gives life..." He quietly murmurs to himself, wondering where he has heard this before-

"There are some that were claimed to be the Pieces of Eden, but they are not,"

That quote Aita said echoes in his mind; why has this suddenly come back?

"Desmond?"

He looks over to see Altair and Ezio looking at him- prepared to head back and prepare for the meeting tonight.

"Is something bothering you, habibi?" The Syrian frowns, his eyebrow furrowing in concern as Desmond made his way towards the two Assassins.
"It's... nothing. I'm just thinking about something." The time traveler shakes his head, giving a smile to assure the two that he was fine.

He doesn't see the two pairs of amber eyes glance at each other in suspicion, knowing too well that the young man isn't telling the truth. Ezio was about to open his mouth and say this when he sees Altair shaking his head, narrowing his eyes to glance over to Desmond.

"Yes, I am worried for him too. But," He lowers his voice into the time in which Desmond couldn't really hear, "We'll find out after we find the item in the Frari."

*Let us hope we get out there safe first,* The Italian Assassin has a bad feeling about all of this.

**End Part 17**

I just realized how mucked up Altair and Ezio were both in terms of how and why they became who they are. And just from Desmond's point of view. For some reason, I just tend to make some deep moments pretty awkward in the end. Apparently, this happens to me on my end (too much).

And I am rereading all of this and I realize this is going on REALLY SLOW. *groan* To be honest, this is what happens when being on hiatus does to you...

* In case you all wanted to know, in later years of his life, Altair spiraled into a very deep depression (that could be borderline suicidal). That was what he was talking about- not a physical disease.

What's next: The Assassins decide the time to go to the Frari is now. Even if there is a bad feeling in Desmond’s gut about this...
Planned Out

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: It's the usual song and dance, you know the drill.

There is a good reason why the Piece of Eden is the way it's formatted to be- and the Philosopher’s Stone is one name.

Enjoy!

Warning: The story's finally getting somewhere. More OOC, And some historical blurb about the Frari- which I am pretty sure you all have learned about at some point in school or the game. If not, then have some little slice of Art History 101- and lots of talking. Also, I know the Frari has no guards in the interior- I saw the videos and read the guides. But for the sake of this story and tension, I have to include them in.

Oh, and more botched Italian. Yay.

Part 1 of 2- this is going to be a long part- considering last chapter was also long.

"italics" = Italian, Arabic, any other language OR a flashback (depending on how it is used)

"bold italics" = over the mic and phone

"normal" = English

bold sentences = emails, screams, or Bleeding Effect (depends on how it's used).

Part 18.1: Planned Out (Part 1)

The clock was striking around five when the four of them headed out- Leonardo had to finish something at the last moment that made the entire walk being set back for an hour. In fact, the thing that he was working did surprise them-

"You created a new map!?” Desmond was the one who can’t help but stare at the exact replica-down to the freaking minuscule detail in ink out of all things- of the map as he feels how smooth it feels underneath his fingertips as he stares at the replica map in awe, "H-How did you manage to find the time to do this?"

"Dio, Leonardo, you are amazing at this!” Ezio can’t help but marvel himself as he looks at the map over Desmond’s shoulders. Altair is looking at it, humming in approval over the fact that the entire map was easily duplicated. Looking at the original to the copy, there could be some things only the sharpest of eyes can tell from the most minuscule of mistakes; to the normal human eye, however, it can’t be distinguished.
"It was something I thought about doing myself as a small project, sometimes for a warm-up. But I'm glad all of you are proud of it. In fact, if some of the Templars were to get their hands on the map, they would receive the replica, only the thing is the map has been slightly altered for their usage. The one that I am bringing to you is the exact replica of the one that we possess," Leonardo can't help but feel prideful as the map is gently passed to Altair, who looks surprised that the artist had something to even show the Brotherhood. Ezio was looking at the inscription before glancing back at Leonardo and before he asked-

"Yes, Ezio, I basically rewrote the inscription I had a couple days before and that was the I translated from before something caused the map to change." The artist sighs, knowing pretty well that his friend would want something like this, "...and no, I am not going to do the same for my artworks, as interesting as an idea it sounds."

"You really need to use your talents for your artwork, regardless what you say," Ezio rolls his eyes, anticipating the usual reaction Leonardo would say (which was usually the complaints, the denial of him being a really good artist, the usual groaning the Italian constantly hears).

"Yes, but they are never the best ones that I would ever present, nobody will appreciate it, the usual in which you are getting tired of hearing," The blonde artist shakes his head, "However, I would rather not say anything..." He pauses, "...especially since I desire to take a break from my paintings at the moment." He grins, "It's actually a good thing, no?"

Ezio just groans. Altair just ignores them (or pretend not to listen since part of him doesn't really exactly care for such frivolities like art). Desmond, on the other hand, is shaking with laughter, knowing the irony in Leonardo's complaints (which did earn Altair's stare and Ezio and Leonardo wondering why the youngest out of all people is reacting like that).

Normally, this type of conversation would be for the safety of Leonardo's studio.

Except for a few things that are a bit out of this picture: they were actually walking/making their way towards the Clock Tower at San Marco. In order to prevent people from recognizing him, Leonardo has decided to wear something a bit more common, to blend in with the crowds of people who are making some last minute decisions before the darkness sets in. Ezio has placed in a black cloak to cover his usual Assassin's garb; Altair and Desmond both agree it would be best not to be recognized by putting on some of the clothing the Italians wear themselves (it was over their Assassins' clothing).

After all, it wasn't the commoners recognizing Leonardo da Vinci that concerns them (it was one of them); it was also the risk of having the Assassins being found out by the guards.

The third reason was because Leonardo also can't jump and run through the roofs efficiently as the three men are, which can explain why they are going through ground.

"Are you working on other commissions?" Desmond (after managing to calm down) quietly asks the artist, who blinks in slight alarm before his eyes slight widen before nodding, "...you should probably get it done when we are done with this mission."

"I plan to," Leonardo chuckles, his eyes twinkling with excitement, "However, I will cherish the moments in which I am aiding the Assassins to help them in their need of trouble."

The time traveler looks at the artist in surprise before he smiles before muttering, "...hey. Leonardo? I still have the previous translation that you gave me before we looked at the map for the second time."

"Ah, you do?" Leonardo's pale blue eyes widen in surprise before he glances over to the bag that
Desmond gently pats to indicate the location, ",...well, what do you plan to do with it?"

"I plan to see whether or not it was accurate or not," Desmond wants to do that once he is done with the meeting or when he was alone, ",...are you sure what I said was similar to the one you translated?"

"It could be," The artist's eyes narrow, "Then again, languages can be distorted. I may say something to you in one language, you can say something in your language, only it can be similar from meaning to tone."

The American's eyes slightly narrow, taking this into account as the artist and Desmond begins to catch up with the two Assassins, the conversation between the two sealed within their minds.

They reached the tower in an hour and a half. By that time, Ezio can see the others were getting ready to the meeting. Luckily for the Italian Assassins, it was empty; not a lot of guards that belong to the Templars will be around. In fact, Niccolo has asked some of the officials who handle the building to use the church for some sort of political reason (he wants to use it the next day for reasons the Assassins would not even ask about- this is Niccolo Machiavelli- the son of an an attorney whose family were descended that began the Florentine Gonfalonieres of Justices- using the church, not the Assassin who was trained at a young age*).

"We're here," Ezio mutters to himself, looking up at the clock tower before grimacing, ",...I hated that tower."

"I'm taking that you have climbed it before?" Altair arches an eyebrow before frowning, "Compared to minarets in Damascus and Jerusalem, it is fairly easy to do such thing."

"Try climbing the freaking Effiel Tower you two think climbing those aren't too bad," Desmond grumbles before earning stares from the two Assassins, ",...what?"

"And you haven't attempted to climb anywhere as tall as what we have to deal with?" The Italian quips a small smile, seeing the embarrassment flushing on Desmond's face.

"S-shut up," And then when he looks up at the tower, he frowns, "Do we just enter in the church just like that?"

"Si," Ezio nods as he nods over at some of the people the Assassins are acquainted with, "Though they know us as Niccolo's allies."

"It definitely puts us in the suspicious group, however," Altair mutters to himself, glaring at the people Ezio nodded earlier. They shuddered seeing the Syrian's death glare, Desmond noticed with some small amusement- though he has to admit, it did frighten him to a certain extent.

"Ah, well, let us hope we do not arouse any sort of suspicion with the others," Ezio grumbles, rolling his eyes as he closes the door to the Basilica di San Marco before indicating to the others to release themselves of their (suffocating) disguises.

They did in no time- well, Desmond and Altair did immediately takes theirs off in frantic as they wanted to get rid of their disguises. Well, Desmond lets out a heave with relief, happy about the cool air that begins to cool his skin as soon as he shoves the loose jacket out. Altair, on the other hand, just instantly discards the loose jacket that was covering his entire Assassin's gard by throwing it at Ezio, who immediately catches it before scowling, grumbling the usual sets of Italian curse words.
that usually have some sort of murderous edge to it. Leonardo gently takes his off before looking around the entire basilica.

"Ah, the beauty of Byzantine architecture," The artist murmurs in awe, drinking in the interior of the basilica as he takes his time to view the church. Desmond has to admit, the basilica was a beauty to itself as he steps in to feel the cool breeze of the church as he steps near the benches of the basilica.

When he first saw the interior of the famed church in San Marco while looking through Ezio's memories through the Animus, he could hear Shaun saying various information about the church since he wasn't the only one awed by the sight (Rebecca was marveling over it as was Lucy; Clay was wondering how they managed to get all the images in the ceiling while Connor was silent (though he did admit later on that if possible, they could see it for themselves when all of the mess is all over).

From what he recalls from the Brit's usual 'history lesson'- or to be more precise, his smartass comments when he complains about Desmond being a dense moron in history (honestly, it wasn't just Desmond who did abysmal in world history knowledge; Clay wasn't any better)- this Basilica was known for what Leonardo did point out: Byzantine architecture and the art and mosaics adorning the ceiling along with shades of gold and speckles of jewelry. Each mosaic tells a story-more specifically, that of the Old Testament. It also had a more interesting history to it: it was originally built to house the stolen treasures from the Crusades. However, it is now used to be a private estate of the Doge- another reason why the Assassins were able to use it to their full advantage: the Doge that is currently with the Pope is aligned with the Assassins (at least, in the time now) and serves as a gateway to the Doge's personal residence. In Desmond's time, it is used as an art study- tourists come to see it for the beauty, scholars for the interpretations for the mosaics and architecture.

Desmond can't help but wonder how lucky he is to see this in person- when before he was seeing it with some limitations thanks to the Animus.

"This... is really beautiful," He looks up at the ceiling in awe and wonder, knowing pretty well how much Shaun and Lucy (the more historical nerds) will envy him when Desmond plans to describe it later. He softly chuckles, stepping a bit forward, "If only the guys at home can see this now..."

He doesn't see the slightly pained look that Ezio's eyes flash as Altair's eyes narrow in an upset manner, despite the indifference in his expression.

As if trying to shake the idea out of his head, the Florence Assassin steps forward to where Desmond is standing, "I know, tesoro... it is beautiful." But he wasn't just referring to the basilica as his eyes glance over at Desmond's awe-struck eyes.

"It's just a church," Altair shakes his head, as he clicks his tongue, looking a bit ire at the ceilings as his eyes scan over the drawings and mosaics before turning his attention back to the Assassins, wanting to get this meeting over with as possible, "...hey, brat. where are your comrades?"

"They should be here somewhere," That makes the Italian Assassin look around the basilica until seeing one of the Italian Assassins lurk about in the Basilica near the altar, "...wait, Antonio?"

"Ah, there you all are!" The thief instantly walks over before beckoning them, "Here, this way. You're all just in time."

"Are the others there?" Altair quietly asks as the four begin to follow the Venetian thief through the hallway that links to the Clock Tower.
"Yes, they are all waiting," He glances over and nods to Leonardo, who nods back, "I assume that you're here for support?"

"Not just that," Leonardo pats the bag that he is carrying, "I have the things you would all need to plan out your routes."

"Ah." Antonio nods as they stop at a door before Antonio opens it, ushering them all in before quickly and quietly shutting it, leaving nothing disturbed behind them.

"Ah, here they are," Mario nods as Ezio shuts the door to the Clock Tower before looking around to see the torches lit to barely conceal themselves while providing some light for the Assassins. As they all got into position to see the other Assassins, Desmond can barely see, even with the torches lit.

Mario Auditore was there, standing in the side that faces the Frari; Niccolo and La Volpe next to him. Antonio, Teodora, Paola, and Bartolomeo making some sort of semi circle. Desmond is standing next to Ezio, who takes his place next to La Volpe, with Altair next to him; Leonardo is standing behind the Italian Assassin, knowing that he wants to observe the meeting that he is also involved in.

The clock tower begins to strike, catching Desmond's attention as seven chimes boom in the area he is in- signalling the meeting is to take place now and that whatever they talk about stays among themselves.

The leader of the Italian Brotherhood steps forward, clearing his throat to silence the others before taking a scroll from the artist.

"...Our new mission," Mario's eyes are flaming with determination as he turns to the direction of the Frari, "...is hidden within the depths of the Doge's church. We must retrieve it before the Templars use it to their advantage." A pause, "This... will not be the case- we must find the Piece of Eden and retrieve it- before they do."

The American Assassin can't help but silently gulp and accept the mission like the other Assassins- for Altair and Ezio, it should be just like any other mission, any other assignment for them. Unlike what Desmond has experienced in the Animus... he can't mess it up. There are no redos, no try-agains, and no time to slow down and play catch-up.

The mission is a one-time shot. If he fails, then it's over. But if he finishes...

What other option do I have? Desmond knows what this means- I have to do this. Failure is not an option.

Altair has succeed to the top and Ezio- later on the lines of his life- will do the same. Desmond can't help but grin to himself, knowing that in some sort of way, he is going to leave his mark on the history of the Brotherhood, whether he likes it or not.

After all, it's in my blood, right?

Various ideas were thrown as to the approach to the Frari- however, each of their suggestions (Desmond doesn't even dare suggest his at all, knowing too well that his ideas will not work-experience with his group has served him too good of a job to remind himself that he's only good on last minute situations- not well-planned routes) were either taken into consideration or shot down
because of instant flaws that will hinder their route.

It wasn't until finally they decide to take this course of action- splitting up into two groups: The more experienced Assassins (meaning Altair, Ezio, Desmond, La Volpe, and Mario) will be the ones who will enter inside the Frari by any means (even if it means taking a rumored secret entrance that only a small percentage of people know about); the other group (Teodora, Paola, Antonio, Niccolo, Leonardo, and Bartolomeo) will create some sort of diversion- or rather instigate one to distract the guards who are guarding the Frari on the outside to prevent the Assassins from being discovered.

More than likely, it would probably be some sort of brawl at the usual tavern or somewhere popular that will go too far.

And not surprisingly, this was Altair's idea- typical of the strategist of the Master Assassin. And again, Mario agrees with the idea- along with some suggestions that perhaps they should be discreet about the distraction portion of the plan- by that, Desmond had a mental feeling that most likely, it's going to be either Bartolomeo with his mercenaries that love to drink and start a fight or the thieves Antonio works with that will begin pickpocket-ting people before slowly descending into chaos.

"Perhaps it will still be good if we are involved then?" Teodora can't help but quip up, causing most of the room (it doesn't help that it's mostly men) to glance at her. When she sees Antonio open his mouth to object, she cuts in, "Do not forget, that men are also vulnerable to the power of the women too."

"Perhaps some..." Paola shoots Ezio and Altair a smirk, causing the two to slightly darken (well, Altair lowers his hood to hide his small moment of embarrassment), "Well, I will help Teodora with the ladies- to prepare them for a night they'll perhaps never forget."

"We'll see how much use that will be when a fight breaks out," Bartolomeo gruffs, crossing his arms, "If it get out of hand, however, that is when some of us begin pulling the innocent out of the way."

The first tenet of the Brotherhood- as all of them take that into consideration.

"That's good then," Mario nods as he glances to Niccolo, "Will you make sure that is the case?"

"Of course," The politician-to-be nods with his usual smirk, "It's also a good chance for me to understand how some Venetian politicians work as well."

"Perhaps to use to their advantage or for blackmail," Ezio can hear La Volpe shake his head at this possibility as Paola begins to shake in silent laughter before the Florence thief speaks up, "It is still not finalized- we also have to consider the other possibilities as well."

"Ah," Mario nods before glancing to Leonardo, "As for you... are you positive that you are going with us on this?"

"As long as I can provide some assistance to all of you," Leonardo grins, "My studio is welcome for use if you all need to hide or to rest after this mission is over; I also-" He takes out one of the longer scrolls in his bag before handing it out to Antonio, "-created some maps for all of you to use; they are made easier for all of you to read and to figure out the route from there."

"Is that so?" They all walk closer as the Venetian thief rolls out the map for all of them to see. Antonio then points to a structure outlined in the San Marco area, "This is where we are..." He then trails his finger towards the direction to their destination, "...and the Frari."

"Well done," Niccolo nods to the artist, who sighs in relief.
"Thank goodness," Leonardo then pauses, "Though when you all initiate your plan and leave this area, I might have to head back to my studio and prepare it for all of your usage if this is the case."

Ezio nods, "Good. In that way, we have a safe place to hide in case we get caught."

"And to provide a safe place if we need to get out of the brawl," Niccolo's eyes mentally laid out a trail from the Frari to where Leonardo's studio is located, "...not bad."

"Perfect. Here is the area that surrounds the Frari, and here... are some of the more local areas that is near the Frari," Antonio spreads out one of the more intricate maps Leonardo made, "Ezio, where are the best areas to enter in through the building?"

"To be quite honest," Ezio places his finger to one area of the building before letting out a small click, indicating for the actual map of the Frari. Leonardo sighs, rolling his eyes as he takes out the map that has the inscription and the Frari layout and hands to Ezio, who unrolls it before pointing at one area that is facing the town, "It would be the best to start from here... and make our way towards the Frari by going through the roofs."

"And risking some of our safety?" Mario groans, somewhat not looking forward to this endeavor, "Nipote mio, are you insane? Running through the tops of the buildings when it could be easier to by foot and ground?"

"Are you a proper Assassino or no?" Ezio shoots back, but with his usual playful humor, "Besides, Zio Mario, we are going by ground until after we go through the rivers."

Desmond can see Altair slightly stiffen at the mention of 'rivers' before he gives a small smile and a pat on the Syrian's shoulder. "Don't worry, Altair," he murmurs, "We're probably going to go through the boat."

"I... hope that's the case." Altair quietly grumbles, mentally hoping that the boat is much safer than swimming through any body of water. Luckily for him, Ezio was too busy trying to make sure his uncle will be safe as the Assassins will begin their run to the Frari when they reach the harbor of the San Polo district. Desmond groans before glancing over and narrows his eyes at the Syrian, gently squeezing his hand.

"I'll try to calm you down, if you want."

That made Altair glance over at the young Assassin before reluctantly nodding, "...only for you, habibi." Then he glances over to Ezio, "I hope the brat doesn't notice it."

He might find out... Desmond les out a mental groan, knowing pretty well that somehow in some form of way, Ezio does find out about it and can use it to his advantage. The other two then turn to hear some loud complaining from Mario- despite him being older and more experienced- before hearing laughter from some of the other Assassins (Niccolo is perhaps the only Assassin that is just amused as the ladies stand next to him; Leonardo is standing next to the ladies, wisely staying away from this mini scuffle as he too is laughing).

"So, are you sure you are up for this, uncle?" Ezio has the obvious playful grin before Mario rolls his eyes and smacks his nephew upside the head, giving a mental answer to the obvious question, "Ow!"

"Remember Ezio," Leonardo deadpans, "This isn't the usual banter I have to put up with you everyday."

"HEY!"
"Si, Signore Mario," La Volpe lets out a smirk, obviously filled with mirth, "Are you going to be as slow as Machiavelli and not climb to the tops with the rest of us?"

"You do realize," Machiavelli calmly deadpans to the famed thief of Florence, "I can gladly set a bounty on your head, despite our alliances."

"Oh, I already know my target," The thief calmly states back before he turns to Paola, "...isn't that right, signora tesora?"

"Providing that you will not die in the process." Paola rolls her eyes, but a slight blush is evident, "...bastardo."

Altair shakes his head as he turns to Antonio (who is trying his best not to laugh his head off), "If you don't mind, can I have a second look at the map?"

"Oh, by all means," Antonio stands back as the Syrian Assassin looks at the map, before indicating to Leonardo, who walks over. The thief is joined by Ezio as the Italian asks more about how the distraction plan is going to work and who is involved with it.

Desmond lets out a small smile as he sees the Assassins begin to work lively before him- they did get out from the Clock Tower a long while back after deciding that it was best to enter in the one of the Doge's halls (the Doge allows them to use it; as long as they don't desecrate the area and clean up). He glances over at his wrist to try and find out the time when he sees the leather band surrounding his arm.

"Shit. I forgot that I don't have my watch on me right now," The American mentally groans as he fidgets in his seat, trying to get comfortable with the clothing. He doesn't see Mario Auditore stopping his conversation with Niccolo before walking over to see the youngest Assassin before clearing his throat.

"I hope you weren't planning to be silent all evening," The man arches an eyebrow as he sees Desmond jump from surprise before looking at the older Auditore man.

"O-Oh... no, not exactly," Desmond gives a weak laugh as he rubs the back of his neck (before cringing at the amount of fabric that was blocking the way), "I was just... listening."

Mario chuckles, his eyes glancing over at how much fidgeting the foreigner was doing just to at least get comfortable again, "These clothing," Mario asks, catching the American's attention, "...do these suit you?"

All Desmond can manage out was a confused look before the Auditore head clarifying, "You do not look comfortable in the clothing that you're currently wearing right now."

"Ah. Right." Desmond looks at the state of his wear (or rather... the clothing Ezio has given to him to wear); he has gotten used to it, but the amount of belts and capes that he's wearing now as opposed to the simple T-shirt, jacket, and jeans are just annoyingly heavy and they sometimes did get in the way of his maneuvers. Not to mention the fact that he has a freaking sword hanging down on his legs that makes it slightly worse for him (for one, unlike Ezio and Altair, Desmond can't make that sword stay still).

