**Gangbusters: The Lakefront Arena**

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**Abstract:** Loris “Byzantine” d’Udine, a freelance criminal with ambitions of running a chop shop, infiltrated Big Boris’s operations in Lakefront City. After securing a shipment of high-end car parts and eliminating Boris in a daring confrontation, Loris consolidated his power. He hired young drivers to retrieve Boris’s luxury vehicles, negotiated alliances with Dante and Elias Grayson, and recruited half of Boris’s former crew with Hyman’s help. Loris took over Boris’s rackets and legitimate fronts, retaining most managers while replacing the resistant few. He confiscated weapons from Boris’s club, stashing them at Dante’s pawnshop, and began gathering intel on rival factions. Finally, Loris initiated plans to build an underground chop shop, using Quinn’s Auto as a front. Through a mix of Streetwise savvy, Persuasion, and Luck, Loris emerged as a rising power in Lakefront City’s underworld, though challenges from rivals and Boris’s loyalists loomed.

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Weeping is a familiar thing to me.
It is a friend to whom I cling 
In times of solitude. 
To realize after such a long t... It was March, 1920, and Lakefront City was a bustling hub of industry, crime, and opportunity. Prohibition had turned the city into a playground for bootleggers, smugglers, and ambitious criminals. Loris “Byzantine” d’Udine, a freelance criminal with a knack for grand theft auto and a dream of running his own chop shop, was about to find himself drawn into a dangerous game.

It was a crisp autumn evening when Loris received a message from Dante “Whispers” Calcio, the local fence for stolen cars. The note was short and to the point: *“Meet me at the Blue Parrot. Got a job that’ll pay big. Don’t be late.”*

The Blue Parrot was a dimly lit speakeasy tucked away in the basement of a nondescript building on the edge of the city’s industrial district. Loris knew the place well—it was a favorite haunt for criminals looking to make deals away from prying eyes. He grabbed his Beretta, tucked it into his waistband, and headed out.

The Blue Parrot was alive with the sound of jazz and the clinking of glasses. The air was thick with cigarette smoke and the faint smell of bootleg whiskey. Loris scanned the room and spotted Dante sitting in a corner booth, his fedora pulled low over his eyes. Dante was a wiry man with a nervous energy, always glancing over his shoulder as if expecting trouble.

Loris slid into the booth across from Dante. “What’s the job, Whispers?”

Dante leaned in, his voice barely above a whisper. “Big score, Loris. Lakefront Arena. You know the place?”

Loris nodded. The Arena was a crumbling relic of the city’s past, now used for underground fights and shady deals.

Dante continued. “Word is, there’s a shipment of high-end car parts stored there. Engines, tires, the works. Belongs to Big Boris Dostoyevski. He’s been hoardin’ ‘em, but I got a buyer who’ll pay top dollar for ‘em. Problem is, Boris’s boys are guardin’ the place.”

Loris raised an eyebrow. “You want me to steal from Big Boris? That’s suicide.”

Dante smirked. “You’re the best wheelman in the city, Loris. And you’re smart. You can pull it off. Besides, you’ve been lookin’ for a way to fund that chop shop of yours, right? This is it.”

Loris leaned back, considering the offer. It was risky, but the payoff could be huge. “What’s in it for you?”

“I get a cut of the sale,” Dante said. “And I’ll make sure the parts get moved quick, no questions asked.”

“Aw, man, you’re wastin’ my time,” Loris protested. “You brought me here for this, and you still haven’t even told me what matters: how much?”

Dante’s smirk widened, and he leaned back in the booth, clearly enjoying the game of negotiation. He took a slow sip from his glass of bootleg whiskey before setting it down with a deliberate clink. “Alright, alright, I get it. You’re a businessman, Loris. I respect that.”

He leaned forward again, his voice dropping even lower. “The buyer’s offerin’ five grand for the whole shipment. That’s five thousand smackeroos, Loris. Split it fifty-fifty, and you walk away with two and a half. Enough to get that chop shop of yours off the ground, maybe even buy yourself a fancy new suit.”

Dante’s eyes gleamed as he watched Loris’s reaction. “But here’s the kicker—if you can get the parts out clean, no heat, no fuss, I’ll throw in an extra five hundred. Call it a bonus for professionalism.”

He paused, letting the numbers sink in. “So, what do you say, Loris? You in, or am I gonna have to take this sweet deal to someone else?”

“Fifty-fifty?” Loris asked without raising his pitch at the end of the question, making more of a statement of confirmation.

“Yeah, that’s-” Whispers was interrupted.

“Fifty-fifty for you havin’ this conversation with me, and me takin’ all the risk, and doin’ all the work? Get the fuck outta here,” he then demanded, “I’ll *maaaybe* do it for four-grand, and *let* you take a thousand for yourself and call yourself a middleman.”

“You kiss your mother with that mouth?” asked Dante rhetorically.

“Don’t you mention my mother right now. $4000, that’s eighty-twenty if you wanna talk fractions,” the uneducated former numbers runner relied on his knack for memorizing and calculating numbers on the fly.