From that one look of slight discomfort, Mario was instantly amused, "Not what you are used to in your time, hm? It isn't like what you were doing before, wasn't it?"

That got a look of alarm from Desmond as Mario grins, "I have heard rumors about a strange young man that resembles like my nipote, running in garments of white and blue that we deem as unusual,
"helping those who are in trouble in the most minor of offenses. Often he would bring comrades to help- they usually vanish in a blink of an eye with a white light like they entered in."

He pauses, seeing as how the other Assassins are now distracted before continuing his conversation with the young man, "I did see you one night in Florence. And before you say anything, I did not say anything to Ezio in fears of you being caught. But it seems as if you were doing your best not to get caught by anyone- well, perhaps when you entered into Leonardo's home to try and get something small was there a risk for you. You seemed to have dodge all attention until the point where you began to stay here for a long time."

"...ah." Desmond nods before muttering, "Well, I had to do a mission that was given to me by the leader of my group at my time. It was a few weeks ago and... it involved having me to enter in Florence in your time." He lets out a sigh of relief, "Mario, thank you for not involving Ezio then."

"It is no problem." Mario chuckles before seeing the American tug at the clothing, "Do you not feel any comfort in wearing these? And do you still have those same clothing that you have now?"

There really was no hiding how uncomfortable he is, huh? He can see Mario's grin before sagging in defeat, giving up any hiding of discomfort. Damn. And he thought Lucy, Shaun, and Connor were sharper than anyone he's met.

"No. It's really itchy... and it's too tight," Desmond admits before gesturing to his bag, "...I do have my own clothing here- wait. Why are you asking me about this?"

Mario glances over to the group of Assassins that are talking, then to his nephew, "In the years I have been leader of the Brotherhood and to the person I am to Ezio- to him, I am his father figure. To me, he is still my nipote who needs a strong figure to stand with him and teach him until the day comes where he takes over- as the Assassin his father was once before- perhaps stronger. I have never seen him as elated and happy as he is with you."

He faces Desmond, who looks suddenly guilty, "...but you are someone who is separated by time. Your reasons for being here are similar, yet the goals differ in a level that maybe I do not understand."

"Yeah," Desmond sighs, feeling the guilt weighing in his heart, "...I don't want to leave yet."

"I know," And he feels Mario wrap his arms around him like a father would do to a son- Not my father, not William unless he feels the necessity to, Desmond's mind flashes to the time where his father greeted him. While there was a relief and the sudden rush of euphoria of seeing his family again, there was a tone of disappointment for how much his son has screwed up, being left to the Templars instead of sticking by his family.

No wonder there was a part of him that envied Ezio so much. Altair- at least- had a family that he actually poured his love to.

Desmond, on the other hand...

-he has his comrades as his make-shift family. But nowhere in there did he had a older figure he would emotionally feel attached to- mayeb to his father, but that situation is completely different in which Desmond feels it in both sides of the spectrum. He's William's son, but he's also an Assassin- the son of the Leader.

"It is your goal that matters to you at the moment. For now, that is. Later, you will find out what you have to do." Mario lets Desmond go before patting the young man's shoulders, "There is a spare room across from this one- Go ahead and change to the clothing you arrived in this time in. I have a feeling," He pauses, "That while I would have to find a way to placate my nipote... today might be
Desmond closes his eyes, knowing too well that he is thinking. Honestly, he didn't want to go. He doesn't want Ezio and Altair to resume what their lives are supposed to be. He wants to stay in the state that he's in.

But the reality is, the world is going to end and not just by the Templars' hands. There are Pieces of Eden that needed to be saved, to be in their hands, some which are purposefully meant to be destroyed since the power itself is too much for both mankind and the First Civilization to handle. The Templars' plan would succeed and overrun the Assassins- the ones who are waiting for him back at 2012.

And Desmond is- unfortunately- the one person who can stop all of the mess from continuing to the next generation. Glancing over at his bag, he nods before he looks down at the hidden blade from his time.

"Thank you, Mario. And... I'm really sorry."

That caused a look on confusion from Mario.

"I... might have done something to-"

Ah. Mario realizes what the young American is trying to say: there is a chance he could've ruined his nephew's happiness.

"If you mean making my nipote happy, then be happy that you did." Mario clasps the American's shoulders, causing him to slightly stumble, "I am not going to kill you for that- you are a strong person... so is Ezio. Nor will I hold a grudge against you for lifting a huge load from Ezio's shoulders." A soft smile appears on Mario's face, "There is a part of you who is guilty for playing a huge part in Ezio's time, along with Altair's time, isn't there?" When he sees the American nodding (with the obvious guilt written all over his face), Mario gently pats his head, "Don't worry; like I said earlier, I will make sure my nipote calms down. For Altair, I imagine there are people who can help him do the same."

Desmond lets out a sigh before he looks down at the sword and the weapons belt that contains the items Altair and Ezio gave him for weapons practice, "...though I might have to take these with me... but what do I-"

"Oh, I don't know where those came from. I am going to assume that they actually came with you when you arrived," Mario offhandedly comments, but he winks, knowing pretty well who those pieces of equipment were from. "You can change in the room down the hallway. But take the outer coat with you; it can help blend you in with us."

The American Assassin can't help but grin, knowing that Mario is also helping him get away with the explanation as to how he got the Assassin weapons.

"Thank you, Mario Auditore." The American Assassin smiles before bowing. "I am grateful for the help in this limited time." Man, would the others be jealous... maybe.

"I should thank you, actually," Mario's eyes crinkle with slight happiness, patting on Desmond's shoulder, "...I have seen Ezio with various women and this is a dream, seeing the Master Assassin Altair himself. But in the only time in which I will say, never has those two been happy to be with anyone else except with you. All of you are separated by time, though... I wish you all the best of luck."
I wish I can repay them by staying here... Desmond can feel his throat constricting (which he quickly gets rid of) as he nods, before quickly exiting the room (quietly) and entering inside of the room Mario told him about and takes out his folded and washed clothing (the T-Shirt, jeans, jacket, and shoes) before staring at himself in the mirror before grimacing, eyeing the amount of belts and layers of clothing he was wearing.

"...Christ. This is going to suck." The American groans before he carefully takes out the belt that was around his waist. He doesn't hear the door slightly open and closing as Desmond manages to carefully take out each layer of the current clothing. As soon as he takes off the coat that covers just the shirt and pants (not to mention the annoyingly tight boots he has gotten sick of wearing), he glances over at himself one last time before letting out a small chuckle of amusement.

Had he worn this outfit in front of Connor, Clay, Rebecca, Lucy, and Shaun, he would see that their expressions would be priceless.

Well, Connor would just wonder what idiot possessed Desmond to wear it while Clay and Shaun would poke fun at him (okay, Shaun would be the most likely person to call him a brainless moron and then point out every component of his clothing before Desmond would have the itching urge to duct-tape Shaun's motor-fact spewing mouth shut). Lucy would be the one who would say Desmond would look somewhat exactly like Ezio and compare him to the Italian (and maybe laugh) while Rebecca would take some photos, claiming it would be perfect for some cosplay in the future (or she would've said with those three pieces of outfit alone, he would look like some badass pirate).

In any case, Desmond gives a small sad smile, knowing that he would probably get the chance to go home, but to leave here-

-it would be something like leaving a piece of his soul behind.

"Well, I did grow attached to wearing this, but..." He manages to effortlessly take out the shirt first before swiftly placing his newly washed T-shirt over it and giving a small sigh of relief at the feel of soft cotton as opposed to the somewhat scratchy material of the shirt.

"Not a bad sight."

Desmond could've jumped about a good five inches, but instead of doing so (and partially thanks to the training that made him more focused), he warily turns around to see the Italian standing at the now closed door, his hood down as a small smile graces his normally teasing face. The American gawks before heaving out a sigh of relief.

"Fucking Hell- you scared me, dammit!" He grumbles as he finishes tugging down his shirt before turning around to take off those damn pants, slight red in the face as he can hear the light footsteps behind him, "Christ, I can't even change by myself... I thought you were with the others."

"They are talking among themselves to find out the best way to distract the guards- this is something I have gotten used to before," Ezio chuckles as he sees the younger quickly pull up the jeans before gently wrapping his arm around the American's waist, "Do they still fit you well?"

"Yeah... they do, despite it being rough and all," Desmond mutters, trying to get to his zipper and button to fasten his pants (It wasn't helping with Ezio being close to him) before managing to succeed, "...what?"

"It seems as if we aren't the only ones alone," Ezio turns, his grin a bit more mischievous as Altair enters in before silently shutting the door, "How long?"
"They need about an hour to prepare everything." The Syrian grumbles, taking his hood off once more to allow his face to cool down before glancing to see Desmond's former clothing again. "Aren't those suffocating?" The elder frowns, seeing how... form-fitting the jeans and T-shirt are to the young Assassin.

"I'm fine wearing these since I've gotten used to them," Desmond manages to grab his sneakers and swiftly ties them on as Altair and Ezio continue to observe his reactions as if they were foreign to him. "...what?"

"Aren't those a bit troublesome?" Ezio was pretty much curious as to what his tesoro was doing, "Your... footwear."

"No, it just needs some time to get used to for you both," Desmond gives a small nod to the two other men in the room, before pausing and glancing over them with a grin, "...well, if you were to wear them, I don't think you both would exactly enjoy it. They're not exactly like what you're wearing..." he eyes the clothing that was on a small heap on the floor, "...I'm sorry. Ezio, how the hell does you manage to wear these one without getting itchy!? And.. you, Altair, for having all of.. these?" He is glancing over at the clothing Altair opts to wear- the one suited for Masyaf and not for the damp climate like Venice.

"It's just the matter of adjustments," Altair murnurs as he steps closer to Desmond, "And adaptation."

"I really wonder about that," The American grumbles to himself, this time feeling his face flushing a bit when he sees the small smile gracing the Syrian before hearing Ezio scowl as the Italian hugs Desmond tighter, "H-hey!"

"You're already had my tesoro for the day, old man," Ezio grumbles, looking at Altair as if he's holding onto an item that he really doesn't want to be taken away, "What are you really here for?"

"Hmn," Was all he can hear before feeling the Syrian giving a small kiss on Desmond's neck, causing the other to squeak in reaction- well, there was a slight indication of a hickey there left by said guy behind him, "...it truly suits you." Altair intentionally ignores Ezio as he ruffles Desmond's hair (who scowls in irritation), "And that- habibi- was for luck."

"Yeah, for luck, I'm sure," Desmond blushes, but there was a nervous grin on his place, "...though I'm worried."

"Do not be," Altair chuckles, knowing pretty well this is actually a real mission- not one in which Desmond has re-experienced, "You already have the basics down."

"Not to mention how much you have improved for the last few days," Ezio's accent is now making Desmond mentally groan (at how freaking seductive the Italian is for using the English language), "Congratulations, tesoro. I didn't think my uncle would be impressed."

"You do realize that both of your accents isn't really helping me relax, you know." The American's blush gets a bit darker, "Why can't you... speak in your native language?"

"Oh?" Another chuckle before Altair stole a kiss from Desmond, "And why is that, habibi?"

Another pause, "Perhaps there is a part of you who has fallen for that part of us?"

"You guys aren't even playing fair!" A pause, "And my Arabic and Italian sucks!"

"So?" Both Assassin smirk at the same time.
That made the American blink before groaning, "...forget I said that, I have a feeling you can understand me well," Desmond mutters, his face darkening before straightening out, "H-Hey, shouldn't we get going?"

"We should," Ezio then pauses before releasing his hug as he remembered something, "...hold on, do you have your hidden blade at hand?"

Desmond’s shoulders instantly drops into one of ‘what the hell do you think?’ response as he lifts up his right arm, showing his personal hidden blade (the modern one), "And before you ask," He pats the sword on his weapons belt, which surprisingly made him look like a modern warrior now that he thought about it, ".I do have the throwing knives hidden in my jacket; the blade Clay gave me in my pocket, the sword you gave me, the bombs I made from Altair are in my bag, and no, they are not really clunky." A pause, "...I had Teodora help me with the jacket to fit my knives so it will be easier for me to retrieve them."

In all honesty though, He can't help but wonder, Rebecca and Lucy are going to kill me for that since they bought the clothing.

"Ah," The two older men were surprised to see how prepared Desmond was before Altair lets out a chuckle, one of amusement and relief that the young man was not so dense after all. Ezio heaves a sigh of relief, placing his hand over his chest.

"...why do you ask me this?" The American eyes at the two with a bit of suspicion, "Look, I am planning to keep the weapon belt-"

"I know, I know, tesoro mio," Ezio suddenly chuckles as he takes out something from his belt, "But perhaps we have one more thing that can aid you."

That catches Desmond really off-guard.

"...ha?" He blinks, confused before echoing, "...wait, did you just say 'we'?"

"You're not hearing things, habibi," Altair shakes his head as Ezio hands over a package to the young Assassin, "Even if the damned fool and I disagree a lot of a lot of things and fight-"

"For too many reasons," Ezio rolls his eyes, not even caring of Altair is glaring at him to shut up.

"-but we both are proud of you for how much you have overcome to get this far.” The Syrian indicates Desmond to open the package, in which the time traveler does... before his eyes slightly widen, revealing what is in front of him.

There are two leather gloves, adorned and flanked with metal plates- shielding the knuckles and the exterior part of the hand; attached with it is a small mechanism that shields a small blade- attached to the middle finger, thumb, and ring finger. The other two items in there are plates that are designated to look like plates- the bands are a bit too wide for the arms and the bands are designated to stretch to the form of the wearer.

Desmond looks at the two Assassins in slight confusion, "What... is this?" He can't help but ask.

"Well," There was a blush on Ezio's face as this time, he is one who is a bit more bashful, "...there are some things about your fighting that the elder and I learned more about- how you also use your fists and knees in combat as points of combats since the bones are sharp enough to land a strike at the opponent-"

"Ezio." Altair halts whatever ramble the Italian man was about to go into, "Stop."
"S-So!?" There was a stammer somewhere, "T-Then how else are we supposed to explain the weapons!?!"

Desmond blinks, looking down at the four items before his eyes widen, seeing what the gloves are supposed to be-

"Habibi, the one you are holding are designated to use your fists in a more efficient manner that allows you to use the force to your advantage," Altair was huffing in frustration, but there was a light flush in his face as well, "The two metal plates are knee plates, amplifying your knee attacks and protecting you from one of the points of balance in your legs."

Oh...

When Desmond places the gloves in him, he grips his fists to see the metal plate form to his knuckles without bothering his hand as he outstretches his arm to prevent anyone from being hurt from his experimentation. When he grips tighter, his surprise comes when a small blade appears, the blade smoothly going through the small groove in the middle knuckle as if it was designated to be another hidden blade- except one that is used with punching. Once he begins to loosen the fist, the blade instantly retracts to its protective metal cover as if it wasn't there.

The knee plates were much easier to put on and Desmond can see how much it easily forms to his knees.

"How...?" He asks in surprise, looking at Ezio and Altair in alarm, only to get the two of them glancing away, a bit guiltily this time. Well, Ezio more than Altair.

"To put it plainly," Altair rolls his eyes, seeing as how Ezio is now, "It was to benefit the skills that you have been taught from birth. The brat and I thought it might be a good idea to build the weapons needed for such thing."

Desmond was speechless- looking back down at the hands and at the knee plates before looking back at the two Assassins. The lump in his throat is back, this time with-

"Desmond?" Altair gently asks, walking up to him before beginning to brush away the trickle of tears from Desmond's face, "What's wrong?"

"I..." And more tears pour from his face as he rapidly blinks to try and stop it, "Why...?"

Altair lets out a small sigh before wiping the rest of the tears from the young Assassin's face, "Habibi, do you think we would not do this just to help you?"

"But..."

"Don't try to underestimate yourself, tesoro," Ezio is next to him, now hugging Desmond and pressing calming kisses against the back of his neck, "Haven't Altair and I told you this before?"

The foreigner gives a small nod, closing his eyes as he feels Altair's hands gently caressing Desmond's smoother ones, "Yeah," he mumbles, "I know you guys told me." There is a part of him that wants him to stay with them, to be like this for a long time. The gifts prove it- and there is a part of him that wants to thank the two dearly for what they did.

It's not what the others would do (except for Clay and Connor, but they are family and they are close to him like brothers)- not even his father. The only exception is the hidden blade that was given to him along with the knife, but those were basics of an Assassin.
"Thank you." He smiles, placing his left hand on Ezio's hand while squeezing against Altair's with his right, "...thank you. I love it. I'll use it- it'll help me a lot."

"It's meant to be yours, you know that, right?" The Italian gives a small smile, relieved that Desmond plans to use their gifts, "Just use it to your advantage."

The American nods before asking, "Whose idea was it?"

Altair sighs (grudgingly) before grumbling, "It's actually the brat's idea. I would love to take the credit, but that isn't the case."

Desmond blinks, looking at the Italian in surprise, "...really?"

"Well, I had help from Altair's part." Ezio grumbles, scowling, but looking at the American's surprised face, he can't help but feel happy that Desmond likes the gift, "...to be fair, the two of us worked on it."

The American was surprised before he pauses, "Wait- that day when you overheard me... was it about this?"

"It was to make the final touches, to make sure it properly works so that you will not lose a finger. Leonardo manages to make the transition of the blades between your knuckles smooth and not be caught at any moment's haste." The Syrian eyes his right hand- the ring finger missing, "We had to create it at a limited amount of time."

"You mean," Desmond can't help but chuckle, witnessing at one point of Ezio's blacksmith skills (it was sub-par- good enough to at least make a blade), "You two paid someone to do this for you." He lets out a small yelp as the Italian narrows his eyes, smirking in amusement as he pinches Desmond's hand, "Hey!"

"Are you seriously asking me to test my skills as a weapon master?" Ezio was about to tease Desmond again when Altair stands up and whacks Ezio on the head, "OW- bastardo stupido- Cosa diavolo era che par, vecchio?!"

The Syrian's eye slightly twitched, "Perhaps I should remind you who is also more mature than you, idiot. But despite that," He eyes the door with seriousness returning to his face, "We should get going- it's about the time we should all head out."

"Oh, but..." Desmond was about to ask about the other Assassins' part in the entire thing when he silences himself, knowing the answer that they all know what they are doing- this is a mission, "...right. The most obvious thing is don't fail this or else."

"What 'or else'?!" Altair frowns, "There is no other condition."

Oh. Desmond mentally groans, forgetting that one thing about missions. ...I forgot about that.

"In any mission," Ezio's arms did leave Desmond's waist as the two Assassins stand before Ezio quickly nips the American, causing said guy to slap his neck in embarrassment (Goddamnit the marks are slightly showing! Desmond pales), "What we need more is success. And that," And add in a cheeky grin before leaving the door following Altair, who is tapping his foot in impatience, "That is my mark of good luck, amore mio." He smirks as he passes Altair, "...as is yours, stronzo. Though
not for long."

"Shut it, child."

Desmond wants to smack himself for how cliche that sounded just now.

But it did leave a sinking feeling in him, nagging him that there won't be any more time to talk about his life.

Ignoring it, Desmond grabs his bags and the clothing that he folded up before following the two Assassin that were waiting for him.

The way to Frari was- understandably- not that bad. Well, the walking from the Basilica was fairly simple; they all traveled as if they were in a group- which wasn't unusual in this part of Venice. Then they split when they reached to the Canal; Machiavelli's group (him, the ladies, Bartolomeo, Antonio, and Leonardo- well, the artist goes back to his studio to prepare his studio for their endpoint of their plan), but he goes agree to go with the group in case something happens to him on the way) went ahead first to cross the Canal; the five Assassins wait until the two boats that held the larger party vanishes before approaching to the Canal, waiting for an available gondola.

Well, that is, until-

"I am NOT going in there."

Desmond, Ezio, La Volpe, and Mario stare at the only Assassin that instantly shirks back when he saw what they were going to cross the river roads on. When Ezio tries to prevent his snicker (it failed as he begins to shake in laughter), he gains Mario's glare and La Volpe pinching the bridge of his nose in ire over at this- ridiculous predicament. Desmond, on the other hand, lets out a heavy groan before walking over to the Syrian.

"Hey, are you all getting in or not!?” They can hear the boatman tap impatiently in the gondola port, "I might have other customers to help, you know!"

"Dio, I am going to kill this man..." Mario groans before walking over to the boatman. La Volpe and Ezio share a wary glance before going after Mario to at least try to appease both him and the boatman, leaving Desmond with Altair.

"It's a gondola, Altair," The American was hoping he got that right, "We are not going to fall in the water. I know that-" He glances to the canal, "Those are what the boats are here for."

The Syrian grunts, "Even if that is the case, boats can capsize. That does not make any sort of difference to me."

That still didn't make Altair budge, huh...? Desmond hangs his head, going to somehow regret what he's about to. Remember, Des, this is just to encourage him... not because you want to kiss him again... (in which Desmond is lying to himself about that).

"Altair," The Syrian was about to snap back at Desmond when he feels soft lips brush up against his own in a quick, chaste kiss before quickly going away. Altair's eyes were slightly wide as he sees a bashful Desmond, pocketing his jacket as he looks away.

"...what was that for?"
"To let you know that... that I'm with you when we cross that river, okay?" Desmond's face is red as he quickly mutters out the second part of his sentence, causing Altair to lift Desmond's face up to meet sharpening dark amber.

"Say that again?"

"And... and if you calm down and get on," Desmond grumbles, getting even more embarrassed, "...I'll give you a kiss again as a reward."

Altair was surprised before chuckling with amusement as his eyes slightly glinted with mirth and determination before they swirled with love and desire-

"Come on, bastardo!" Ezio hisses to the three as La Volpe and Mario try to distract the annoyed gondola bower, "Let's hurry before he decides to go away!"

"We're coming, Ezio!" Desmond manages to gesture Ezio before grabbing Altair's hand, "Come on!"

It wasn't until when the three Assassins manage to reach to the harbor did Mario pay the boatman with a lot of money (possibly for the trouble for going through this) before La Volpe follows, muttering something to the older man about anger control issues. Ezio shakes his head before entering in the boat; Desmond was going to step in when he gets pulled back by the Syrian. The American was about to say something-

"Perhaps you need more than a simple kiss to persuade me, habibi," Altair murmurs, a smirk evident on his lips, "But for now because of time... this will do."

Desmond's face paints a shade darker than usual as he enters in the boat with Altair following behind him; by the time all five of them were seated in the gondola, the boatman shoves the boat away and gently glides through the Canal to the location Mario is pointing to. Knowing the length of the Canal, this will take a while to find a safe port for them to land.

It wasn't until he feels Ezio gently tap his arm that he looks at the Italian.

"How did you convince Altair to come in?"

"Just a bit of persuasion," Desmond grumbles in response, seeing as how Altair is closing his eyes and trying to lean back against the side of the boat to avoid any motion sickness, "...why?"

"Well..." The Italian pouts, "Perhaps I want to see how you got him to get in the boat, tesoro."

The American gawks before turning to see if Altair can even hear this-

"I'm pretty sure he doesn't mind as much, tesoro," Ezio chuckles, "...even if I envy his company around you."

"Oh for the love of God..." Desmond quietly mutters (and checking to see if the two other Assassins are busy aiding the boatman- which they are- and if there is nobody else around the Canal) before giving Ezio a chaste kiss, just like the one he gave Altair earlier, before pulling away, his face red, "In case you decide to pull some stupid excuse, claiming that you'll be seasick without it."

"Ah," Ezio was slightly surprised to see how forward Desmond was with that; it was a bit shy, but for once, his tesoro was more forward with his affections. He gives a small smile, subconsciously feeling his lips to savor the feeling not to long ago.
The rest of the boat-ride was silent—well, if not counting how Mario and La Volpe are helping the boatman find the right canal to stop at and leave.

"There, now that wasn't so bad, was it?" Desmond squeezes the Syrian's hand as the five left the gondola. Well, Mario having to deal with the boatman again because of what he said and La Volpe and Ezio has to deal with calming Mario and the boatman down before drawing an attention over something stupidly trivial (as over the extra pay the boatman wanted for the 'extra distances and time to find the right canal').

Altair nods, a grunt being his response as he shakes himself, "That was troublesome to deal with."

Desmond chuckles before kissing the Syrian, this time a bit longer and deeper before releasing it, mentally glad that they weren't caught by anyone yet, "Maybe one day you'll tell me why you hate swimming so much."

"For a later day, habibi." Altair chuckles, his smile going before vanishing quickly as the three Italian Assassins walk up to where they are, "Let's go."

Silence overwhelms the five Assassins as they begin to climb up the rooftops of one of the more noisier houses in Venice and begin their trek towards the Frari, which now that Desmond just sees it, wasn't too far off from the Canal- it was just the matter of time and endurance of just getting to their target location.

It wasn't until about one-third of the way that the subject was brought up again- this was over at one of the locals' events that they are holding, so the amount of racket made overwhelms the thuds and footsteps the five Assassins were making.

"...I still can't believe the great and almighty Altair Ibn-La'Ahad is frightened of stepping foot in water." Ezio lets out a snort of laughter.

For once, Desmond was so grateful for having La Volpe restrain Altair with him (he manages to easily convince Altair to not take out his hidden blade and to stab someone- namely one very certain Florence Assassin) while Mario talks to his nephew about his childish behavior (if you can count smacking Ezio on the shoulders and slowly threatening him about something that regards blackmail as an effective way to shut Ezio up).

It seems as if by the time they have reached near the Frari, there was already some sort of event going on (Desmond wasn't exactly sure of what it was, but this was something he did not witness). By the time they met up with one of Antontio's allies, however to get the news of what is going on, they realize that it was some sort of celebration regarding one of the more locally important noble's birthday.

...or rather, the son of the noble's taking place at a more local area.

The one thing that did bother Desmond about all of this was that they were indirectly involving the lives of the innocents just to get to the Frari, to get what they need, and getting out. The other thing that didn't exactly bother Desmond was at the moment he sees most of the guards there, he was somewhat relieved to see the Frari fairly devoid of all guards.
Turns out that Niccolo had some sort of back-plan to all of this, after all (well, who would? It was something of a one-time effort for them, despite his age); he does have his mysterious influences. No doubt that Teodora and Paola did some handiwork (there were ladies in there, after all). Antonio and his group of thieves along with some of Bartolomeo’s mercenaries (no doubt promised fun and some form of chaos on their end) were waiting for their signal- Bartolomeo and Niccolo are going to stir up some form of trouble. Leonardo wasn’t there- which meant they safely escorted him back to his studio.

All the American would hope is that they won’t get killed in the process.

"Huh." La Volpe sounded a bit disappointed, but he is surprised, "They managed to pull it off really well."

"Considering how much you don’t trust Machiavelli, that is," Ezio chuckles, seeing how loud and rowdy most of the men have gotten while most of the women wisely stayed away from the rougher fights, "You have to admit, he's done a good job with the others."

The Florence thief shakes his head before taking a few steps back to look for any more guards around the vicinity.

"Not bad planning," Altair can’t help but smirk, knowing so far there wasn’t a hitch, "Now it's the matter of entering in the church."

Mario glances to his nephew, who nods before looking for a certain wall before leaping towards one of the lower rooftops, no guard in sight (normally, there would have been, but it seems as his attention was attracted to the chaos). The five follow suit before seeing Ezio examine the area and seeing a door with the obvious red painted cross on it.

Desmond can't help but wonder whether this is the best or the worst luck he's encountered as he stares at Ezio. Mario, La Volpe, and Altair just glance at it warily before turning to Ezio, who can't help but grin.

"I told you there is one." He smirks, "And it took a while to get that treasure too."

Mario groans, "I don’t know if this is a good thing or bad thing that you stole something from the Templars."

"What about the Apple!?"

"That's an exception!"

"Be grateful." La Volpe deadpans, "I'm not sure if I should be proud or slap you on the head, idiota Ezio."

Altair lets out a thin sigh, not really exactly expecting... okay, he was expecting this.

"This is a Templar door." And adding with (this time, with another round of seething irritation, "...and you managed to enter in their territory without getting caught."

"Hey, at least I am fine now," Ezio is getting irritated as he grabs the door knob, "Shall we enter or no?"
The haystack was- for once- a freaking curse on Desmond as he was the unfortunate soul to jump from the ledge to the pile of hay. Hence him managing to try his best to silence himself once he felt contact with the fucking sharp hay on his face and through his jeans as he is gritting his teeth to silence his pain.

This, of course, earns a look of confusion from the obviously unharmed Altair and Ezio; Mario is brushing off hay before looking at the young man in confusion while La Volpe just stares at Desmond.

"I. Hate. Hay." The American manages to grit out in a whisper.

"Ah."

Desmond's left eye twitches as he abruptly stands up to get rid of the accursed damned dry straws of hay that are sticking to him, Thanks a lot for the concern, of course I'm fine with diving into a pile of fucking needles! That is, before he sees Altair shoot a look of concern before twitching a chuckle with a smile, knowing the irritation Desmond felt when diving into dried out grass. That- at least gave some comfort to the American as he mouths out, I'm fine.

Altair quirks a smile, mentally relieved.

Ezio silently indicates to the ladder that leads to another ledge that leads to a closed door- the one that leads to the actual entrance to the Frari.

Desmond nods as he swiftly follows Altair and Ezio up the ladder with Mario and La Volpe behind him, knowing pretty well this is the point of no return. On the back of his mind, there was something nagging him that maybe it was a good idea to place on the earpiece and make sure the others know where Desmond is so that he can tell them about the map.

When they reach to the doorway and allowing La Volpe and Mario to go ahead and join Altair as the Syrian manages to silently open the door to see if they can inspect a bit for the inside of the Frari and seeing if it is safe, Desmond was about to tell them that he needs to get out something when he feels someone's hands on his wrist, causing him to jerk up and see Ezio.

"I was..." he trails off, seeing the serious look on the Italian's face, "...you okay?"

"This is not the best time."

Desmond can't help but cock his head in confusion.

The Italian Assassin lets out a small chuckle before glancing at his bag, "The thing you talk on. I believe that you called it the communicator?"

The younger man was about to ask Ezio what he meant until his eyes trails towards his bag before muttering in embarrassment, "...oh."

"If I were you," Ezio's eyes flash in concern in an instant, tightening his grip on Desmond's wrist, "I would not take it out- for the safety of all five of us. I am not sure why-" He pauses, "But I fear the noise will give us away to the guards."

"Wha- guards."

Desmond was about to ask why the ever living hell guards would need to be in a church at the night, but he falls silent under Ezio's silent stare that usually meant it was not only a bad idea, but that he could potentially be correct.
The American mentally groans.

Great.

Despite the fact that most of them are distracted by what the commotion going on nearby the Frari...

It's still guards. There are some who are still sharp at this absurd time of night. And the chances of them being caught is very very high.

It's not worth it, even if I do want to ask the others to at least help me navigate through this church...

"...I guess I won't take it out then." Desmond sighs, taking his hand away from the bag before nodding at Ezio, "Okay... let's play this by ear."

Ezio nods, a small smile appearing before quickly going away as Desmond catches it in confusion. Was there- relief in his eyes?

Well, there isn't anymore problems to deal with, right?

"I hate to break the news to you both," Altair's eyes flash gold again before opening to his usual dark amber, "But it seems as if there are some guards in the Frari."

"But I thought..." Desmond trails off before groaning, "No way. No fucking way. I thought the entire point of the distraction was to draw all attention to the guards."

"You mean from outside the Frari," La Volpe grumbles, not particularly happy about this new development, "There are some guards inside the Frari- these were not the ones we actually had to anticipate."

"Dio. You are joking." Ezio pales as he was about to strangle the Syrian, but he sees Mario shakes his head, silently indicating to the door that lead to the actual interior of the Frari, "The last time I entered in, there were no guards in the Frari- I actually had the freedom to run around the area with no one around!"

"Would you like to see?" Mario grumbles, "I had a good look myself- and there are a few number of guards inside."

The Florence Assassins stares unbelievably at the two older men before silently opening the door- his eyes suddenly flashing gold. Then a good ten seconds later, he manages to shut the door without making a sound before seething, "Merda."

Desmond gulps. Oh. Fuck.

"Are they the Templars?" La Volpe asks Ezio, who shakes his head, "What emblem did they have?"

"Blue, gold, and the coat of arms from Venice." And another pause, "Along with some wearing white, red, and yellow with the coat of arms of Rome."

That made Mario sigh in relief as La Volpe grimaces, knowing pretty well who the guards are from. Altair frowns, "...they are not from the enemy?"

"No. They must be sent from the Vatican- ordering to the Venetian government to prevent any sort of
Bloodshed or any sort of disturbance," Mario quietly muses, "And to prevent any sort of thefts that any petty thieves would attempt on the Church. There are two guards working with each other. We still have to be careful- we must not attract the attention of the Vatican or the Venetian government."

Desmond was itching to ask La Volpe if he did anything to involve any church thefts- but even if that was the case, the infamous thief of Florence wouldn't sink that low just to earn some money from the streets.

The main concern was how to get past these guards to get to the item... wherever the hell that is.

"I thought guards would normally not enter in here during the daytime," Ezio was not happy about this new development, "Merda. And here I thought this would be easy."

"What would be easy?" Altair warily glances at Ezio, "Gaining a Piece of Eden when there are other men that would easily want to tail us for what we are searching for now?"

Ezio was about to snap back, but knowing the amount of trouble for gaining the Apple of Eden that he possess, he just groans, "Thank you for having that much confidence within us, bastardo. Perhaps you should've been there when I grabbed the Apple from Borgia."

"You're welcome." Altair closes his eyes, shaking his head.

"...now what?" Desmond whispers, gulping as he turns back to the thief, who sighs, a slight grimace on his face.

"Let us pray to God that we do not get caught by Borgia's men." La Volpe mutters, seeing Ezio's wary glance as well, "...and that Borgia himself does not show up."

"But what if that happens!?" Desmond can't help but hiss, slight panic in his voice. He saw what happened in the struggle for the Apple and how a certain Borgia member tried to take the box from Ezio and the others, "I- I mean, what if he gets ahold of the Piece of Eden again!?" He knows La Volpe and Mario are looking at him, but Ezio grips the youngest man's hand.

"We are more prepared this time," The Italian Assassin quietly replies, his eyes narrowing at the last struggle for the Apple that he knows is in possession of Machiavelli's hands (he knows the politician won't dare open it- even after they inspected it for the first time), "Borgia doesn't have the map, he has no idea what item we are looking for."

That did assure Desmond a little bit as he numbly nods, relaxing a bit.

"This man, Borgia." Altair asks as he glances over at the other Assassins, "Was he prepared to take the Apple with him?"

"The last time he had his squadron take the item with the utmost secrecy," Mario grimaces, "It was around that time and days before that we have heard rumors flying around, saying that there was an item Borgia desired that will change the course of history." The oldest man pauses, "We had our insiders mention about this to Ezio, hence we aided him in the retrieval of the Apple."

"With Borgia himself at the scene, we barely managed to get the Apple away from him," La Volpe's lips were drawn into a thin line, "It was at the time we were lucky that he did not open the box to reveal the item."

"I see..." Altair quietly replies, feeling stares from the other three Assassins (well, incredulous ones), "Are all of you considering that he might have heard about what we are looking for?"
Ezio's eyes narrow, "On our way here, I heard some guards saying that they will send some guards to the more important areas in Venice after the scuffle- including the Frari. These are the mercenaries and guards the Borgia family have. It won't be long before they will realize where most of the Assassins are."

"What!?" Mario's eyes widen in horror, "Are you positive about this, nipote!?"

"How- how the hell did that happen?" Desmond nearly gawks out in horror, which was beginning to grow, "Nobody mentioned a thing about it to the outside- nobody had the map!"

"Whatever it was that alerted that bastardo Borgia," Ezio was mentally seething, "It must have been an outside source- not one of our Assassins have blurted a thing to the guards."

"...shit," The American pales before gritting his teeth, knowing that this means everything will be screwed over if Borgia does get to the Piece of Eden before they do- even if they did have the advantage of entering into the Frari through the secret passageway, "Shit! He'll get to it and then what do we do!? I-"

"Desmond." Altair's voice cuts though, completely halting what could have been Desmond's incoming rant of panic, "Calm down. Brat," He aims a death glare at Ezio, "Don't even think about it. Brat," He aims a death glare at Ezio, "Don't even think about it. There is a very good chance that he may never get to it- even with the information this Borgia has received- he will dismiss it since he will go for the one wielding the most power. The guards will be easy to bypass, even if we would taken the other course of action to go straight in."

"And pray tell, elder, why the hell not?" Ezio glares at Altair, wanting to know if by some means, there is some sort of miracle- before his dark amber eyes widen in slight horror and freezes, seeing a familiar faint golden glow taken out from the pocket of Altair's pouches, "...no way- imposible-!"

"It's not yours, if that is what your train of thought is, brat. Not the one that caused your allies to suffer under the screech that all of us endured and causing Desmond to have that effect," Altair quietly hisses, but compared to what the one sealed in the box did, this one was more subdued, controlled, and quiet. Unfortunately, Desmond's face pales as soon as he sees the all-familiar and all dreaded artifact Master Assassin of Masyaf has in his left hand.

"...it's the one that I had for a while."

And then it suddenly makes sense to the time traveler- everything just came in place like puzzle pieces. How Altair manages to understand Desmond too easily, how simple English, Italian, and Latin came to the elder, how they were able to understand him when he spoke in Arabic. How he was able to read what Desmond actually wrote in English and was able to comprehend in the basics of the future technology...

How he was able to follow Desmond from 12th century Masyaf, Jerusalem to Venice, Italy in the 16th century without having some sort of harsh repercussions.

And how Altair was able to understand what Desmond was going through in the Animus and why he didn't get as furious as Ezio when the time traveler explained how he was able to witness everything in their lives.

And why Desmond wasn't suffering from the Bleeding Effect right now- it seems as if it was more subdued, more obedient to the Syrian’s mind.

It was the Apple that Altair possessed from Al Mualim.
...yeah, I know. Before I can expect to hear someone complain (I am going to bet that there will be
one) about this, the whole 'able to understand a lot with the Apple' plot has been used before. It was
either that, or there would have been a language barrier that would've been severely limited to the
point in which my mind was scrambling around the idea that perhaps Altair would've had some
knowledge about other languages.

That, and it's also because I don't want to delve into how freaking complicated the Animi program
would be had it been developed in real life (like I want to research all of that and try to wrap my head
around how much programming and energy that would've costed in the world of Assassin's Creed-
considering I have other things to plan out and honestly, I am scared to find out how much planning
this would've took from the people at Ubisoft).

Researching about the maps and districts of Italy are a pain. For those of you wanting to know why I
had to go through that, it's because I have to make sure they have to be accurate enough for the story
so it has to be believable. Also, wasn't there something about how you can't use a horse in Venice in
the games? (Which I somehow associate with a mental image of one of the Assassins riding a horse
like Sgt. Angel did in Hot Fuzz)

*This was actually Niccolo Machiavelli's family history. Bear in mind that he is around 19-20 years
old when this story happens and how Ezio knows of him. By this time, it might be implied that he
could've began his influences in the Italian politics and dabbled a bit into it (or maybe learned a lot
about it). As an interesting side note, Niccolo wrote The Prince around the late 1510's- when he was
probably in some sort of pseudo-exile.

Also, I did try to look up the best way from the Basilica di San Marco to Basilica di Frari. In any
route look up, it does have to involve going through the Canal Grande- considering that gondolas are
used in Venice in Ezio's time. And not to mention about the several humorous mentioning that in the
games, Altair can't swim in the rivers that well (or is this because the controls for it are just that
difficult?).

What's next: The Apple vs. The guards. This is going to go really well (it's not).
Retrieved

Part 18.2: Retrieved

The back of Connor's head was reeling with a semi-headache as they wait near the door that lead to the inside of where Haytham was sitting in. Closing his eyes and letting out a silent huff, he rubs the bridge of his nose as Lucy and Clay look at him in concern.

"I still can't believe William wanted to speak to Haytham out of all people," The Native-American man mutters as he slowly opens his eyes, "What does he want to talk to that bastard that was so important?"

"I'm honestly not too sure about that," Shaun is leaning against the wall, glancing over to Rebecca who is sitting on the floor cross-legged, "For all I know, William could be asking him about Templar hideouts."

"Too obvious," Connor grumbles in response before asking, "Maybe about the Pieces of Eden or about him spying on us?"

"That's too easy," Rebecca shakes her head in response to that, "Your... I mean- Haytham-" Shaun's hand on her shoulder gives a small squeeze to warn her what she was about to say (and not even wanting to risk enduring another round of Connor's wrath), "Well, he might not talk to William about
"Or that he might use some diversions to avoid talking about it," Lucy adds, "The last thing anyone needs is the two of them to find a reason just to get along or... something."

"William getting along with that bastard is the last thing I want to think about right now," Connor closes his eyes, not even wanting to think about it, "What I'm also worried is if Haytham said anything about the Animus, being what we made it to be or..."

"William won't say anything about it, knowing him," Shaun shakes his head, "Abstergo wouldn't even try anything absurd like... we did. And speaking of..." His eyes are shadowed from his glasses, but his tone suggests weariness, "...I'm surprised we even pulled off this ridiculous idea- the Animus being a time machine."

The other Assassins face each other with uneasiness before Rebecca quietly replies, "There were some risks using the program as the basis for the time machine... that glitch though," She groans, "Arrrgghh that thing is driving me insane! I'm starting to give up and say that it might as well be caused by some stupid programming crap or even better, some moron inserted a Piece of Eden into it!"

Instead of the usual responses (Shaun, Connor, and Lucy wanting to counter her, as usual), all she receives were stares.

"...what, no arguments about it?"

"At this point," Clay shoves his hands in his pockets, "Whatever logic we try to use to explain what happened in the Animus and how the glitch happened, it's gone, hacked into pieces, incinerated, and probably thrown out the window. And no," He knows they are staring at him as if he is insane as hell, "I did get some rest, I'm not tired, and I'm sure as hell not on drugs!"

"I thought you were playing Portal or something," Rebecca grins as Lucy gives a small snort of laughter. A slap on the forehead means Shaun was probably mentally asking the gods to do something about his situation. Connor stares at the other Assassins in the most hilarious confused look.

"Wha- Portal!?!" Clay manages to stare at Rebecca incredulously, "How the fuck did Portal suddenly come into this conversation!?"

"I don't know, I don't even care," Shaun groans, the tone of 'I want to smack you all' returning, "But seriously, Clay, are you aren't delirious?"

The blonde just gives Shaun the middle finger salute, "Shut up. I wonder how the hell Des manages to tolerate you." He can see the British man roll his eyes in response.

"Clay, we just curious," Connor lets out a small grin, causing his younger adoptive brother to glare at him before resuming.

"I don't even think there's any way to explain it with hypothesis and conclusion. I mean, Des is stuck in there right now. The glitch has happened once. It happens again and we don't know how the hell that happened. And then there's Altair in Ezio's time, stuck with Des. I'm not sure how to begin explaining about that."

"I'm starting to think that maybe it's possible that Altair could've gotten the Apple with him and used it to get through Ezio's time," Shaun takes off his glasses as he rubs his eyes, "But what the hell,
maybe my theory could be wrong."

Lucy and Rebecca glance a wary glance at Clay, then at Shaun. They don't see Connor stiffen at the mentioning of the 'Apple'; his dark brown eyes narrowing as his mind begins to shift gears.

"You know, sorry to shift subjects," Clay frowns, "I've been wondering about the time machine. I mean, I know Dad... I mean, William means well, but I really wanted to ask him for a while about why he decided to make the Animus the way it is now."

That makes Lucy and Connor look at Clay in confusion as Shaun and Rebecca glance at Clay with questioning looks, making the other Assassin let out a huff before continuing, "A while back, when William first decided to make the Animus into the time machine, he told us the reason why he wanted to make like that..."

"So he wanted to retrieve the Pieces of Eden, that it would be much easier so that the Templars would not get their hands on it," Lucy finish the sentence.

"...well, that was one reason. The actual reason was so that so Desmond wouldn't go back to the Animus and be under stress again." The dirty blonde haired man is thinking about something, his grey-blue eyes narrowing in something that is irritating him, "I'm starting to rethink all of that for a while, especially since Des's trapped in there now."

They all look at him in surprise.