**OOC: Skills used:**

Streetwise Intelligence (INT) 45% + 2%

Lockpicking Dexterity (DEX) 25% + 4%

Persuasion Charisma (CHA) 10% + 6%

Intimidation Charisma (CHA) 10% + 6%

Dante’s smirk faltered for a moment as Loris laid out his counteroffer. The fence leaned back in his seat, tapping his fingers on the table as he considered the proposal. “Four grand, huh? And you’re gonna leave me with just a thousand for my troubles?” He chuckled, but there was a nervous edge to it. “You drive a hard bargain, Loris.”

Loris didn’t blink. “You’re the one who came to me, Whispers. You want this done right, you want it done quiet, and you want it done by someone who knows how to handle themselves. That’s me. So, yeah, four grand. Take it or leave it.”

Dante’s eyes narrowed, and for a moment, the air between them grew tense. Then, with a sigh, he leaned forward again. “Alright, alright. You win. Four grand for you, a thousand for me. But you better make sure this goes smooth, Loris. Big Boris ain’t the forgivin’ type, and neither is my buyer.”

He reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a folded piece of paper, sliding it across the table to Loris. “Here’s the layout of the Arena. Storage room’s on the east side, near the old loading docks. Boris’s boys patrol the place, but they’re lazy. You get in, grab the parts, and get out. No fireworks, got it?”

Loris took the paper and glanced at it, committing the details to memory. “No fireworks,” he agreed. “But if things go sideways, I’m not gonna sit around and wait for Boris to introduce me to his fists.”

Dante nodded. “Fair enough. Just don’t bring the heat back to me, alright? I got a reputation to maintain.”

“Yeah, you’re getting’ off easy; you’re lucky I didn’t say ninety-ten. What’s your troubles again?” Loris said before walking away. He shook his head as he walked over to his car. Getting in, he made his way back across the railroad tracks and to Quinn’s Auto, where he could put in a few calls on the rotary telephone. He needed to gather more information on Big Boris’s enforcers and buyer, and reached out to a few trustworthy allies in this game.

“Good morning. Office of Hyman Sonnenschein. How may I help you?” a familiar woman’s voice buzzed through the line.

“Gladys, it’s me: Loris.”

“Awww, yeah, Lorisss, how are you, dawlin’?” the woman from Jersey smiled as she replied. “Hyman’s not in right now. What can I tell him when he gets back?”

“Alright, well, nothin’ I guess. When will he be there? Maybe I can swing by, bring some o’ those eclairs you like.”

“Oh, Lorisss, don’t you dare. I’m watchin’ my figure.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, but that’s sweet.”

“It is a sweet figure,” he jokingly agreed.

She giggled, and masked her laughter, “OK, I see that he’s due back after lunch. Try about 1:30 or 2 just to be sure. You know he can linger at the diner.”

“Linger, yeah, if that’s what he calls it. Alright, Gladys. One of these days, you know, I’m gonna call, and it ain’t gonna be for Hyman. I’ll see yas at 1:30... or 2.”

He hung up, and then went into the front office, and pulled open the silver handle of the 4’ tall refrigerator, nodding again to Quinn Fritz, his formal boss and informal business associate... you could even say, partner.

“Hey, partner,” Loris said informally, “you got a minute?”

“No, I’m studyin’ for the bar,” Quinn joked. “What’s it look like? Luigi’s out there workin’ on the only car in the shop, and I’m in here wonderin’ why I’m not in Miami with someone half your age.”

Loris, who was about half as old as Quinn, had seen far less action than the retired safecracker turned mechanic. Quinn had done a short stint upstate—five years on a nine-year sentence reduced for good behavior—and had gone more or less straight since then, relying on down-the-line racketeers such as Loris, to pad his income while still maintaining enough legal distance from illegitimate enterprises that few lawyers could touch him, and the best lawyers in Lakefront were working defense these days; that was where the money was.

“Yeah, I got a fuckin’ minute,” Quinn clarified after an awkward pause.

“Sowaaa…” he started, “I got a proposition from a guy…”

“You got a proposition…?”

“Yeah.”

“From a guy…?”

“Right.”

“What guy?”

“What does it matter? Just…”

“It matters. It usually matters more than the proposition.”

“Aw, look, I didn’t come in here to have you bust my balls. I haven’t even told you what it is.”

“It doesn’t matter what it is if I don’t know who’s involved.” They’d been through mishaps before, and Loris understood what Quinn was referencing.

He parted his lips and inhaled, thinking it over before answering, “It’s Whispers.”

“Who?”

“Whispers, the guy at the pawnshop,” he clarified.

“Oh, that fuck? Monty or whateverthefuck?”

“Dante,” Loris corrected him.

“Ah, yeah, Daaante,” Quinn shook his head. “Degenerate gambler, preys on the poor, ends up selling them back their own asses at a 20% profit. This neighborhood was better off without him and his pawnshop, and that goes for every other pawnshop around here.”