"Think about this for a second," Clay continues, "William said that our pasts were altered- all three of our pasts. Rebecca and Shaun were Assassins for a while- there's no way in hell they would've known about this beforehand. There's also the fact that he apologized for the way he's been treating us- about how he regrets for the way he pushed us and Des so we can be like the people we are." Then he grimaces, "This was after we found out about the Toba Catastrophe and what could be the Second Catastrophe."

"Clay, get to the point," Connor frowns, "What are you wondering about?"

"Was there a third reason why he made all of this?"

Connor and Lucy stare warily at Clay, their faces contorted in confusion.

"You know... there's been a part of me that wanted to know about too." The three turn around to look at Shaun and Rebecca, who also look concerned as Clay gives a small weary grin. "I've been thinking about all of that as well."

"Huh. Guess hell did freeze over after all," Clay quietly snorts as Shaun shrugs, "You had doubts too?"

"A lot more than I would've given credit for," The Brit pushes his glasses up to the bridge, his eyes filled with concern, "Maybe it got worse after Desmond got trapped with the glitch, I don't know. But it has tacked in my brain every time we used that machine, to make our missions."

Rebecca sighs, tapping her foot as she looks over at the door to the room, "Same for me; but for now," She indicates to the door, "I'm curious to find out what's taking William and Haytham so long."

"That's another thing I want to bring up," Shaun's eyes glance to the door, "It's been about five minutes so far, and there's nothing suspicious that's coming up that's warranting out attention."
There was the usual silence before Connor frowns.

"...wait, that's the odd thing. Why aren't there any screaming or... something of the sort?"

"I dunno," Lucy shrugs, "Is that supposed to be the normal reaction?"

"What was supposed to be the reaction?" Clay asks Connor, earning a stare from him before sighing, "...ah, never mind, I think it was supposed to be the yelling, screaming, and threatening."

There was another round of silence, which did last longer than the usual five seconds until Rebecca asks, "Do you think we should eavesdrop on the call?"

It got a reaction, of course.

"You just read my mind," Lucy sighs in relief as she grabs her iPhone while Clay walks over to the technician. Only Connor and Shaun stare at the three before staring at the three other Assassins, who are beginning to set up the iPhone before Connor cuts in.

"I hate to ask this, but is this really necessary?"

"Well, you wanted to know what the hell's going on too!" Clay exclaims (in a whisper low enough to not catch anyone else's attention), "I mean- do you?"

"But- I mean- argh, you idiots are hopeless." Shaun lifts his arms up in defeat before shaking his head, "Know what? I'm interested too, why the fuck not."

The Native-American lets out a sigh before glancing over them warily eyeing the laptop that is in his left hand, "...do you need this?"

"What do you think?" Lucy frowns, lifting up the iPhone, "We can't just use it with... this, you know."

The oldest Assassin lets out a silent sigh before considering his choices... before clearing his throat and hands Rebecca his laptop, "One trace of us listening in, and I will gladly let Desmond use you as target practice."

All he got was a glare from the British man as Rebecca pouts as Lucy and Clay stare at each other in alarm before gawking at Connor.

"Connor!" Lucy hisses, obviously trying to find out what the hell's wrong with Desmond's older brother out of all people.

"Sorry," Connor closes his eyes, "...stress."

"It's... fine," Shaun closes his eyes, taking off his glasses as he rubs his eyes, "Same goes for all of us."

"And besides," Rebecca lets out a smirk, "When Des does come back, I want to see his reaction when he finally meets Connor's biological dad. Knowing from what Clay told me," She shrugs, "It seems as if Desmond really wants to punch the living hell out of him."

Then she sighs before cracking her knuckles, instantly beginning to type in the laptop at a very rapid pace as she begins to upload the phone call between William and Haytham.

"All righty then!" She grins like a child eagerly awaiting to begin his new project, "Let's start!"
The Apple.

Out of all the bloody things that should have never been created for mankind (that the First Civilization decided to think was a very good idea for reasons back then), that item should be on the top of any list of any category.

At first-hand glance, it is the most innocent of all items—just a simple orb that has some etchings of shapes carved into it. A golden orb that can be easily mistaken for a child's toy—a ball.

When touching upon it for the first time, however, aside the warm emitting from it, there is an underlying feeling that something is very, very off when it begins to glow in front of you. The whispers, noises, and unknown to people, the almost non-existent humming noise that can either hypnotize or ruin the minds of many people; promising seed to all knowledge, to the doors of all the answers one desires... or ruin for those who seek the deeply hidden power, to corrupt with a simple idea with temptations unbridled to all of humankind.

A preserver, a destroyer of the world, of mankind alone.

The double-edged sword to the First Civilization—once a tool, now a weapon.

The very weight that sitting in the hands of Altair.

Predictably, the others fell into a shocked silence as the Syrian Assassin clutches onto the orb, knowing fully well in the gears of his mind on how to use it.

Then-

"Oh no." Ezio seethes, his eyes narrowing instantly as soon as he saw how Desmond reacted to the mere sight of the item last time, "No. No way. No way in FUCKING HELL."

"Ezio!" Mario hisses to indicate the volume of his nephew's voice, in which Ezio closes his eyes to calm himself of a possible anger before glaring at Altair, this time not at all hesitant to pull out his hidden blade should anything go horribly wrong, especially now the Apple of Eden is now put into play.

"I know," Altair's quiet voice is going through the thick tension in the room all five Assassins are in—the Apple is not reacting as badly as the one Ezio had retrieved before. He knows very well about the state of Desmond's mind—he knows what not to do. His eyes meets Desmond's own—before murmuring something in his native tongue that he does not want Ezio, Mario, or La Volpe to understand at all—

...Altair?" The American manages to whisper, as if the room only contains him and the Syrian.

"It will not harm you." He sees Desmond about to say something, "I know your feelings about it. However, it is the very same one I have obtained from the hands of the man I once thought as a mentor, a father. It has gone through a lot of people, and the potential for it to be dangerous is high. I know what I am doing." The American now begins to realize what Altair is trying to say- "If this does anything to harm you, habibi, I will not hesitate to destroy it, even if I am the damned hypocrite that uses this same item to obtain knowledge— for the sake of the Brotherhood and to help the Assassins." He locks his eyes with Desmond, realization now dawning on the young man's face.
"...trust me, Desmond. Please." Altair whispers, "I know what I am going to do."

The young Assassin's eyes slowly close, letting him think about it for a second before gripping his fists (at least he doesn't have the equipment on) before looking up, "Do you swear it's not dangerous?"

"Not to you, no."

Desmond draws out a silent breath, knowing the answer to all of this-

-when he feels being jerked back, forcing him to see Ezio's eyes also closed, but his jaw is tightened.

"Ezio! What the-!" He feels the hand around his arm tighten in a protective hold, his back against the armored chest.

"Altair." No bastardo, vecchio, stronzo... just a simple usage of his name, only to be singed with pure anger. Ezio's eyes open to a fury, his left hand tightly holding onto Desmond's right arm, who is still in his normal state, now trying to say something, but Ezio wants to do this for the safety of his tesoro, for the sake that Desmond would not get into one of his horrible Bleeding Effects- "I will only ask this once and you will reply to me, only the goddamn truth." He was not at all subtle in his harsh breathing, nor was he in his prepared stance to stab Altair's throat, no matter how skilled the Syrian was in combat. "...Why. Why do you have that fucking item in your hands."

Altair's eyes narrow, pocketing back the glowing orb before turning to Ezio, "Around the time Desmond came to my time, I was looking at this item with a comrade, to try and figure out what it was trying to tell us about the world." Then he glances at Desmond, "That was the plan for what I was prepared to do before we heard some guards saying about an intruder in an abandoned building where Al Mualim used to store his private possessions."

A pause.

"It was also at the time in which I had that feeling that I was being watched- I wanted to consort to it for the answers at my spare time, but I couldn't."

"What was it..." Something told Desmond that he's already gotten the answer to it when Altair and Ezio heard Desmond's explanation on the first night he's trapped in Venice, "...that you wanted to find?"

The Syrian's eyes lock onto Desmond's.

"I didn't know it then that it was you, but I wanted to know who was observing my life- the feeling I was accustomed to long ago."

---

About a few weeks ago...

The buzzing was back- watching him (though it really wasn't unusual as before) as if it was observing his movements.
But that wasn't the problem Altair was dealing with at the moment.

"Intruder! Intruder!"

That made Altair look up, along with Malik, who looks extremely annoyed about their meeting being disrupted. There are other Assassins (the more tactical and stronger minded ones Altair can trust) in the room too who manage to look up when some of the Assassins' guards entered in, flustered.

"What the hell just happened?" Malik was the first to demand the guards, "I thought all of you novices were able to guard Al Mualim's possessions just fine!"

"We did!" One of the guards can't help but look a bit pale as he points to one of the abandoned structures, "But- But-"

"Calm down." Altair frowns, seeing how nervous the guards are in front of Malik, "What are you trying to say?"

"Someone manages to get past us and enter in the room-" The second guard was about to say something when a third guard cuts in.

"The intruder looks a lot like you, Master!"

That causes the group to fall silent before-

"...what?" Altair's mood suddenly turns a bit dark as soon as he hears this- a look-alike? That should not be possible-

"I...I said an intruder that has a likeness to you, Master," The guard who had just blurted it can't help but state it again, this time with concern (while earning the bafflement of all other Assassins and guards for being either brave or just plain stupid), "I am not sure if this is possible, but-"

"Was it a Templar?" Malik walks next to his friend before seeing all of the guards shaking their heads. "Then how... unbelievable- Just how the hell did an intruder come inside to our grounds in Masyaf!?"

It wasn't until the guards fall silent that Altair has a suddenly bad feeling about all of this.

"...what. Happened." His right hand man, his best friend narrows his eyes, wanting to use his one good arm to smack some of the guards senseless until they talked.

"The man said-"

Ah, so it was a man?

"- He said that-"

"That what?" Altair is getting impatient-

"That he was an assassin!"

It suddenly made the Master Assassin of Masyaf freeze in his position.

'...what!?'

That makes him want to examine in the storage area, to find that person responsible, to make sure nothing in there was missing. His eyes narrow instantly, flashing into the entire area to activate his
Eagle Vision, to make sure his mind wasn't playing tricks or anyone wasn't trying to fool him.

Everyone around him is blue. The structures were the muted grey with a slight blue tinge.

No Templars.

"Not possible..." he mutters to himself before turning to Malik, "Malik."

"I know," The one-armed man grimaces, his mouth also in a thin line before ordering some of the Assassins to check the area with the guards before clicking his tongue, "What the hell is going on...?"

"I don't know," Altair wasn't exactly happy to hear about this at all before something clicks in his mind, recalling something, "...did the guard say the person looked like me?"

Malik stares at Altair before sighing in exhaustion, shaking his head, "He did say that, but that doesn't exactly mean anything, Altair. And besides," The one-armed man lets out a huff of ire, "This... this might be a good reason why I would rather have some of Al Mualim's possessions burned."

The Master Assassin closes his eyes, toying with the idea. He would still rather keep some of it- very few items in there were valuable to the Assassins in which they would need to aid- to find some of the remaining Templars where he lives. But there was a part of him that says to burn it all- to stop anyone else from getting to the items. The only other item aside a piece of paper that looked like a map Altair managed to discover in one of the books that he decided to get from the former (now traitor) Mentor is the Apple, which he held in his hand.

"I'm going to the Bureau in Jerusalem," Altair grumbles, rubbing his head as Malik was about to ask why- "To ask the other Assassins if they have seen such person in there. Then we can travel to other areas- Acre, Damascus... all where the Assassins are. Masyaf is a fortress. I want answers."

His friend sighs, closing his eyes before groaning, "Fine. I'll get the horses. But this time, you get the supplies."

The Master Assassin nods as he turns around and begins to stride back to the living quarters to begin gathering his items as he places the Apple of Eden in his pocket.

He didn't want to tell Malik that the buzzing feeling that was watching him before had returned- right at the moment the meeting began until it vanished when the guards ran away. For a while, he has felt it, watching over at the moments of his life; he didn't know about it when he was a child. But when he started to train as an Assassin, that was when he feels it; a presence that was witnessing it all. From his rise, fall, and regaining of his title and now his ascension to being the Master Assassin of Masyaf...

Initially, he was annoyed with it. He wants to find whoever is causing this, to tell him to leave him alone. It then gets to the point in which he silently ignores it, to eventually realize it was only there to see him; the feelings evoked by his silent observer were different; all with the underlying feeling of sympathy tinged with every emotion with reluctance to pry into the Syrian’s life.

Altair just was too arrogant, too irritated, too irrational to take a second thought about who has been there for the duration of his life.

When it disappears, Altair was- at first- relieved to have it out of his life.

Instead, the reality of it hits him extremely hard- even at one morning when he can't help but panic,
trying to grab onto the feeling again. It was odd, unusual; this was after he obtained the Apple of Eden from Al Mualiam and refuses to go near it. He wants it to return as it felt like something cold and barren replaced it afterwards—especially because of the unusual whispers and flashes all in foreign languages and strange imagery, the feeling of the mystery observer was present, except it would try to escape Altair when he tries to look for it, to feel it again and to be comforted.

Altair only tells this to Malik, who has promised to keep silent since then; he notices that his best friend is worried for him.

The feeling didn’t return for a while—until he becomes the Mentor of Masyaf.

And when it returns, he can’t help but compare it to a companion, someone who has seen everything in his life (despite the reluctance, Altair, for once, welcomes it). He wonders if he’ll ever meet the source of this feeling; he wants to know what is truly going on, why he has this feeling the entire time.

‘Surely,’ his eyes narrow, ‘I’ll gain the answers. Soon.’

He fails to see the orb glow softly, as if it has heard his silent wish to meet the source of the presence in his head.

_____________________________________________________

It takes a couple of days for them to reach Jerusalem; though the Bureau were expecting him and Malik with the other Assassins who accompanied them (the ones who also plan to keep Jerusalem at bay from the Templars’ hands. As soon as they reach the city and into the Bureau, the first news involve the series of barrages regarding Robert de Sable’s comrades swearing revenge on the one responsible for his life. Altair just ignores it, knowing really well that de Sable is dead for good.

The second one involves the minor missions, status reports.

The third one got his attention in a snap.

"As you requested," One Assassin glances at the city from the open window, "We did ask and... well, there is such person."

Altair’s eyes close, confirming his suspicions.

"A man, who wears in white and... blue," The man continues, "Able to disguise himself among the crowd, yet this man helps the unfortunate and looks for things that others don’t know. Sometimes, he has companions, sometimes he is alone." Then the man frowns, "The other thing unusual about him is that he has a black bag on him... though it is very unusual."

"And do you think this person is harmful to the Assassins?" Malik asks, concern in his face as he glances to Altair.

"We... don’t know, but he does take down Templars."

Another Assassin from another region? ‘Impossible,’ The Master Assassin frowns, ‘There would have been a notice to us, signalling an arrival of another like us... What is going on?’

"I’ll take a look around the city to make sure," Altair wants to clear his head from all of the barrages of news; nodding at Malik to make him take over (which his friend clearly does).

"If you do find him," Malik sighs, rubbing his head in irritation, "Make sure to get him here. There’s a lot to ask, to make sure he’s truly one of us or a traitor."
"...good idea, but will it work?"

The Master Assassin jumps to the roof before exiting the Bureau to the city of Jerusalem, which looked the same as it was; the city was bustling with people going about their lives.

Altair lets out a sigh, trying his best to get rid of the headache in his mind before deciding to walk around the city, thinking it will help clear out his head faster before he returns to the Bureau. Silently jumping down from the building to the streets without making any attention to himself, the Syrian feels for his weapons, his hidden blade, his daggers... and the orb hidden from view from anyone, in his bag.

It was only Malik that knew about Altair carrying the Apple- it was Altair's idea and despite the former's grievances, Malik finally consented to the condition that Altair shouldn't try to use it at all- only for something important will that opportunity rise.

'It hasn't gotten to that point yet,' The Syrian muses to himself, breathing the scent of the spices and coffee as he swiftly walks among the villagers; some who are more willing to accept him as an ally, others as neutral. His hood was up to prevent anyone from pointing him out in the crowd.

That is, before he accidentally bumps into someone wearing a black robe by accident.

"Sorry," was all he can hear from the person who instantly walks off, not meeting up to apologize. Altair manages to straighten his hood before brushing off any traces of dust or any sort of grime the person could have on his clothing before walking inwards to the borderline between the middle class and upper class section of Jerusalem-

-that is, until he has a feeling that something was missing when he places his hand to the pocket where he had the map he found among Al Mualim's possessions.

"What the...?" he frowns, "I know I had it in there somewhere... I had it with me when I was walking among the-

'The person who I came in contact with!'

That made his dark amber eyes widen before turning back around, to try and find the person that had just bumped into him. The one wearing a black robe who had just pickpocket him.

'So, he has the map, huh...?' His eyes narrows, not even seeing the golden glow from the Apple in his pocket at all, 'Very well, then. Let me find you...'

He swiftly enters the alleyway before jumping on the walls to reach the rooftops, immediately closing his eyes before opening them to activate the Eagle Vision, to track his would-be target and get that map back.

From the sea of white and some red guards, he can't find the person. It wasn't until he deactivates it and jumps from roof to roof that he finally spots the person in the black robe-

-except a part of him notices that the person was wearing not only strange footwear, but also unusually light blue pants that could've made him stand out- even if he did try to wear the robe. Curious, he tries to get a closer inspection of the young man who was wearing the black robe, knowing very well people can't look up the cities except to view the skies.

"I finally found you," He narrows his eyes, preparing to jump down from the roofs and ambush the man-
-when he suddenly finds dark brown eyes looking back at him- wide, horrified, and- hang on a second, why was this man pale when he noticed Altair?

And then the man suddenly bolts from the sea of people, his robe suddenly flaring out to reveal the rest of his clothing; a strange short white hooded robe, a black bag slung over his shoulders. The hood flies out to reveal messy brown short hair, and something black in his right ear along with a black armlet-

-with the Assassin's insignia in silver.

'What the?!' Altair's eyes widen before giving chase, now wanting to demand answers as questions fill in his head about the boy he just saw (who is doing a really good job trying to shake Altair away from his trail- how experienced was he? 'Now... I am intrigued.') before seeing a group of guards beginning to approach him.

Altair's eyes narrow as he sees the guards chasing after the young man, who manages to find another area to isolate him from the group of people, abandoning his black robe as a distraction tactic.

That was when he drops down from the rooftop between the guards and the young man, instantly taking his hidden blade out before engaging into combat against the guards.

"ASSASSIN!" He hears some of the guards scream in horror, but they were silenced as he throws his daggers before stabbing the guards closer to him. By the time he was done with them, he realizes the boy had just turned around the corner, hearing something strange come out from his mouth as Altair sprints to follow him, wanting to find out who the hell he is-

-the buzzing feeling returns when he closes the proximity between him and the young man, which made the Syrian realize that the boy was the source of it all-

-when he sees more guards approach the young boy, ready to attack him.

"Not again!" Altair snarls, immediately stabbing a few of the guards before throwing a smoke bomb to distract them and ending their lives with his hidden blade before barely seeing the young man running off again to where Altair knows is a trapped corridor in the area.

A small smirk graces his face as he quickly walks over to the man, whose face turns pale before trying to find a way out, in which something in his face shows that he did-

-to which Altair quickly responds by reaching out and grabbing the man's right arm and twisting it, forcing the man to slam his chest and head against the wall (causing said man to scream in pain) as the Master Assassin quickly inspects the hidden blade.

The Assassin's insignia is there- but it was etched in some unusual fiber- in fact, the entire hidden blade is drastically different than Altair's; the man doesn't have his ring finger cut-

"ShiiiiitshitshitshitOWOWOWWOWWWW-"

The man was speaking in some unusual language, causing Altair to arch an eyebrow before pressuring more on his arm- the feeling that was once watching him now there, the source of it...

...wait, it came from this boy!?

His eyes suddenly widen before he narrows them, instantly demanding, "Tell your name. Now."
“What!?” The boy sputters, but Altair wasn’t in the mood for excuses as he grips the boy’s arm tighter.

"And why you are here," Altair continues, "And what you have done to the map I had in my possession not too long ago."

He can barely make out what the boy is saying, but then-

"I can't get away from- OW! Oh god, shut up, Desmond, find a way out, find a way out..." He was talking to himself in a frantic manner- wait, his name is-

'Desmond...?' The name sounds really foreign to his tongue, yet it feels familiar, it sounds so familiar to him- "...your name is... Dez-munde...?"

That made the boy freeze.

"You can- what the- OW!"

Altair can't but admit, he was amused by this stranger's antics of trying to get himself away from the situation as he tightens his hold on the boy's wrist.

But he has to confirm one thing-

"Are you an enemy?"

A silence as he sees the boy struggling in front of him.

"No, I am not one of those bastards, Altair! I am not your enemy!" Desmond cries out in pain, "Let me go already!"

Altair makes a small 'hm' as he slowly releases his lock on the boy, causing him to instantly turn around before nursing his arm from being pressure for too long. That was when the Master Assassin realizes that not only was the source of the buzzing feeling in his mind-

-he has seen Desmond from visions the Apple has presented to him before, which instantly begins to form more questions in his mind than the answers given. The images of a young man being forced on some sort of unusual contraption

'So... I see,' Altair's eyes close before opening them again to hear the boy muttering to himself, 'He's the one who has been..."

But he can't just immediately confirm this yet; yes, he is an Assassin, which makes it better for the man-

He hears a step and immediately he snaps to see the stranger trying to get away when Altair grabs his wrist again (hearing the boy growl in pain and threatening- actually, he found this adorable for some reason as opposed to being threatened. For some reason, he's more comfortable in Desmond's presence than anyone else).

"Now where do you think you're going?" He smirks, very interested to see what the boy is going to do next; in fact, perhaps he should take Dezmund...? Desmonde? (Altair makes a mental note to find out a good way to pronounce his name correctly and to ask how the boy knew who he was) - somewhere else and not back at the Bureau, "I'm not done with you yet."

And that produces a sputter from said guy as he tries to get Altair's hand off his wrist (which is
failing) before looking up to meet the Assassin face to face and paling in what looks like to be fear.

'That will change soon,' The Syrian actually doesn't want him to be-

"GUARDS! GUARDS!"

That snaps the two men out before he feels Desmond finally free his wrist from the Syrian's grip, forcing Altair to see-

-a white circle being surrounded with unusual symbols- those similar to what the Apple showed him.
Altair's eyes widen in surprise before feeling someone push him out of his way. Looking up, he sees Desmond looking a bit relieved to see the white circle and was running to the bright light-

...wait. The young boy- he wouldn't- Altair realizes too late that this was something Desmond was looking for the entire time-

"What the.-"

"I'm definitely not staying here at this time- sorry!" Was that slight regret in the boy's eyes? It really didn't matter since the Syrian can hear the guards and turn to see Desmond managing to sprint to the portal.

...meaning there is a chance he'll lose sight of the person he's been searching for- the one whose image keeps flitting from the Apple of Eden.

"Not if I can help it," Altair growls to himself, his selfishness overwhelming him as he follows the boy, never wanting to lose the buzzing feeling again, not wanting to lost the person who has watched over him-

-not even caring where he will wind up just to keep up and at least ask Desmond for some answers .

Little that the two know, the portal wasn't to the place either of them would hope to wind up.

"...and that was when I wound up in your time," Desmond is leaning against the wall, recalling how that went afterwards and where he wound up in now, but he bites his lower lip, "But why didn't you...?"

"Had I would have," Altair tightens his hold on the Apple, "It would have been a long time ago. However, when you reacted to the Apple Ezio possessed, I didn't think it would be a good idea."

"What good idea would that have done?" Ezio closes his eyes, rubbing the bridge of his nose, knowing also that La Volpe and Mario would be having a lot more questions about it all (they really didn't; they were just silently listening and observing, which he has to deem them as having too much patience), "...never mind, at least now I know how you were able to understand us. But what..." he gestures to the Apple, "...are you planning to do with that?"

The time traveler blinks before he pales, recalling something regarding one way to use the Apple of Eden (thanks to damn Clay's research). And it was also something that would've happened to the three men that were in the room inspecting the Apple if Ezio didn't shut the Apple off in time.

It had to do with control.
and guards.

The time traveler's eyes widen, realizing now what Altair was going to do with the said Apple of Eden. It wouldn't affect Ezio, but if Desmond would be exposed to it...

Altair grimaces, glancing over at the door before glancing at Desmond, "...perhaps it's a better idea if-"

"Okay, fuck no if you're telling me that I have to stay behind that stupid door while you use that Apple to do something to the guards!" Desmond cries out, "I am not fragile! I... might have a problem with the Apple-"

"A problem?" That got all four men staring at him as if Desmond was trying to underestimate his Bleeding Effect (which he has done too much). The young man lets out a groan.

"...scratch that, I could potentially have... oh, forget it, you all know," The American Assassin gives up trying to skirt around the issue before he lets out a huff of ire, "Look, what I am trying to get at is that I'm not that defenseless against the Apple and if I wind up having another Bleeding Effect... just knock me out or something so I don't do anything really stupid." Desmond was getting really tired of being handled like glass even- he's already gotten that treatment back at home at 2012 from his family whenever he gets into the Bleeding Effect. And to see the Assassins in Venice all worried about it-it would also jeopardize the mission too, which could potentially and indirectly present problems that eventually reach to Desmond.

A part of him dully reminds him about how things make their way back to him having a Bleeding Effect- and there's no way his luck is that great (unless some miracle occurs, which Desmond highly doubts).

"Fine, we'll keep an eye out for that then," Mario was the first one to respond, but he frowns, "Just to be on the safe side, however, it would be better that if Altair deals with the guards before we enter in."

"And just in case," La Volpe frowns, knowing pretty well what happened last time with the Apple of Eden and what happened to them, "In this case..." he glances to Ezio, "You and Altair have to go in and take care of the guards- then the three of us can enter in."

"Do you think this is a good idea!?" Ezio exclaims out of horror before his amber eyes narrow, "No-no. I cannot go along with this- this asinine plan!"

"What part of what I'm planning to do is what you would call insane?" Altair responds back, not particularly happy about this either, "It is at least better than charging ahead, thinking that you can take all of the guards on at once!"

The Florence Assassin growls, "That was precisely what happened last time!"

"Except that was with Borgia and his guards," La Volpe deadpans, frustration slowly seeping in, "The guards- did you not confirm it yourself!? These are the guards from the Vatican and the Venetian government! Remember the First Creed, Ezio. How much do you think we have to risk!?"

"Well-" Ezio was about to cut in when he feels Desmond's hand grab his left arm, causing him to look at the youngest Assassin in surprise, "Desmond?"
Desmond lets out a tight sigh, having a feeling as to where their argument was going to lead, "I said this earlier, I've probably said this a few times, but I'm sure as hell not going to repeat myself for- I don't know how many times- but I am not made out of glass, porcelain, or any other precious jewel! I mean- I've been through all of this!" He manages to hiss out in ire, "In case you all might have forgotten, I've actually seen what happens to the Apple, I know what the hell it does, I know what you all had to do in order to gain those damned items, and you know what? I honestly don't really particularly think it does anything to my health unless it was another Piece of Eden or something else like... oh, I don't know- a freak attack."

At the point, he can see all four men looking at him, as if he's trying to get his point (because of time). Letting out a deep sigh, Desmond finishes, "Look, I'm trying to say I'm not fragile, I'm not breakable. I can deal with the Apple that Altair has. The one that's in the box is different story. I'm not reacting right now." He narrows his eyes, "Altair, as long as you don't use it to kill all the guards... they're not Templars, right? As long as they aren't, don't use it to kill them."

The Syrian was about to ask why when his eyes dawn on realization before murmuring, "The first tenant of the Creed."

"...yeah." It will be and always one of Desmond's moral codes, what he really wants; no innocents to be hurt, "I trust you, Altair."

The Syrian nods, a small smile gracing his face before vanishing as it came, "...Thank you, habibi."

Desmond nods before facing the scowling Italian, who is still wanting to say this plan is a bad idea (yes, the American knows it is, but what other choice do they have? Five versus... how many guards in the Frari and they aren't Templar affiliated either can equal bad news), "...Ezio. I'm fine. Don't worry. Please."

"But..." Ezio lets out a sigh of frustration, "I... I can't get it my way this time, can't I."

Which really meant: I can't protect you all the time, huh?

Desmond shakes his head, "Sorry. But I have to go with Altair on this one."

The Italian cross his arms, biting his bottom lip as he looks down at the ground as he is giving himself a quick mental debate before looking up, this time to Desmond, "...on one condition."

"...really?" Mario and La Volpe glance over to the wary foreigner (well, the thief just rolled his eyes. Mario, on the other hand, was grinning, thinking about that Ezio is more like his father).

"You are not to come along." He sees Desmond about to open his mouth, "Even if you are trained well and your mind isn't affected by Altair's Apple, I still can't afford to risk you, not for my life and I can barely take it if you have another... Bleeding." Desmond's mouth snaps shut, but he nods, closing his eyes. Ezio mentally sighs in relief before facing his uncle and one of his mentors, "Mario, I'm not sure if-"

"If the Apple Altair has will be like the one you retrieved?" Mario finishes, knowing too well about that for two times, "I know. We will stand behind in here and wait until it is all over."

"Just don't attract any more attention that what we already have," La Volpe can hear the church bells ringing nine times, "I believe the chaos outside the Frari is bad enough."

"Of course..." Then he faces Altair, who is slightly smirking, "...and you... at this point, I give up trying to dissuade you from this plan."

Altair narrows his eyes, "Your plan would have gone badly, had we not have a backup in turn."

"Shut up, old man!" The Italian Assassin can't help but nod tightly before his eyes glance at the Syrian with a bit of suspicion, "...fine, use the Apple for just this once. But do anything and-

"I know." Altair grounds out, knowing too well the two of them care for Desmond's mind and his well-being; he doesn't want Desmond to be shattered or to be affected by the Apple anymore, "I know, child. And I don't plan to-" And he tightly holds Desmond's hand to assure him that nothing was going to get him at all, not even the Templars, "-I don't want to harm what is mine."

"I can't afford to lose what is important to me either, bastardo," Ezio's eyes narrow back before glancing to Mario and La Volpe before looking at Desmond, "...wait until I return to get you three. It will be quick."

"Be careful." Mario sighs in exasperation, "Don't do anything stupid, nipote."

The Italian nods before glancing to La Volpe, "...If I get out of this alive, I will never hear the end of it from you, eh?"

"What do you think?" The thief smirks, "Just don't embarrass yourself in front of your tesoro, idiota Ezio."

"...what do you think I was going to do?" Ezio deadpans before receiving a slap from Altair, who just rolls his eyes, "Ehi! You fucking stronzo-

"I am not at least a bit sorry for that," The Syrian smirks before walking to the door, his hand hovering over the door handle before looking at Desmond, "...wait here."

"I know," Desmond nods before taking a step back to allow Ezio to step next to Altair, whose expression looks grim, but he nods silently to his mentor and his uncle.

"...you will be safe, right?"

"Said the person who has entered through the doorway in which Templars can only know," La Volpe shakes his head, still not going to forget this, "If you get killed, I will not be surprised."

"Ha." And his smirk (though strained with nervousness) returns, "How little of faith you have for me, La Volpe- hey, I can hear you over there, old man!" Ezio glares at Altair, who shakes his head before cursing something in his native tongue. Mario closes his eyes, shaking his head. Desmond can't help but sigh, but a small reassuring smile appears, catching Ezio's eyes before La Volpe opens the door.

"Be careful." Mario cautions the two Assassins before they step out, "You know who they are."

"We're ready for that," Altair doesn't turn around, but he knows the potential risks he and Ezio are going to take.

After all, he's been there before- only he was the combatant who has fought against the user of the Apple before.

As soon as the two manage to slip out of the door and manages to shut the wooden door silently without catching the nearby guard's attention, Altair places the Apple, which is silently glowing, back in his pouch for easy access before turning to face Ezio. Said Florence Assassin, however, has his eyes flashing the gold as he is beginning to scan around the entire area where they are in.
A second of silence passes before Altair turns to face the Florence man, "...well?"

"Not red." Ezio's eyes narrow, knowing too well the risks of facing innocents on top of being caught by some incoming men Borgia has sent, "...at least Desmond is safe."

And not being in a crossfire, Altair's eyes narrow before activating his Eagle Vision- what Ezio saw was confirmed as he sees a few white figures walking around the Frari; the guards were indeed from neutral forces.

The Apple grows heavier, as if it is silently waiting for Altair's moves.

"...let's go." Altair nods, "Do not mess me up."

He was met with a derisive snort from Ezio, "As if I would. If this plan fails..." The Italian Assassin trails off before narrowing his eyes, "No, I am not going to fail. This awful plan of yours, bastardo, better not fail. Even if you did it just to protect Desmond from reopening his wounds- I am not going to explain how stupid you are if this plan fails."

The Master Assassin of Masayf is silent, but he knows pretty well Ezio is implying if this goes wrong, then it's all going to be his fault. ...The casualties, on the other hand-

No! His eyes narrow into sharp slits as he begins to advance silently to the guard before nodding to Ezio to distract them as he reaches for the Apple, I will not fail.

"I actually was surprised- you did use the Piece of Eden pretty well, considering that you didn't go off the deep end." A pause, "In a way, I admire that part of you; being a protector to the people... You... are more human than you think. You also managed to make yourself included, even though like you said before, we are outsiders. But you're always the influence of a lot of people."

Desmond's comments from earlier begin echoing in his head; he will not be like Al Mualim, he will not fall into the corruption the Apple always tempt him with...

He can hear the guards looking at Ezio in panic before calling for reinforcements as the Italian Assassin begins to goad them into fighting and shouting in Italian, I can't; this will be different. He tightly clenches the golden orb, which begins to glow brighter in his right hand before seeing a guard coming after him. This isn't Solomon's Temple- I won't make the same mistakes!

He instantly kicks a guard before slowly gripping to the Apple and facing Ezio, "Ezio, you impatient brat, if you want to save your sharp hearing-" He can hear the Italian Assassin balk before seeing the Apple in which Ezio immediately knows what this means as he covers his ears.

Facing the guards that have been gathered to try and fight them, Altair's eyes open, focusing his attention into the Apple in his hand as it begins to hum at the frequency that he has heard before, causing the guards to instantly scream in panic while clenching their heads in pain-

Allah! Help these souls to a slumber so we may not induce them into a panic- never let them know we were here! Altair can see the glow overwhelming the guards; he squints as to prevent himself from being blinded.

The Apple glows brightly as it floods the Frari, forcing the guards to cry out before being knocked out, each guard seeing black.

"I've been wondering something for a while, Desmond."
That causes said man to look up at La Volpe, who is leaning against the door to hear any suspicious noises while Mario cleans his sword with a cloth he brought with him.

"What about?" Desmond asks.

"When we first met," The Florence thief glances over to Mario, who looks up with an interested expression, "You first asked me to never tell Ezio of your presence and that you already trust me, despite having never learned a single fact about my life." He pauses, "Didn't you think that perhaps Ezio was waiting for you to show up?"

That confuses Desmond a bit before shaking his head, "...no way. I met you, Paola, and Leonardo first before I got stuck here. Waaay before." He glances to Mario, "Even he's heard rumors but he didn't tell Ezio about it."

"I see," The thief nods slowly, "So... you didn't know about how interested Ezio was about pursuing those rumors and after he touched the Apple that he wanted to know more about what laid ahead for him?"

The only answer from Desmond was a stare of bafflement, "...huh?"

"Well, the three of you manage to hide it so well from Ezio," Mario chuckles, placing his sword back in the sheath, "The thing that bothered him more than anything else was that he wanted to know the name of the man that he's talked about. In fact," He can see Desmond stare at the two as if they were joking, "The one thing that bothered him more than anything else is that he wanted to meet you in person, for himself, but you won't present yourself to him."

"Would that explain why his irritated mood when I told him about Leonardo in the first place?"

Desmond recalls how agitated Ezio was when that revelation came to be, "...hang on. How did he know what I looked like... oh wait." He groans, "...let me guess..."

"After we looked at the Apple," Mario sighs, "Ezio looked at it again by himself, this time longer than usual before he tells me of a boy he saw in the Apple- unusual contraptions but what made him itch was a familiar presence that he has missed for a long time. He said that that he has felt it several times in his life; a feeling of being watched, observing his life as as boy, when his father and brothers died from unjust reasons, when he first begins training." A chuckle, "Also he feels embarrassed that the presence has seen his flirtations with women."

Desmond stares before groaning, recalling his first reaction to when he saw Ezio getting flirtatious with a bunch of women in the Animus (also, he knows of this because he actually complained to the rest of his group that he has to be stuck with looking through the memories of 'an arrogant asshole of a playboy' and that if he ever met him, he would give Ezio a good kick to the stomach).

Look where that turned out (though he has a feeling Connor will do the honors on behalf of Desmond's past whining and witnessing himself while Desmond relived Ezio's memories).

"Well, to be honest," Desmond lets out a chuckle, recalling that, "I... I would've done the following and smacked Ezio's head for those."

La Volpe chuckles as Mario shakes in silent laughter.

"I am relieved to know I am not the only one annoyed by Ezio's flirtatious antics."

"I know," Desmond lets out a silent sigh of relief though he frowns, now realizing where this ended up; for some reason, Ezio hasn't been that flirtatious around any women when Desmond arrived in
Venice— it was only focused on him. "...though he hasn't done it recently..."

And to this, he can hear a sniggering from Mario as La Volpe stares at Desmond before shaking his head, "...okay, what?"

"Dio mio, Desmond, you have just begun to notice this?" The thief stares at the young Assassin in exasperation, "You are thick-headed!"

The time traveler manages to stare at the two other men in confusion before it clicks in his head... before groaning, "Oh God. So, Ezio didn't... and Altair didn't even bother..." His face instantly blushes red, "It's already bad enough Paola and Teodora knew! Don't tell me the others knew this too..."

"It was really obvious." Mario can't help but smirk, causing the young man to stare witheringly at the older man before glaring at La Volpe, who can't help but shake with silent laughter, "I was wondering why Ezio and Altair are more protective of you than anyone else they have been with. Or why he wasn't even flirting with them when you were around. So I had to ask the ladies, in which they gladly mentioned the things I was wondering about."

Desmond lightly hits his head against the wall, "I think the gods must hate me. When the hell did you find out?" (By that, he was actually glaring at the thief this time), "And let me guess. Machiavelli had a 'feeling' about it. Antonio and Bartolomeo didn't even give a crap; they were just amused by me being a dunce."

"I'm not that dull in my observations, Desmond. And yes, Machiavelli noticed, he mentions those relations are not unusual. Antonio and Bartolomeo have a small bet going on—looks like I have bad news to inform to those two," La Volpe responds as he pats Desmond's shoulder, "Those two—Altair and Ezio—as arrogant and prideful as they are—care deeply for you. More than you realize." He chuckles, seeing Desmond's face blush red, "I'm taking you already knew?"

"...first hand, that's for sure. So... what about you and Paola?" Desmond can't help but grin at this sudden shift in subjects as Mario chuckles in amusement, seeing the normally infamous thief's face go speechless for once, "When were you going to say anything about that?"

"My my, you and Paola...?" Mario grins a bit too evilly, "I didn't know about how intimate you two have been."

Mario can't help but fail to hold his chuckle as La Volpe, the infamous thief in Florence (and perhaps gaining some notoriety in Venice and other parts of Italy), groans and covers his eyes with his hands in embarrassment while Desmond was stifling his laughter.

The door opens, causing the three other Assassins to look up and stop their conversation before silence overtakes them, tension instantly setting in.

It was Ezio, who looks a bit tense and rigid; his expression was of one filled with irritation and relief mixed together.

"So?" Mario asks him.

"It's safe." Ezio opens the door wider, allowing them to survey the results of the last minute plan.

Altair was standing against the wall, turning to see the others walking through as they see the sight before them; all of the guards that were guarding the Frari were knocked out. No weapons drawn, no blood in sight.
It was an interesting sight— for once, there wasn't an outright bloody war that took place in a church.
"...you weren't kidding." Desmond quietly murmurs as he surveys the damage, "No bloodshed."

"No lives taken," Altair softly mutters as he gently grabs Desmond's arm, "...I gave you my word."

A soft smile appears at Desmond's face in relief, "Thanks."

This was enough for all of them to begin advancing to the interior of the Frari— going into the nave and passing through the walls that narrowly make their way to the transept, to the altar.

The silence is beginning to frighten Desmond (if not counting on the footsteps they were making) as he walks over the unconscious guards before biting his lower lip before looking back up at Altair, who is now pocketting the Apple of Eden where he hid it the entire time.

It was apparent all guards that were in the church were affected; they were either against the wall or on the ground; their weapons not drawn.

What would happen when they wake up? The time traveler wants to ask this to the others, but a part of him says that it really isn't important; right now, searching for the Piece of Eden the map has shown is.

In fact...

"Hey, the map," He frowns, "Did it show where in the Frari the Piece of Eden is located?"

This made the four Assassins stop before glancing at Desmond.

"I-I... mean..." Okay, well, he probably mentioned something stupid or something that hasn't been asked (or mentioned) before, "Okay, the map I got presented itself as a map in Venice. What about the interior? Does... it show anywhere in here about the actual location of the item?"

"Take out the map." Mario immediately orders; Ezio was about to take out the duplicate when Desmond stops him, shaking his head as he takes out the original map and unfolds it, showing as it was; the map of Venice with the inscription. The obvious pointed mark is indicated to the Frari— no details as to where specifically it is.=

"He's right." La Volpe's eyes narrow as he looks over at the map again before looking over to the walls that they were going to approach, "This map can only tell so much—that blasted inscription is unreadable to my eyes; what the hell is going on!?"

"Wait," Ezio stares at the thief in confusion, "You... can't read the inscription? At all?"

"No."

Altair and Desmond look at each other and then look at Mario to see if the other man can read it.

"If you wanted to know," Mario replies, "While my eyes are still sharp and my body is still fit for that of Assassins, I can't read a single word from the blurb written on here."

"So then..." Ezio trails off as he looks down at the inscription again before letting out an irritated huff as he folds the map again, "Huh. This is really unusual."
"That's not our main line of concern; the map didn't show us the floor-plan of this church," Altair's lips thins into a narrow line, "It only shows that the Piece of Eden is in the Frari and nothing more."

Desmond gingerly takes the map back from Ezio's hand before placing it into his pocket before asking, "So... is this map useless this point on?"

"Unfortunately," Altair does not sound pleased at all, "This means it's up to us to discover it."

It wasn't until Ezio manages to exclaim, "That will take a while for us to discover! How the hell are we going to do this in one night!?"

"Not unless we all split up and search for it." Altair sighs heavily, knowing pretty well this is going to be a long night, "I wasn't expecting this setback."

"I don't plan to leave, even if that's the case." Desmond firmly states, "And this is something I want to... okay, scratch that. I have to do this since I brought this mess in." (He can clearly see the two Assassins expect that from him (well, more like Altair is smirking and Ezio giving a resigned 'Okay, I know...' smile) since- well, this is Desmond's mission outside of the one he has from his own time).

"None of us did expect for this..." Ezio sighs in frustration before glancing to La Volpe and Mario, "I understand that-"

"If this is some way of telling us if we should turn back and walk away, you really must have some gall to say that," La Volpe cuts in, stopping Ezio from continuing that sentence. The Italian Assassin stares and shakes his head before facing his uncle.

"...and you, Mario?"

"I plan to help and see if there are anything in here that benefits me in the future," Mario deadpans, "And no, Ezio, I do not plan to turn back. Why else would I be here?"

Ezio lets out a defeated sigh before shaking his head, "I- Well... oh, I give up. Well, then... uncle, what do you propose we do?" And this time, they all turn to the oldest man, who scowls as the responsibilities of the mission are now suddenly thrown onto him.

"Isn't it obvious? We search for the item until we find it." Mario sees that the two younger Assassins were about to ask how the hell are they going to achieve that, "By beginning to look in the nave and in the transept. And if we can't find it anywhere that is out in the open, then we begin looking around in the hidden areas."

"Hidden... areas?" Desmond warily asks before blinking, "Wait, I don't think I can go there."

"I don't expect anyone but the brat to," Altair smirks, causing Ezio to glower at the other man in ire, "After all, didn't you discover the hidden room where the Templars hid their treasure?"

"I told all of you- this was a while back!"

The five Assassins made their way into the transept and sanctuary- the high altar present in the elevated floors as the slightly dim lighting of the churches reflect the windows which reflect the night. The glass was thick enough to shine a bit of moonlight; not for anyone to see who is inside the church.

"Perhaps your brain has refreshed its memories by now," La Volpe sighs in exasperation before looking at the statues that were near the altar, "However, perhaps I can offer a first place to start." He points to the series of statues to the left of the sanctuary.
'And where is it?' Altair quietly asks before looking up to where the thief was eyeing. Ezio, Desmond, and Mario look up the series of three statues that were against the wall, "...in there?"

"Do you all have any other areas to begin searching?"

"Not exactly..." Ezio trails off, "Hang on. Aside those areas... there are also hidden areas in the Frari- one of them has the hidden room. I'll search for it there."

"Are there any more?" Altair arches an eyebrow; looking forward to searching other areas in this unknown structure.

"Si, the ones down there," Ezio grumbles, gesturing to the areas left of the sanctuary, "There are hidden rooms in there as well."

"I will search in this area," Mario gestures to the choir and the benches in front of the altar, "Any hidden items would be hidden in there; it also has the most amount of light shining in."

"And... out there?" Desmond looks from the wall to the nave (it is pretty dark for this time).

"I will search there," La Volpe volunteers, "All because I know some of you don't have enough skills to poke around even the darkest of places." And with that, he was eyeing Ezio.

"Oh come on!"

Desmond can't help but shake in silent laughter, "It is true... Sorry Ezio."

The Italian Assassin glares at La Volpe and at Altair (who is smugly smirking).

"And... where would I be searching?" Desmond finally asks, a dreading feeling creeping into his mind (meaning that there is a great idea where he would be searching).

Four pairs of eyes (two amused, two deadpan) indicate to him what the answers to his dumb question before walking off to their respectful areas assigned to them. Ezio to the right side of the sanctuary where he has been before, Altair to the left side of the sanctuary, Mario to the transept and choir area, La Volpe to the nave, leaving Desmond to the statues that are on the wall.

...crap. I really. REALLY. Hate my life. Desmond sighs exasperated before warily walking up to the statues, silently flexing his hands to prepare himself for the amount of physical work ahead of him.

"All right, which one should I start?"

A couple of minutes and after looking for any sort of strange out of place items in the series of statues yielded no results.

Even when Altair and Ezio decide that looking around other areas (Ezio knows the hidden rooms, which annoyed everyone else, but they decide to look around the nave and in the transept- the Bell Tower was completely out of the question since that does involve searching the outside; same went for the cloister) in the Frari didn't get them anywhere. Mario decides to search the monastic choir to see if there was some sort of hidden areas while La Volpe guards near the narrowed walls that is in shielding the nave from the transept- to keep an eye out for any more guards that can either be awake or enter though the main entrance (he did look around in possible hiding areas or plain sight areas before telling the others he's more concerned about guards entering in the Frari).
So far, nothing.

Not even when the two Assassins have utilized their Eagle Vision at what could have been vital points throughout the church. All but one area that Desmond did ask about.

"Why would anything be located in the altar out of all areas?" Ezio can't help but ask himself in ire as Desmond looks up from the steps (he's been waiting at the area near the transept and sanctuary).

"Why wouldn't you?" The American asks, frowning, "I thought it was the first place to look."

"Tesoro, there's one thing about some churches you don't know- in my time, that is," The Florence Assassin smoothly sits next to the time traveler as he turns around to look at the altar, "People are highly religious- most, if not some. The altar is one of the areas where the priest or whoever heads it is the only one who can touch the area... I do not know how it works in your time, but here, it is valuable to those who have communed with God."

"You mean..." Desmond stares at the altar before looking up to see the stained glass windows and turning back, "There is a higher chance we can be discovered and getting caught if we looked at what could be one of the most obvious hiding areas."

"...well, if you put it in that way," Ezio chuckles before seeing the darkened stained glass windows; the source of lights are lit candles that were placed at points that can illuminate most of the church. Then his amused smile fades into a look of frustration, "I don't understand. We searched through everything, every single hidden area- I even looked into the area where the Templars hid their treasures. Nowhere in this area can we see a Piece of Eden or anything that could possibly react to anything we do- not even when I use my Vision can I get anything."

So a dead end for Ezio too. La Volpe got absolutely nowhere- not even when he is above them, inspecting in the nooks and crannies of the church.

"Where... is Altair right now?" He quietly asks the other Assassin.

"He's looking at the left and right wings again to try and see if we've missed something," Ezio lets out a frustrated sigh, "The inscription says more cryptic talk when we read it earlier; do you have an idea what it means in here?"

"To be honest, no." Desmond grumbles, recalling the stupid inscription (What fucking bowl!? He can't help but cry out as he reread the inscription after looking at the map again before placing it away), "And it's... supposed to be the Immortal Stone. Or.. whatever crap it is." Even if the name does ring a familiar tone in his mind, Desmond is still confused as to what the Piece of Eden looks like.

"Out of all the things we had to be searching for-" Ezio shakes his head before hearing someone (sounds like Mario) letting out a curse in Italian. The two Assassins look over to the choir, where they see the older man cringe in pain as he is holding his head, "Mario, are you all right?"

"Yes- and I have found absolutely nothing in here!" Mario shouts back before grumbling what confounded architect thought it was a great idea to place the benches as they are.

Ezio shakes his head, clicking his tongue before facing Desmond, "Did you manage to find anything, tesoro?"

"Nope." The time traveler glares at the statues again, "Those spaces were too narrow too! Why'd you think it was the best idea for me to look there again!?”
"Practice, maybe," Ezio chuckles as he strokes Desmond's cheek, moving a bit closer to the younger Assassin. "Or perhaps it's because I wanted to see you attempt to climb the structure when I look up...?"

"You..." Desmond's face was red as he was about to give the Italian a glare for being a pervert when they hear another bang and another string of curses, this time a bit louder. Ezio's hand slowly lets go of Desmond's cheek, groaning as he shakes his head.

"My mother will kill Mario when she sees the bruises on his head," Ezio lets out a small laugh before turning to Desmond and quickly giving him a kiss on the lips (much to Desmond's surprise- in somewhere like the church out of all places?!), "I'll be helping Mario to make sure he doesn't injure himself. Maybe you should have a second look too; perhaps you can find an answer where we can't."

He stands up from the steps to help his uncle get out of whatever predicament or mishap he causes, leaving Desmond to sit on the steps before letting out a frustrated sigh as he turns to face the statues before eyeing the altar.

"It has to be here somewhere..." Desmond quietly mutters to himself as he stands up, his gaze not leaving the altar before frowning, his mind telling him that something should've been there when it actually wasn't, Is there something... missing?

He has seen what the Frari looked like (he had to do his research around the Venice area while he was diving into Ezio's memories- the same went for Jerusalem, Florence, Masyaf, and all of the areas he will be looking at while reliving the memories of both Assassins) and he had a feeling it looked incomplete; comparing this to the Frari in his time, there are more lavish paintings, the hidden rooms are more open to the public, more tombs were present.

Speaking of, what did the inscription say again?

"To the bowl of the savior of the Mother, a single drop of the liquid that gives life. The stand where the Mother stands opens; for the ones who have the eyes of the Eagle, may the Immortal Stone be safe in the Chosen's hands." He looks at the statues to see if there are any females on the said statue. Unfortunately, they were way above and perhaps too delicate for Desmond to try and poke around for the second time.

"Nope, not going through that again," Desmond shakes his head to himself, "What the heck does the first line of the inscription...? A bowl?"

Looking back up, he can't find any sort of item that would indicate a shallow bowl in the statues (who wouldn't? From what he can see, they're mostly of men in the Doge's clothing). The choir was out of the question; there is nothing in the nave that can help him since there is probably one or two tombs (out of all the things Desmond would rather not do is to desecrate anything involving the dead and their monuments) and paintings...

...wait, paintings.

No wonder he felt something was missing.

Looking back up at the high altar again, he narrows his eyes, expecting to see something familiar perched above the table in the high altar. The words from the translation are still echoing in his mind before quietly murmuring it to himself, "...To the bowl of the savior of the Mother..." His brown eyes trail to the front of the altar, but what does it mean by the bowl of the savior of the mother?

He looks around to see anything that resembles a freaking bowl when he eyes an empty space in front of him with a small altar that is standing on the stairs.
"...what the hell, I thought there was-" He stops himself when he realizes this was in the late 15th century- the painting that was supposed to be there (in accordance to Rebecca who had done the research about that place, the name of the Assumption of the Virgin by Titian) was painted in 1516 to 1518- early 16th century.

The painting (from what he has researched on later after his Animus session) was the very painting that propelled Titian to one of the higher levels of an artist; it has been taking down twice from the World Wars and has been restored. The treasure of the Frari (and the main attraction masterpiece in Venice) was supposed to present the assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven- it was a joy for the Catholics, raising hell for other religions. The story goes that Mary rose to heaven before her physical body decayed; it was her ticket to eternal life. It ends with how perhaps it was Jesus that carried her up to heaven. From that point forward, the painting was like a celebrity; the Catholic church defines it as their dogma- after all; Mary was a recognized saint.*

He frowns, having a feeling that the inscription is only meant to be understood by him only. The Assassins of this time don't even know about the future and what significance the Frari holds. Desmond’s eyes narrow, looking up at the high altar before he approaches the table, looking down to see nothing sitting on it.

Well, obviously, there has to be some way to get the item... out of thin air. Oh God. I think I'm going insane.

Better than doing absolutely nothing and sitting around until calling it off- the search was about to be called a waste of time.

He hears Altair and Ezio talking to each other, looking at where Desmond is standing in concern; Mario and La Volpe are keeping an eye out for any other guards that could potentially enter in the Frari. Turning his attention back to the high altar, Desmond closes his eyes, recalling the rest of the inscription: "'A single drop of the liquid that gives life...' That's blood, right?"

He looks down at his hands before grimacing, not wanting the two Assassins to see him doing that at all, "...okay, so, to come invisible bowl, I'm supposed to give a drop of my blood. This... is fucking weird." The rest of the inscription is in his mind as he quietly murmurs to himself, "'The stand where the Mother stands opens; For the ones who have the eyes of the Eagle, May the Immortal Stone be safe in the Chosen's hands'..."

Hang on a second... Desmond repeats the statement over and over again, but something feels really off, "...the ones who have the eyes of the Eagle?"

Is he missing something?

"Desmond," Ezio is walking up the steps with Altair behind him, "I don't see anything that can help us."

"It's not here," Altair is getting really irritated as he looks around the altar, "Whatever we are supposed to look for-"

"It's... here," Desmond quietly murmurs to himself, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath, before slowly opening it to reveal the sharp golden glow, facing the altar. He doesn't see the shocked look on both Assassin's faces as Desmond takes a small step forward to the altar, "...I just realized that it's not with normal eyes." And another pause, "And I just might do this despite that it's a stupid idea..."

But he knows it's there, the Piece of Eden is there, "...I'm going to take a risk."

For some reason, he can now see something resembling a small bowl in the altar at the center.
Walking up to it, Desmond looks down at the bowl, grimacing before nicking at the bottom part of his right thumb and trying to prevent a cry of pain from his mouth as a drop of blood land on the bowl.

He can hear Altair and Ezio demanding what Desmond is doing when a sudden white glow catches them off-guard, causing him to cry out as he can feel something about to burn-

'I see then...'

Desmond’s eyes try to open at this- Wait, who the hell is this- he wants to ask, but nothing can form from his mouth-

'The chosen one, huh?' Followed by a mirthful chuckle (How come this person sounds much different and why does he sound a bit like Aita-), 'Well well. About time you showed up. I was wondering if those damned Sages got to it before you did. Good thing too- I wasn't going to let that those damned three taking it either.'

Aita!?

And this time, he hears amused laughter, like it was warmth-

'That man? Oh... yeah. Well, no, not even him. Not when he's in the same league as those three.' And a pause, '...though this means one thing.'

Desmond freezes, feeling confused as he takes this new information into mind, Wait, Aita's... no way, he was supposedly murdered, right? Then why-

'If you want to know answers, use this item. But use it to your own will.'

The white light fades, allowing Desmond to heave some coughs from holding his breath for too long before looking at the altar in front of him-

—in the form of a stone.

He manages to look around him, seeing that the world was standing still; even Ezio and Altair, who were also shielding their eyes despite their hoods on, looks alarmed. Walking a bit to the edge of the altar, he can see La Volpe trying to run towards them with Mario; behind him are some of the guards-

—wait, Borgia's men.

Shit! Desmond quickly glances over before his brown eyes land to the dark golden stone with a light red hue, silently humming and softly glowing, waiting for any sort of response from him.

"...so you're supposed to be the item that I'm looking for?"

A soft, brighter glow in response to the dull one earlier.

"And you are... actually a Piece of Eden." A pause, "A solid. Piece of Eden."

The glow returns.

"...really? I feel like I'm talking to a dog." The American quietly asks, slowly walking up to the item as he begins to take a closer look at it. Seeing it for himself, the stone is smooth; grooves are carved into it like the Apples of Eden- gold lines pulsating as if it was alive. The stone barely fits in the palm
of his hand, emitting a warmth that Desmond feels familiar.

'So, are you prepared to wield it?'

The voice... Desmond's head snaps around, looking around to try and find the source of it, "H-Hey! Where are you- Aita!?"

'I know things are not what they seem to be; the item in your hand is created for physical deception purposes. This... is the dormant state of the Piece of Eden. This is the way it was to be when it's not disturbed.'

WHAT! Desmond looks back down, baffled to see that this piece of rock is a Piece of Eden (well, the designs and the way it is reacting to him does give it some sort of damned hint along with the way it looks like in terms of appearance), "Hang on a sec- what the fuck am I going to do with a ROCK!? Throw it!? Like that's going to help!"

This time, he hears a mirth-filled chuckle; it does sound like Aita, it might as well be that bastard who Desmond talked to in the Nexus-

-but it's not him.

'Hold onto the item like you would for the Apple. It will react to you- to you only.'

"This... better fucking work, Aita- or...whoever you are." Desmond murmurs, gripping the Stone in his right hand before closing it in a fist, feeling time working again, slowly hearing the chaotic noise, La Volpe and Mario trying to alert Ezio and Altair of the reinforcements that are going after them, the two Assassins realizing that Desmond is in front of him, holding a fucking stone-

For Christ's sake, you stupid stone, Desmond closes his eyes, squeezing the stone in his hand tight as he hears some shouting that he realizes means to surrender, ...you better work or else I'll chuck you to the masses.

The said stone begins to slowly glow, raising itself from its dormant state as the time traveler's hand holds onto the item tight, also feeling the dried blood from his right hand.

'It falls only to your hands now, Desmond Miles.' The voice whispers, 'You know what to do.'

A minute ago, the guards were bursting into the Frari, mostly armed by Borgian guards and headed, demanding the Assassins to surrender, witnessing the fates of the other guards (they were knocked out from Altair's Apple).

Ten seconds before that, Desmond has suddenly appears in front of the two alarmed Assassins, La Volpe and Mario, with something in his right hand which is outstretched before a blinding white light begins to emit- to blind the guards.

Thirty seconds after the Borgian guards stormed into Frari, most of them were falling down to the ground, screaming in pain as some of them feel their eyes burning in a hellish inferno, some of them seeing their lives and their transgressions, while some cry out for the other guards to fall back, dropping their weapons.

A couple of seconds later, one of the Borgian guards was successful to reach the youngest Assassin
and try to grab the stone that was in his hand before he screams his lungs out, forcing his hands away from the stone. A sudden cry of burning pain surges from his hand to his head before his eyes roll back, screaming out incoherent sentences in Italian before slamming his head against one of the pillars on the wall, trying to drive out whatever demons possessed him; cries of pain and agony horrifying the remaining guards before him.

Five seconds later, the remaining guards collapses from the forced will to be unconscious- their memories being slowly wiped from each of the guards' memories about the item; a painful price to pay for witnessing the item's potent power first-hand.

The glow fades- the stone vanishes into Desmond's hands...

...replacing it with a golden band around the young man's right middle finger, the glow reducing itself into the dimming, soothing glow before dissolving into the ring, going to its new dormant state in its owner's finger.

Ten seconds later, silence fills the entire church before Desmond slowly opens his eyes, to feel nothing in his right hand before seeing the golden band in his finger. Lowering his hand, his eyes widen to see the guards collapsed over the benches; unlike the Apple's effect on the Venetian and Vatican guards, the Borgian guards are sleeping a heavy sleep, not disturbed.

It didn't take long for Altair, Ezio, La Volpe, and Mario to notice the shock in the young man's face as he turns around to face them, looking down at his right hand before looking at them.

It wasn't until his eyes scan around to see the one lone guard, the one who fell into the depths of his insanity; blood from his bruised head present and slowly trickling from the pillar where he banged his head, foam coming out of his incoherent mouth, barely breathing, his eyes closed.

That causes everything in the time traveler's mind to halt, to stop and look down at his now shaking hands, everything of the worst immediately rushing to him before seeing the item in his hands, the very thing that has caused all of this- all of the guards...

Then, in a shaky voice, Desmond manages to utter as he looks at the guards in horror, "...what... did I just do? Did... Did I just..."

A loud, horrified cry was heard from outside the Frari in the darkest night in Venice.

End Part 18.2

...I'll let you all soak that in for a minute while I go ahead and begin typing up the aftermath to all of this.

Also, I have just realized I have botched up the entire architecture of the Frari and made things more confusing as I would have liked. ARRGGH. Sorry guys... (and this is Alternative Universe-Canon
Divergence (AKA NOT GOING TO FOLLOW THE ACTUAL STORYLINE).

*Thanks to Wiki and for ParadoxPlace for this interesting info about the painting. And also thanks for the fact I have an interest in Renaissance and Romanticism art. It is true about what the painting is supposed to represent; August 15th is the actual date in which the Assumption of Mary is celebrated in Italy.

What's next: All Desmond wants to do is to run away after he realizes what he just did. Compared to the modern day Assassins, however, the Brotherhood have a much different opinion about all of this.
Okay- it's been a while and... yeah, a lot of stuff happened and to put it this way: I had to move, change my jobs (I now have two), and writer's block along with more stuff.

So my most sincere apologizes about the delay. I have not forgotten this story at all and your reviews have... dude, I don't know what to say. XD

As a small consolation to know I am still alive, here is a one-shot before the next chapter ((or part) to Glitch. As always, thanks again for all of your support- I really appreciate it! This one-shot could be taken as a part of the series, if not- but again, enjoy and let me know what you think!

(This is also a flow for me to get back to the ACS Series.)

Disclaimer: I don't own ACS series. And Five Nights At Freddy's.

AU (possibly set in Glitch-verse...? Maybe?), just for entertainment purposes- pure crack.

Also an excuse to torture these guys.

And to get my ACS juices flowing again for Glitch.

"If there's any consolation from this," Desmond wheezes as his friends manage to get out of their latest fright, "This is the only time you'll hear me scream like a little girl."

Shaun, Rebecca, Lucy, and Clay all nod (too quickly) at the same time, still trying to get whatever lives they have remaining just from that one (rather, it was several times- BUT THIS ONE HOLY CRAP he hates that bear so much) jump fright.

"You know," Clay manages to find his voice back, "I think we should just- I dunno- stop for the night?"

"As much as I would love to," Shaun groans, "A bet's a bet. We still have to continue to the end all in one night." This elicits a group groan and complaining- especially from Desmond, who is actually the only one who is brave enough to get through three nights without any problems. This fourth one, though, was different.

He doesn't even want to think about the last night and how much problems that will cause.

Lucy is one who groans next, rubbing her eyes, "I hate this- remind me, who decided this dumb hell bet again?"

"I think it was me, and before you say anything-!" Clay can feel his girlfriend's death glare, "It was
just something I've been wanting to experience also... and I will admit, I am a wuss."

"...yeah, as if we needed that reminder after those loud screams," Rebecca grumbles as she shakes her head, "Okay- we need a better way to get through this night... without trying to get killed."

"You mean that Fuzzy Fazbear that constantly creeps the living hell out of me?" Desmond shudders, knowing that he's intentionally saying that wrong for good reason (and he doesn't care. He just wants to finish this game so he can just watch something happy and soothing like- oh he doesn't know- an episode of Conan?), "Or that creepy as hell Ducky or that stupid Bunny Rabbit? Not to mention that derpy Wolf!?"

"...it was either that," Shaun deadpans, "Or you could've chosen the one I recommended-"

"Nobody wants to see a skinned dead guy that chopped your two fingers BEFORE you slam the elevator through his torso!" Desmond doesn't even want to begin with that (he's seen the playthrough videos just to get an idea- let's just say Amnesia is a baby compared to those two games they were debating about earlier), "With just a video camera!"

"He... does have a point," Rebecca nods, "Also, too many dead bodies."

"...didn't we just get through-" Clay snaps his fingers, trying to find the name for that one game they played last week and actually had to discuss the plot of that story (if there was one to begin with in accordance to him), "Um, that one game with you being an insane guy who thinks you've been chosen as a warrior by this tribal creepy girl and then you start shooting pirates-"

"Far Cry 3?" Desmond warily asks, "...dude. I think I just slept through that one."

"As if the one from Amnesia was bad enough?" Shaun grumbles before sighing, "Right, this time, we'll try to make sure to close the doors-"

"That is if we have enough power on," Lucy shudders as she gently grabs Clay's arm, who holds her hand and squeezes it reassuringly, "The solar power thing is really crappy."

"And I don't even want to hear that phone call again," Desmond shakes his head, "I think that's been winding in my head for about- what? Seven times?"

"Dude," Clay groans, "Just... play the stupid game and make sure to watch for that dumbass duck!"

"...by that," Rebecca mutters, "You do also have the risk of getting that Fox showing up- wait, I think at this point, any of them are just terrible. Just survive the night!"

The group lets out a terse sigh before Desmond places his mouse over to the screen, clicking the Night 4 option... again.

"Really," Desmond mutters as he stops the audio for the call and begins the round of clicking on the cameras before keeping a wary eye for any of the mechanical dolls, "How bad could Night Five be compared to this?"

They managed to finish- and by that time, a cranky Malik (who was actually not happy about seeing them scared to no end from a frigging game) was deadpanning about idiot novices and how they were morons to even try playing that sadistic game. Well, at the same time, he was preparing some tea to at least get them to sleep (and coffee for him and Leonardo). Desmond is the only one awake as Shaun and Rebecca were sleeping on the couch; Clay and Lucy got the foldable couch.
"The next time this game night happens," The one-armed man grumbles as he pours in the hot water in the teapot, "Maybe I should suggest it instead of one of you."

"...what, you mean your taste in playing Halo and shooting games?" Desmond dryly mutters before grabbing a cup of chamomile tea, "I don't care what you suggest- just no Five Nights at Freddy's!"

Malik lets out a small snort as Leonardo gently places a blanket over Clay and Lucy, "...though you do realize," The man give a slight sadistic smirk, "That game has a sequel."

Silence.

Then Desmond looks up from his cup of tea, a pale look on his face, "...what?"

Chapter End Notes

There is... a third installment to that. *sigh* Schadenfreude-like humor. Why must you exist.
Disclaimer: Except for the new bastardous creation of a Piece of Eden, I don't own anything.

The aftermath of it all, people. And for a long wait, I really am sorry about the wait.

And the facts about the details from ACSIV and Initiates kind of threw me a bit off course, but I found a way to make it work. And besides, I have some things planned for the group...

...and despite what you all think, some of it are good.

I would also like to mention that a lot of stuff's happened to be for a long time (job changing, and now faced with transition between moving to a new place, got fired from that job, now have to do two jobs and dealing with personal life issues with family and friends... not fun and at the same time, dealing with horrible writer's block), hence why the long as heck time it's taking me to finish this chapter.

So- here we go.

AND TO THE ONE PERSON WHO IS ASKING FOR THE INTENSELY INTIMATE MOMENTS- I am tempted, but nope, not happening for a while (in other words, in about a few chapters). Just wait. *headdesks*

Enjoy!

Warning: Once again, botched Italian sentences, OOC moments, long as hell (and I can't describe for my life) action scenes, and just confusion over the structure of the Frari. And lots of angst and fluff to make up whatever the hell I just made last chapter.

"italics" = Italian, Arabic, any other language OR a flashback (depending on how it is used)

"bold italics" = over the mic and phone

"normal" = English

bold sentences = emails, screams, or Bleeding Effect (depends on how it's used).

Part 18.3: Dealt With (Part 3)

Desmond’s face morphs into one of horrified shock as he absorbs the aftermath of what just happened before him before he looks down at his right hand before looking back up to face their speechless expression, "...what... did I just do?"
When they couldn't answer, Desmond's eyes widen in fear as he faces the damages done inside the Frari before paling as realization hit him, "Did... Did I just... Oh God, Oh God God God God..."

"...you took down the guards with a blinding light," La Volpe quietly muses, taking in the sight of the guards that are limp and were leaning against the walls or lying on the floor, their weapons scattered, "Just like the way the Apple could have."

"But- what I just did-" Desmond was close to panicking now- no, it was akin to horror-striken, "That- That one guard-"

"The one who... ah, I see him," Mario frowns as he faces the young Assassin, "Desmond, what exactly happened when-"

"I-I don't know! One minute, I was holding onto this- this-" He tries to gesture to his right hand (it has a slim stream of his blood coming from it), but he stops, seeing the golden band before gulping, "...it was a stone earlier. What the- How the fuck did it change to a ring!?"

"Desmond," He can feel Ezio's hand at his shoulder, who looks extremely worried for the younger man's sake, "You still helped us from being caught by the guards-"

"You mean I nearly killed one of them!?" The time traveler cries out in horror, gesturing to the bleeding guard, "An innocent!? That guard isn't one of Borgia's men!"

"How could you..." Ezio trails off as he sees the blue and gold colors from his uniform before he manages to creak out, trying to reassure the young man, "...even still, there is a chance he could have been a part of Borgia's men-

"The Venician guards would have nothing to do with Borgia," Mario quietly reminds his nephew, "Some officials would not be this corrupt to work with him."

The Florence Assassin kept quiet, but his worry soon turns into a slight panic, hoping to God that Desmond wouldn't have his mind broken over-

"I broke a part of the-"

"No, you didn't," Altair's golden eyes dims as he closes them before glancing back to Desmond, "That man is not an innocent."

"But-" Desmond was about to cry out that in his mind, he could see it: the guard was white. The guard was-

-wait, did Altair just say that the guard was a Templar?

He looks up at the Syrian in confusion, wanting a confirmation of this. The Syrian's eyes narrow as he slowly nods, confirming what Desmond was thinking, "He was disguised as a Venetian guard. You didn't break the Second Tenet of the Creed, if that's what you were wondering."

Desmond can feel his body sagging a bit from weariness, but that still doesn't stop his other worries once his eyes look over the other guards that were in the room, all knocked out, "...is he alive?" He can't help but ask Mario, who is already near the bloody guard and begins to inspect him; La Volpe is looking over the old man before glancing at the entrance to see if anyone else has decided to get the bright idea to cross inside the Frari.

His inquiry made Altair's eyes narrow in suspicion, "Why are you concerned for his life? Anyone who is on the Templars' side must never be spared." That made Ezio roll his eyes behind Altair, but
the Syrian took no notice.

The time traveler's supposed argument for trying to defend the live for a Borgia soldier dies in his throat at the moment he sees the Syrian's tightened jaw, "...I thought he was someone who was outside of the conflict." He quietly mumbles, looking down in regret. It wasn't until he feels a calloused hand lift his chin to face Altair's concerned one, forcing Desmond to see him face to face.

"Even if we wished for them to stay away, habibi," Altair quietly responds, his hand that was lifting Desmond's chin moves to stroke his cheek instead in a gently manner, "They always want to know, they will somehow be involved. That's something we honestly can't change in people."

Even if it costs their lives, Desmond mentally grimaces, knowing his fair share of innocent people getting involved in dramas- especially in matters that are outside of their circle. He looks up when he feels a gentle kiss on his forehead, Altair's stoic face contrasting with his very concerned eyes.

"Don't dwell too much on the negative or things you didn't do that you blame yourself for," The Syrian murmurs, "I can't stand seeing you like this, Desmond." His eyes shift over to Ezio, who is closer to the other two, "...Even the brat's worried about you."

"Shut up," Ezio's response was more subdued, but the look on his face tells Desmond that Altair was accurate on how he was feeling, "Are you feeling better, tesoro?"

"Well, no. But it'll be better, I hope." The American closes his eyes, wanting this night to end already before hearing Mario call out their names to catch their attention.

Mario was kneeling down and feeling one of the Borgian guards' pulse before looking up at the others, a slightly relieved (and alarmed) look on his face, "It's amazing, but he can breathe." A pause, "He's living."

That was a surprise. Desmond stops ranting before managing to creak out, "...what?"

"He's sleeping." Mario repeats, but this time there is a wash of relief in his face before glancing at the guard who had knocked himself out earlier by running into one of the walls before knocking on it (repeatedly), "However, this one... he can barely breathe as he is; how much strength he used to run himself to the pillar and was able to survive, I have no idea how that was able to happen."

"Are you sure?" La Volpe looks alarmed as to that similar idea as he walks over to where the older man is and feels the guard's pulse. A look of shock crosses the Florence thief's face before frowning, standing up, gesturing to the three Assassins, "I'm going to check on the others to see if they have a similar condition like that man. Ezio, do me a favor and keep an eye in case one of these guards decide to suddenly come back and attacks us."

Ezio just nods, more concerned about Desmond's state of mind than how the guard is (For all he knows he could he someone working for the Borgia family or a Templar affiliate) before facing a concerned Altair, who is now looking at the High Altar area, "...what's wrong?"

"There's something about this area that is bothering me," The Syrian quietly responds as he walks up the stairs, "I am going to investigate something. Don't move from this spot." Then he glares at Ezio, "Don't try anything funny either, brat."

"Like I would, asshole," Ezio grumbles, flipping the bird at Altair's back before seeing Desmond look at the two with some amount of confusion. Sighing, the Italian cracks a small smile, at least feeling better at seeing the young Assassin not horrified or shocked (or traumatized for the matter), "Desmond, don't worry, everything's going to fine."
The time traveler's eyes widen in considerable surprise before letting out a ragged sigh of relief, wanting to fall on his knees. Instead, he just closes his eyes, his shoulders slightly sagging as if something that would have been there has been taken out from him, "...I can't believe I'm saying this," He mumbles to himself, "But thank God nobody was killed." He can't help but give a small smile of relief as he can feel his arms relax.

He nearly jolts when he feels a pair of arms wrap around of him and pulls him into a gentle hug. "Ezio?" Desmond manages to ask in surprise.

"I hate seeing you in torment," Ezio mumbles before pulling out slightly to place his hands on Desmond's waist, his forehead meeting Desmond's, their eyes meeting each other, "Please don't worry us- both me and the old man- like that again."

"I..." Desmond hesitantly nods before gulping, nodding, "Okay. Got it." He feels his body shaking, a soft shaky laugh escaping him, "Though I can't help but feel relieved..." There are tears slowly coming from his eyes, which Ezio wipes with his thumb, "S-Sorry."

"Don't be," Ezio quietly responds before kissing his eyes gently, "Desmond... you saved us. You should be proud."

"I want to be, but..." He trails off, looking down at the ring in his right hand; Ezio's glance follows to the golden metal ring on Desmond's hand, "It's this. It was something I found, it was something else before. It causes the guards to be like that." He gulps, hoping that he doesn't sound asinine, "...it's a Piece of Eden."

One look at Ezio and Desmond realizes that for some reason, the Italian Assassin wasn't laughing his head off or just saying that Desmond was joking. Instead of that, there was a narrowing of his eyes before lifting up Desmond's right hand, inspecting the ring before gripping it.

"The designs are similar to the Apple," Ezio muses, his amber eyes following the patterns of the ring, which were glowing a soft blue, "The glow that was in front of us when you stopped the guards did remind me a bit of the way the Apple reacted. The metal is similar, as well as how it is reacting to the rest of people." His eyes narrow a bit before placing Desmond's hand down, "Desmond, this item... when you touched it, did it affect you in a bad way? Was your head in pain?"

The time traveler shakes his head, getting a bit confused as to where this is going at the moment, "No. It actually didn't do anything like the Apple did... Why?"

"Unlike the Apple... but how?" Ezio mutters to himself, his face slightly to the side before looking back up, "Desmond, can I ask something else?"

"Y-Yeah...?" He doesn't like how suddenly intense Ezio is getting at this.

"When you first picked up the item," The Italian has recalled when his comrades first inspected the Apple- it ended with Mario and Machiavelli with a headache while he manages to shut the Apple with Leonardo shielding his eyes, "Did anything happen when you picked it up?"

Desmond frowns, trying to think of what did happen-

'The chosen one, huh? ’ Followed by a mirthful chuckle (How come this person sounds much different and why does he sound a bit like Aita-), 'Well well. About time you showed up. I was wondering if those damned Sages got to it before you did. Good thing too- I wasn't going to let that those damned three taking it either.'
"...I did hear someone talking to me when I picked it up," Desmond responds, his eyes widening as he recalls the voice in his mind (He's still annoyed that it sounded like Aita, but it wasn't for some odd reason). Ezio frowns and silently urges him to continue on; they didn't see Altair walking back up to them, listening in to their conversation.

"And that the person told me that the item is supposed to be used for physical deception purposes and that what I just grabbed was its dormant state," The American continues, trying to figure out the last piece of information about it before gasping, "...and that I would hold onto the item like I would do for the Apple, and that it'll react to me only." Then he pauses, seeing Ezio's alarmed reaction before turning to see Altair's slightly widened eyes, "...what's wrong?"

"This confirms it," The Syrian quietly responds, "The High Altar was hiding it- it was invisible to normal eyes." With this new revelation, Ezio places the pieces together before he realizes it as well, looking at Desmond in alarm, causing Desmond to look at the Florence man in confusion. The Syrian's eyes narrow as he faces Desmond, "Desmond. How did you find out it was there?"

"Well, I just... remembered the inscription from the map," The American knows that the inscription has helped (somewhat), "I-I mean, it was a bit tricky and all-"

"That's not what I meant," And this time, Desmond slightly pales, seeing how silently furious Altair is at the moment, "Ezio, you brat, use your vision and look up at the Altar."

"What, you..." Ezio's voice trails off when he sees the Master Assassin shoot him a 'do it or else I'll really kill you' glare, "...all right." The Italian man looks up at the High Altar and his eyes immediately flash gold, before his eyes widen and he rapidly closes them before looking at the other two Assassins in alarm, "What the-! It's different than-"

"I know," Altair nods, not wavering from his stare at Desmond, who begins to pale a bit, "That's what I want to know... how was it possible that you found out about it, Desmond?" This time, Ezio is glancing at the youngest member in surprise and in shock.

The time traveler was about to make to say something when the three of them hear Mario call out to them, snapping out the tension between the three.

"We have to get a move on," Mario and La Volpe comes over to them, "There is a chance more guards are on the way and it's nearing the darkest of night."

It was a silent way back, but when they arrive back at the place they all met up, the other members of the party look a bit disheveled and seem a bit out of breath; Leonardo was supplying them with water from the amount of energy spent. The ladies (Paola and Teodora) have decided to take rest on the lying couches while Bartolomeo and Antonio were already sleeping on the pillows on the floor (provided with blankets and other things, of course). Machiavelli and Leonardo were awake and greeted the party with minimum amount of silence as they enter in.

It wasn't until a few more minutes later of settling in that Mario, La Volpe, Altair, and Ezio explains about what happened in their end. Desmond, on the other hand, has remained silent, but he was a bit unnerved about how the two Assassins were reacting to him since they left the Frari. The youngest man must have an idea that the two Assassins knew about the invisible areas in the High Altar since they finally used their Eagle Vision, but why are they reacting like he has been hiding something about...
Oh yeah, He places his hand over his eyes as he closes them, a slight headache coming to him, ...I didn't tell them I have Eagle Vision.

He's talked about this to Connor and Clay before; then to Lucy, Rebecca, and Shaun. Because the Eagle Vision is only used by a certain percentage of the Assassins (or rather- any human on the face of Earth), the only risk that anyone will manage to discover Desmond (aside showing his face to the public, of course) is his usage of the Eagle Vision. It also doesn't help that unlike Connor and Clay (and now Altair and Ezio), Desmond hasn't perfected it; even Connor and Clay have told him there are some issues with his as opposed to what they had to go through.

Desmond only got his recently, his two brothers had gained theirs through a more natural way (a fever, dizzy spells when they initially used it, then their bodies have to get used to their taxing energy drainage). Desmond on the other hand... he knows that his body gets tired, his Eagle Vision can show him things other people can't (there was one time Clay couldn't see any prints all over the freaking keypad in a security room in the Animus as practice, but Desmond can see the obvious wearouts from the number 1, 6, 7, and 9).

He knows that while it shows the allies and enemies of the Order, the importance of anything and anyone, and heightened surroundings, it wasn't on solid ground. He's obtained it through Altair's memories while going through a Bleeding Effect, which wasn't helpful. To that day, he knows Connor and Clay have promised to help Desmond perfect it, but all of them were too busy trying to escape Abstergo and finding out more memories, more secrets, and developed training to find out. Even Desmond pushed perfecting a vision to the back of his mind.

And now wasn't exactly the greatest time to remind Desmond about his imperfect Vision.

Argh. Maybe I should've said something about it long ago.

He opens his eyes as he now hears Machiavelli's voice talk about what happened at their end and possibly from the sound of his ire voice, there was a chance they would have been caught by the Templars. So, it seems as if some things in their end didn't go smoothly as planned.

Desmond glances at his right hand before gently removing the ring and setting it on the table, which he sees the ring transform back to the form he originally saw it: the red-golden stone with the markings glowing around it. I don't know how, but... He remembers how the voice told him that the stone will only react to him, how he was the only one he can hear the person's voice, how the stone manages to change its form in front of Desmond.

...speaking of appearances...

This ...Is the item. This is a joke, right?

Desmond can't help but wonder if this was either a practical joke or if this was... well, what it is supposed to be what it is as he stares at the ring sitting at the wooden table in front of him.

This rock- or ring or whatever the fuck it is- is an actual Piece of Eden?

THIS is what they've gotten through all the trouble of retrieving this entire freaking time?

...this item was the supposed legendary item that they went through the entire trek to the Frari, went through hell with the guards, and Desmond having to use his blood (a drop of it- it's bandaged) to retrieve this...

...dinky piece of metal, or rock, or whatever reactive metal this particular Piece of Eden is made out
He can't help but wonder if he feels either really disappointed or just wants to up to whoever decided to make this thing and stab them just because he was getting more annoyed by the minute.

(Desmond would like to think that the gods are screwing over his life- oh wait. That's been something of a requirement for him in the beginning.)

Feeling his left eye twitching, he now feels like his expectations have been shot and replaced with pure irritation and fury, wanting to know who the hell decided to make this god-forsaken item and why it even acts so useless before wanting to throw this ring at said creator and just wanting to beat the living hell out of him or her or it (Yes, at this point, Desmond really doesn't care about what or who created this... whatever this is. He just really wants to fume out his rage, but he is more exhausted than peeved right now).

"I can't believe." He stares at the item, "...that I went through all the trouble." And then this time with a glare (and his eye twitching still), "...just to retrieve you."

For some reason, he had a feeling the voice that came from the item was laughing.

"You sound satisfied about the item."

He knows that Leonardo is patiently waiting with a small mirthful grin, but it fades as Desmond grimaces in response.

"...I'm taking things didn't go as well?"

"No, they did," Desmond lets out an exhaustive sigh, "It's just... let me put it this way- they now just realized I have Eagle Vision and aren't happy about it."

"...ah," Leonardo nods before sighing, "The fact you have kept that knowledge from them for too long, though, isn't the most helpful idea you've had. The same went for the Bleeding Effect of yours."

"That was just from the Apple- speaking of, did you know Altair had another one in his possession?" The time traveler had just recalled that little tidbit to the artist, who looks at him in surprise...

...before sighing, "...I had a feeling as much that he would've gained possession of a Piece of Eden."

Had this been Ezio talking, said assassin would've freaked out before going into a night's worth of a rant that would've owed up to him getting a very strong drink for the guy for just listening. But this is Desmond- the only person who wouldn't be surprised by anything since- well, his entire journey in Renaissance Italy so far is the only reason why he isn't... freaking out as much.

(Okay, he did on the first few hours.)

The time traveler lets out a sigh, this time a bit more on the heavy side, "...well, Ezio didn't take it well. If that makes for any sort of consultation."

"He doesn't take secrets very well," Leonardo winces before gently patting Desmond's shoulder, "I can sympathize- he will eventually get used to it."

"I... I hope so," Desmond gives a small smile, hoping that the Italian will actually be fine with it in the end. He did comfort him from killing a man (or actually make him lose a lot of blood), "I just- I
want to apologize to the two. Both Ezio- and Altair. I might make a chance to talk to them tomorrow- when they're not as pissed off."

The artist nods, "They'll manage to forgive you as easily. Don't worry too much about it." His eyes crinkle, seeing Desmond looking pretty relieved before seeing his clothing, "...do you want to remain in that for the rest of the night? I assume you should take off your weapons."

"...yeah, just feels sorta... odd? I've been used to wearing those clothing," Desmond gestures to Leonardo's clothing, "But," He grins, "I'm just happy to have my T-Shirt and jeans on. Maybe I should just—"

If there was such thing as karma, Desmond would be mentally cursing whoever decided to give him the natural luck to be at the most awkard place at the worst time (since he somehow manages to stumble out of his chair from tripping on his own two feet (only Desmond can do this) and fall to the floor before groaning in pain).

"Are you all right!?" He looks up to see an alarmed Leonardo as the artist runs to grab him. A second later, Altair and Ezio barges in to the room to see Desmond groaning, standing up as he rubs his aching butt.

"I'll live, just surprised to hear you come in," Desmond glances to the artist, "Is... there something you need? What about the others?"

"They've left; tonight nearly drained most of them of their energy," Ezio quietly responds, eyeing the night sky through the open window. The strange thing is, Ezio's eyes doesn't meet with Desmond's, which already sends a feeling of urgency to walk up to him, to find out what is going on, but he stops himself.

It might have to do with earlier.

...*fuck.* Desmond lets out a mental groan before grunting, "What... is going to happen now?"

"We rest," Altair responds, his eyes stonily facing Desmond's (despite that the Syrian was concerned, there was one matter to be resolved), "Then we'll figure out what to do for the next day."

"...right." The time traveler suddenly feels even more awkward than before as he looks down at the floor.

A tense silence fills the room before the artist lets out a clearing of his throat, "May I offer a suggestion? I need to talk to the both of you about this—" He indicates to the dormant stone sitting on the table, "-and Desmond can rest since it's clear that this night was taxing on him more than the both of you."

He especially shoots a glare at his friend, who was about to say, 'No, I need to talk to my *tesoro* about something... but fine, let's do it your way.' Then Ezio just nods, swiftly takes the stone and after taking one look at Desmond (the time traveler doesn't see it, but the Italian is worried), he exits the room. Altair did so with more reluctance before he pauses.

"...Desmond, keep in mind we're not done talking about—"

"I know," The American mutters bitterly (which does surprise both Altair and Leonardo), "...just really tired."

The Syrian pauses before he sighs, nodding in reluctance before exiting the room. This leave Desmond with the artist, the thickening awkwardness leaving- but still-
The American grimaces before looking at the window—recalling that it was the first place he ran into after crashing into Italy while being on the run from the two Assassins.

Leonardo sighs, shaking his head, "If anything is wrong, I'll let you know. For now, just get some rest." He smiles reassuringly, "I'm sure those two aren't angry at you."

"I... hope not," Desmond quietly mumbles, a sickening feeling of feeling terrible bubbling at the bottom of his stomach, "Is it okay if I..."

"Of course," Leonardo pats his friend's shoulder before pausing, "Now that I think about it, this was the first place you ran into when you were running away from those two."

"Look, mi amico, whatever you need, let me know. I'll be looking at the item you all retrieved."

"Thanks." Desmond gives a small nod before shutting the door behind the artist and leaning against the wall, a heavy sigh silently escaping him.

Shit, I screwed things up again...

The rock was sitting on the table, dormant as its glow dims into the usual white hue that has gotten to be familiar with most of Pieces of Eden (otherwise, it'll just stay still and not do anything— that's something at this point, the others should take with caution).

This doesn't stop Ezio from looking at it as if it was untouchable— or rather a cursed item. He did manage to place it there— before it slowly begins to burn his hand (or rather, gave that sensation. It's still fine and still the Italian doesn't like the Piece of Eden).

"You do realize it won't react like it did when we examined the Apple," Leonardo deadpans to his friend, who lets a frown mar his face. The artist takes a seat in his studio seat while he sees the two Assassins standing.

"I know," The Italian is still examining the item with his sharp eyes, "I don't think I should try to touch it."

"Neither should you," Altair is also glancing at the item with a degree of suspicion, "What I am wondering is how Desmond was easily able to manage the usage of it without suffering from the Bleeding Effect."

Ezio doesn't say it, but the older man is right; when the Apple of Eden is near Desmond, there is a risk of the Bleeding Effect.

"Was there anything else about the item that stood out to you both?" Leonardo asks, beginning to sketch out the item in the dormant state, "Like say... if it has any abilities similar to the Apple."

"It did cause the guards to go out of their usual minds," Ezio muses, "It did cause a glow like the Apple did when Altair held it in his hand. Not to mention..." He frowns, recalling one other feature about the new Piece of Eden,

"What do we do about the Piece of Eden?" Leonardo asks, obviously not trusting the item that is sitting at his table, "It'll only react to Desmond, and most likely there is no way that we can handle that thing without having him around."
Ezio frowns, still recalling what happened to the man who tried to grab the Piece of Eden and the results from that. The last time any one has tried to activate the Apple of Eden... that was not pretty. His eyes dart over to the stone sitting on the table, slowly glowing.

"I am not taking any chances to have that thing activate in the workshop like the Apple did the last time," Ezio has a bad feeling about the... stone (it was a ring earlier on Desmond's hands), "So for once, I would prefer if that would be secure elsewhere."

That earns a look of slight surprise from the artist, but Altair understands- he nods in agreement, "Should we place it in a box?"

"...for once, can we not have it something like where the Apple was placed in?" Leonardo dryly deadpans, recalling when they've brought the said Apple in after the struggle with the Borgian guards and any enemies who were more than eager to grab the artifact, "I think this item is already menacing just from how you described it."

"As if the Apple is any better?" Ezio grumbles, recalling how that series of events went.

The artist sighs, still warily staring at the stone before grumbling, "...fine. But if that thing dares to mar any of my precious items or does anything to my things, I will see to it that I will create a device just to contain it."

"...so be it, then."

Leonardo lets out a yawn before indicating to Ezio that he's going to sleep. The entire event was time consuming (and also strenuous on the artist's energy and spirit for having to be involved in an Assassin-related event) for the artist and he had to do a commission first thing, "For now- let it sit there. I need to gain more rest- you both should as well." Then he pauses, "Don't get mad at the boy- he's still learning, you know."

"...Right. Good night, Leonardo." Ezio sees his friend closing the door to his room- before the main room lapses into a deep silence. Then Altair breaks the ice with the other question that has been looming in their heads for a while-

"About the Eagle Vision Desmond has," Altair asks with a frown, "Did you have some idea that he would have received it already?"

He can see the other assassin pause before sighing with a nod, "...it did make me wonder how he was able to slip past guards and other people easier than some of us." Ezio did see that when Desmond was talking to that child earlier, "There is only one other way- we both gained ours through experience. His," The Italian's eyes narrow, "...that blasted Bleeding Effect. I believe he's mentioned it before. Connor- he has too."

"...yes," Ezio closes his eyes, hearing Altair's confirmation, "...what is your point? It's not like he has anything else to hide."

"That's the thing that bothers me!" Ezio suddenly bursts out, "I don't understand why Desmond would try and hide things for us to discover later- while there is a part of me that realizes he does this just to prevent us from being- I don't know, furious with him- but that's the problem! I am! I know I should trust him and know that he is still a young Assassin, but this doesn't mean he has anything else to hide! ...is there?" Then he lets out an exhaustive groan, "...I don't know. Perhaps I was a bit too- taken aback at the new discovery. But I know. Perhaps I should try... at least realize that he has his intentions for keeping it a secret."
He's just realized that the other man wasn't protesting, arguing or doing anything to refute him (or even disagree with him) before he looks around and lets out a frustrating sigh.

Altair wasn't there.

Ezio lets out a heavy sigh, knowing pretty well the Syrian would obviously be confronting his tesoro over the Eagle Vision matter.

Damn you for not having distractions, bastard.

Desmond was trying to get some rest, but he couldn't.

I screwed up big time... Desmond closes his eyes, his face looking over to the open window as he can feel his heart in heavy pain. He knows Altair is really angry, Ezio is just not saying anything; all because he decides to conceal the fact that he does have his Eagle Vision awakened, that he knows a lot more than he should.

In fact, that was what him into trouble in the first place.

God, I hate my life... The American closes his eyes tight, placing his hands against his head as if he is in prayer. Now the two that I care a lot about are... really angry at me for not telling them about the Vision- it's really stupid! I really didn't want them to know it was the result of... of... Oh God, I just want to get the fuck out of here... Just anything but face another round of anger, disappointment, and misunderstandings. He doesn't want to face those again- not again from the two he cares more than he should have.

I don't want to let them know or irritate them, but I just did... He closes his eyes shut, trying to dull out the painful stabbing in his heart.

He doesn't see the chest that contains the Apple beginning to glow.

Letting out a small sigh, Desmond was find something to do (like find a pillow to place his head in to sleep for a bit- or at least to try) when the door opens, forcing him to sit up and see Altair, who has shut the door, the expression on his face unreadable.

"How come you've never mentioned to us anything about having Eagle Vision?" The Syrian quietly asks the young Assassin.

Desmond gulps and closes his eyes, expecting that question, "...You know how I've experienced your memories while I was held in captivity?"

He knows Altair's attention is slightly perked from this, but Desmond continues regardless, "I got it after one of my Bleedings when I was back in Abstergo, when I was going to escape from the facility. It took a lot of energy from me, but it helped me escape the facility with my other comrades. But..." He trails off before taking another deep breath, his mind racking up on what would be the best way to describe how his vision works compared to Connor and Clay's, "...it's not perfected. I can still things as they are in front of me, the way you and Ezio see it through your eyes. It's... it's not the way I would like it to be since I see things a bit different than the both of you."

He opens his eyes, looking at his bare hands before a bitter chuckle escapes from him, at this point not even caring who listens as he turns away from the door, "You know what I saw back there at the High Altar? You saw it first. Then Ezio did and the two of you look like you guys are about to kill
me." He then pauses, feeling the Syrian's eyes narrow at this comment, "I... I can't tell you how I solved it. I can't tell you how I got my blood on some invisible bowl that was sitting on an invisible table." Then his voice gets more quiet, "I've... already screwed things up just from me being here. I've messed things up. I can't tell you, Altair."

"Can't tell me what?" Desmond can just jump from his spot as he feels a warm body up against him; Altair is leaning towards him, a look of concern on his face, "...Desmond, what aren't you telling me?"

"It's..." It's about the Altar, it's about the painting that will show up in about twenty to thirty years later that will be a point of blessings and contentions to the world in the Frari, It's just a simple painting from someone who rivals Leonardo and yet won't match to his fame by a long shot- Oh God, I'm blabbing about the future- The American closes his eyes tight, wanting to stop those thoughts from rushing through his mouth. Shut up, Desmond, shut up!

Instead, he settles for, trying to turn away and forget all of this, "...nothing. It's really nothing-"

"It isn't nothing! What you have just told me about your acquirement of the Eagle Vision not only angers me," Despite his slight frustration, Altair pulls Desmond close to him (and not caring whether the younger man was trying to pull out) before embracing him from behind, "...but it worries me."

"Me getting... how?" Desmond cries out in confusion, "I mean, my Eagle Vision isn't all that perfect unlike the both of you and..." He sighs, "It's... not up to the same level as the two of you have gotten it to be."  

"We'll get through it," Altair closes his eyes, "Like we did with training, to help you become better; I can help you. Even that brat Ezio can help your Vision. Desmond, I... I'm not angry at you for not telling us about the Vision." He can feel Desmond slightly stiffen and was about to say something, "I was wondering how you managed to see if someone was an ally or an enemy without asking." And then, "...like back in Jerusalem when I found out about your presence."

"It's... something I would rather try to hide in case anyone finds out," The American quietly murmurs, knowing that escaping and dodging the question from Altair might as well be futile, "Does Ezio know?"

"He could have an idea."

Altair was about to ask how Desmond was still able to figure out the riddle to gain the item when the door opens, forcing the two of them to turn around and see Ezio walking in before shutting the door behind him. There was a slight dim light from Leonardo's desk, meaning that the candle is to remain there until it dies out (it does- thirty minutes from now).

"So?"

"I'll be best," Ezio huffs, not missing the blush from Desmond's face and the slight ire from Altair (from interrupting maybe), "If we left the Piece of Eden to how it is. Unfortunately, knowing how Leonardo is after I explained to him what happened at the Frari," The Florence Assassin was not exactly happy about the idea that he was just informed about, "He wants to see how the item reacts to Desmond- at the next day, that is."

"...great." Desmond groans, "Can't he just try to do this tomorrow morning when I don't feel like the living dead?" He blinks, not hearing a response as he sees the other two Assassins shift (a bit uncomfortably), "...what?"
"Are there anything else you are hiding?"

Desmond then pauses before shaking his head, "I mean- I can go about my brothers and other things that have happened to me, but you've already known that. Aside the Bleeding, Eagle Vision- no. I swear, nothing else."

Honestly, he just wants to stop all scrutiny on him- he knows how terrible he is at actually keeping things to his own since his personality is the type to easily reveal things. Well, he still has some things that he's managed to keep secret (that was back when he was travelling from the Farm to New York). But the fact he was more open from his Assassin family back at the modern days... that meant he was more prone to them reading his thoughts.

It's not helping that he was with two Assassins who do not enjoy people who have hidden things from them (throughout most of their lives, they were littered with betrayal- wait, that's most of the Assassins).

"Next time," Altair softly murmurs to Desmond, which jolts him from the thoughts he's been thinking (most likely redundant ones), "Let me know if you have any more secrets that you've kept away that you want to reveal."

The youngest Assassin's face glows a bright red, but a smile from Desmond made Altair a bit relieved that bit by bit, Desmond is slowly letting go of the burdens from his shoulders. It was only when he notices Ezio's glaring at Altair did the Syrian feel a bit bad for him (if not a bit smug).

"...tch."

The Italian might have a feeling he's going to lose (bit by bit) to the Syrian before letting out a slight forlorn sigh, looking out the window.

One thing was clear- he needs to find a way to get Desmond to open more to him (since it's now evident that Ezio was more privy to betrayal- perhaps that's why his tesoro isn't more likely to open up to him than... well, before, actually).

...but how?

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The talk with William must have left Haytham shaken- there was no other way to describe the Templar's mood. Haytham Kenway's face is pale, as if he had seen a ghost or something that made him terrified. He was not sweating (for this would be an indication of nervousness) or jittering (another sign).

Well, that call they just so overheard did give them a reason to tread carefully.

"So..." Clay was the first to trail off before glancing warily at the other four Assassins, "...um-"

"If you twits wanted to know what I was talking to your leader about," Haytham cuts in, his eyes narrowing, "By all means, you can go ahead and ask."

"I'd rather not," Connor murmurs, his eyes closed as his mind tries to reel from what he has just heard, "It's your own business."

Haytham stares at Connor in wariness and was about to ask why the hell he said that when his eyes scans that all of the other four Assassins look really nerved and uncomfortable, leading Haytham to
"You brats listened in." Nerved and uncomfortable got instantly replaced by a combination of irritation and the 'I-told-you-so' glares. Haytham blinks and frowns, "You know, the usual reaction to this would have been panic, but you all look like you were expecting this."

"We did," Shaun deadpans, rubbing his glasses with his cleaning cloth, "It's not exactly one of those unexpected situations."

"Just what did you expect us to do? Sit around in boredom and wait?" Rebecca shrugs, a grin appearing as Haytham stares at her in surprise, "Nope- not that type of person!"

"That's just implying you, you know that," Clay holds back a snicker as the tech's grin immediately turns into a glare aimed at him, "...what? You know it's true!"

"And I can stick a really good trojan horse in your laptop and makes sure it'll corrupt every single one of your files," She sweetly responds back, "Didn't Lucy tell you the last time a guy in here managed to piss me off?"

The Templar stares at them, a bit baffled that they aren't at least a bit concerned about this, "...aren't you at least bit concerned about what I would have said in this sort of situation!?"

"Not really," Lucy shrugs, prompting Haytham to stare at her in surprise, "Well... in a rather normal situation like this one, I should be worried about what you would do to me since you're the Templar and I'm actually the Assassin who you all thought worked for all of you... but I double-crossed Abstergo and William. But in this case, since which it is and I am not too concerned about what you would do since I would rather take care of some people from Abstergo since they've lied to me about Leila's death," The blonde woman takes a deep breath before glaring at Haytham, "Well, no. I'm not too worried."

"Besides," Clay can't help but smirk, earning Haytham's glare, "What were you hoping we were suppose do in this situation?"

"Let me think- perhaps having something more productive to help your order?"

"I wish," Connor frowns, "We're a bit stuck at the moment."

"What could you all be possibly be stuck on?" The Templar can't help but ask in slight amusement (Out of all groups- are they truly this inhibited by something so trivial? Little that he know, the five other Assassins have a really good reason to be delayed and they know it), "Is it something regarding a mission gone wrong?"

Normally, if this was an interrogation (okay, this could technically count as one), they wouldn't say anything.

"...we sort of are in the middle of something." Rebecca carefully states to a skeptical Haytham, "But really, it's none of your business and we're just- waiting for other orders!"

"I... see," Haytham slowly mutters before frowning (whatever that's happening, it's pale in comparison to what he has heard earlier, "May I ask about something?"

"Whatever answer you're looking for, it's a 'no.'" Clay deadpans to the Templar, "Just before you ask anything regarding any sort of activity."

"Oh for the love of God, that isn't what I was asking!" The Templar was close to losing his temper...
(or his patience, for that matter), "I was going to inquire you lot about the First Civilization!"

There was a silence, rather a stiffening one, as the Assassins stare at the older man.

Connor's eyes narrow into slits, glaring at his father, "...what?"

Haytham stares at the five Assassins, "...are you all daft!?"

"Uh- no," Rebecca narrows her eyes, suddenly getting a bit wary, "We're not- we heard you."

"Just where," Connor asks darkly, "Did you hear that?"

Haytham refuses to say anything, not wanting to let this group of young adults (or kids) know that he's overheard after watching their Subject's memories.

"Well, how much do you know about the First Civilization?" Lucy asks, "As in informative wise."

"Unfortunately on my end," Haytham grimaces in defeat, knowing that was one area he has little to no knowledge in, "I didn't know of such group of people until Subject 17-"

"Desmond, you asshole," Connor growls, getting a bit stressed from hearing that name used around (William was also getting annoyed before snapping at Haytham about that too), "This is my brother we're talking about!"

"...fine, until Desmond's genetic memories provided with such detail that made me wonder more about them," Haytham dryly continues, realizing at this point, he might as well comprehend with the Assassins until he can find a way out of here (or find out the actual truth based on what William told him), "I- or say, for that matter- the Templars if you'd prefer to think of them in that regard-"

"Just get on with it!" Shaun was starting to get impatient, earning Haytham's death glare, "Your slow drivel's much worse than that of a boring documentary about watching paint dry!"

Rebecca, Clay, Lucy, Connor, and Haytham this time stare at Shaun before Clay asks (with some amusement), "...you actually watched that? Is there even such documentary?"

The British man's eye twitches, feeling his vein pop from his forehead, "Clay. It does exist, like you were mentioning that there wasn't a documentary about sloths. By the way, thank you for livening up my mood that day, I never had so much boredom in my LIFE!"

"Ah, you're welcome. I'm glad to have such schadenfreude-like tendencies, specifically for you," Clay has the smirk that makes Lucy and Rebecca to snicker as Connor shakes in light amusement. Haytham, on the other hand, just stares at them before muttering, shaking his head, '...is this how the children act these days?'

"Going back to..." Lucy shyly interrupts the about-to-be-argument between her boyfriend and Shaun, "...well, the thing is, we've only seen one. Minerva." That, obviously, was a lie. There was another one they're trying their best to keep secret about- Aita (since Desmond's apparent contact with him have left the modern Assassins wondering what is really going on from where he is- he's been in Italy for a while- he's bled and... what next? Actually, they didn't want to think about any possibilities), but they were tight-lipped about it.

Haytham frowns, his eyes narrowing, "...anything else you know about them- aside the obvious reference to them being Gods and all?"

"How did you-"
"My own research." The Templar deadpans, ",...and no, before you all even dare ask, I never uttered a word of this to the rest of those twits at Abstergo. They're far too invested in other projects that even projects to ridiculous heights." (Again, that was a lie, Connor and the others can barely hold onto his word like a cat trying to make friends with a tiger since those emails did mention about the First Civilization.)

"...all right, then," Connor frowns, "Then you tell me what you know about it since you've... done your research."

Haytham frowns, "Unfortunately for you, all from what I've gathered- as well as that bloody Vidic and his group of so-called researchers-"

"So they are researching about the First Civilization!?"

"Only because they were the ones who were able to create and handle the Pieces of Eden," Rebecca sighs, "That's something that'll only interest them."

"...that's the only reason why we'd bother looking them up," Haytham can't help but agree with the Assassin on that, "But looking at them... just made me wonder if there was more to the story than the usual precursor to the Pieces of Eden."

"Even if we did tell you what we know," Shaun still doesn't trust the man whatsoever, "What would you do with the said information? Pass it to your so-called boss like a Templar lapdog?"

"Ha!" Haytham's eyes narrow as he barks a sharp laugh, "Yes, knowledge is a powerful and dangerous tool to use in this time- the word is more potent- if not more equal with steels and guns. But there are some that perhaps some are better more equipped to understand than others."

"Like how we found out you were hiding in here the entire time?" Lucy mutters to Clay under her breath, who just gently squeezes her hand in support.

"It's... fine," Connor lets out a sigh as he pinches his nose, "Let's just say what we... do know," Then he frowns, "By that, it's better if we just gave you what we do know. So far."

This also translates to: Don't say that Desmond had a meeting with another First Civilization inhabitant.

Clay, Lucy, Rebecca, and Shaun look at their temporary leader before sighing.

"...I think there wasn't exactly a choice in the beginning, was there," Rebecca then shrugs, "But- then again- this would probably be a good enough payment since we've overheard what you and William talked about."

This time, it was the Templar's wary stare that meets their calmer expressions, "...I take it that you've already known about what most of the conversation was about."

"Yeah, well," Shaun frowns, "It was pretty clear we knew that it was something technological Abstergo's been creating."

Haytham witheringly stares at Connor.

"We've taken the liberty to look through the files while you were chatting with my dad," He smugly smirks as his biological father's eyes narrow in silent fury before nodding to Lucy, "I think you should thank a certain someone."
"I knew it," Haytham mutters, this time shifting his glare to Lucy.

"What can I say?" The blonde woman grins a bit too evilly (matching Clay's), "I think I had my influences and chosen my side pretty well."

"When this is all over," Haytham seethes, "I will make sure to make your deaths as painful as possible."

Clay winces, "Aaaand speaking of, I think that's where we'll begin that First Civilization 101, Assassin Style Lesson'." He ignores the withering stares from Shaun and Connor while the girls just giggle, "You know that Minerva's a First Civilization inhabitant. But we also found other ones-there's Hermes, Isis, Osiris, Aphrodite, Consus, Uni, Tinia, Ares, some other ambiguous inhabitants in which we associate with Gods today. As to why, people think they were all powerful when they made the weapons..."

He sees the Templar's patience wearing thinner by the second, but he goes on anyway, "And- oh yeah, there's Aita, that one guy who's actually one of the few who were also responsible for a lot of creation for some of the Pieces of Eden, along with some of the other First Civilizations to try and come up with the solutions to the Toba Catastrophe. Unfortunately, there was that one solution they tried and failed because he was murdered while making a technological change to something at that time- I think they were trying out the alchemy or... something, I dunno. Also, he died at another solution, which actually and honestly didn't really help since it was all about preserving their race-

"Stop- Wait a minute."

They all look back to see a now confused Haytham, who for once feels like something really isn't right.

"Now what?" Shaun groans, "Looks, if you're just trying to buy some time before-"

"No, boy, it's what you said that just came to me and..." He looks over to Clay, "You. What was it you said about Aita?"

"Well..." Clay frowns, "I said that Aita had been murdered, he was involved in creating various solutions to the Toba Catastrophe, he was a close acquaintance to a few other First Civilization members like Hermes, Isis, Osiris, Aphrodite, Consus; that he was actually working on something that would have changed the technology of the First Civilization-"

"Stop!" Haytham exclaims in alarm that forces the others to jolt in alarm before looking at them in horror, "That's not possible! Aita couldn't be murdered- that wasn't how I recalled it! And he wasn't the one responsible for creating new items- no, he wasn't the one for alchemy!"

There was an alarmed profound silence throughout the entire room before this time, it was Rebecca who steps in to talk.

"...what do you mean," she asks slowly, trying to get some sense from all of that, "Aita couldn't be murdered?"

Shaun was the next to ask, "And what do you mean- that wasn't how you recalled the entire thing?"

End Part 18.3
Aaaaand yeah... going to blend a bit of Black Flag in here. (Spoiler flags everywhere.)

Oh, and I've heard about **Unity** and **Rogue** (and I caught up on it, for those who were wondering). ...at this point, this is border-lining what I'm placing in *ACS IV*, so **Unity** and **Rogue** will have to be a different story on their own (on that, any ideas on how to approach this?)

What's next: The Apple does one more thing- except it doesn't affect **just** Desmond this time. At the same time, the modern Assassins and Haytham realize they've been fooled by several details in their 'research' regarding the First Civilization.

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