“So you want to hear this or not?”

“Hear what?”

“The proposition.”

“No I don’t wanna hear anything that bum’s peddlin’!”

A tense moment of silence between them was underscored by the melodic chirping of a black-capped chickadee.

“Alright, tell me the proposition,” Quinn caved in.

Loris related most of it before Quinn interrupted him. “Are you nuts?! Big Boris? You get yourself killed fuckin’ with Boris. Don’t do it.”

“You wouldn’t do it?”

“Maybe I would, but I wouldn’t see my next birthday if I did,” swore the owner of the shop.

“So, I should turn it down?”

“You should’a never taken it in the first place. Even someone saying you agree to do it will put your name on a headstone,” Quinn professed. “Don’t do it.” Then he thought to ask, “How much did he offer?”

Loris left out the details of the initial offer, “Four grand.”

Quinn looked down and shook his head, miming with his lips, “Four grand,” then saying aloud, “What’s the degenerate’s cut?”

“He gets a grand.”

“A thousand dollars?”

“Yeah.”

“For what? For doing what?”

“That’s what I said.”

“Fuckin’ degenerate,” Quinn leaned back in his chair, the creak of the wood echoing in the small office. He rubbed his chin, his eyes narrowing as he considered the situation. “When’s this goin’ down?” he repeated, his tone a mix of skepticism and reluctant interest.

Loris shrugged. “Whispers didn’t give me a timeline. Just said the parts are at the Arena now, and Boris’s boys are guarding ‘em. I figure the sooner I move, the better. Less chance of Boris catchin’ wind and movin’ the stash.”

Quinn sighed, shaking his head. “You’re playin’ with fire, kid. Big Boris ain’t just some two-bit thug. He’s got connections, muscle, and a mean streak a mile wide. You cross him, and you’re gonna need more than luck to get out alive.”

Loris leaned against the refrigerator, crossing his arms. “I know the risks. But four grand’s four grand. That’s enough to get the chop shop up and runnin’, maybe even expand the legit side of the business. You’d see a cut of that, you know.”

Quinn raised an eyebrow. “Oh, now you’re cuttin’ *me* in? What, you think I’m gonna help you with this suicide mission?”

Loris smirked. “I’m not askin’ you to come with me. Just… maybe keep an ear to the ground. See if you can find out anything about Boris’s enforcers—how many there are, what kind of firepower they’re packin’. Anything that’ll give me an edge.”

Quinn stared at Loris for a long moment, then let out a gruff laugh. “You got guts, kid, I’ll give you that. Alright, I’ll see what I can dig up. But if this goes south, don’t come cryin’ to me. And for God’s sake, don’t bring the heat back here.”

Loris nodded. “Wouldn’t dream of it.”

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With Quinn’s reluctant agreement to help, Loris decided to make his next move. He glanced at the clock on the wall—11:45. He had a couple of hours before his meeting with Hyman Sonnenschein at 1:30… or 2; plenty of time to make a few more calls.

He picked up the rotary phone again and dialed the number for Officer Lister Owsley, the corrupt beat cop who’d turned a blind eye to some of Loris’s smaller jobs in the past. After a few rings, Owsley’s gruff voice came through the line.

“Owsley.”

“Lister, it’s Loris. Got a minute?”

There was a pause, then a sigh. “This better not be about another ‘misunderstanding’ with one of your ‘borrowed’ cars.”

Loris chuckled. “Nah, not this time. I need some info. You hear anything about Big Boris movin’ a shipment of car parts to the Lakefront Arena?”

Owsley was silent for a moment, then lowered his voice. “What’s it to *you*?”

“Let’s just say I’m considerin’ a career change. But I need to know what I’m walkin’ into. You hear anything?”

Another pause, then Owsley muttered, “Yeah, I heard somethin’. Boris’s boys have been braggin’ about some high-end parts they’re storin’ at the Arena. Word is, they’re plannin’ to move ‘em soon—maybe in the next day or two. But listen, Loris, if you’re thinkin’ about pullin’ somethin’ stupid, don’t. Boris’s got the place locked down tight. You’ll be lucky to get in, let alone get out alive.”

Loris nodded, even though Owsley couldn’t see him. “Thanks, Lister. I owe you one.”

“You owe me more than one,” Owsley grumbled before hanging up.

Loris considered the next few hours. Quinn would keep an ear to the ground, and provide details about Boris’s enforcers, hopefully by the end of the day, and not a moment too soon. Owsley had confirmed that Boris’s men were guarding the car parts in the Arena warehouse, would move them within the next day or two. Though this left some wiggle room, Loris had no reason to take any chances with delaying, so tomorrow would be the operative day. Today was therefore devoted to reconnaissance.

He considered scouting the Lakefront Arena himself to get a better sense of the layout and security, trying to recall if anyone who worked there would recognize him. His cousin used to be one of the peanuts-and-popcorn girls there, but she’d since moved on to be one of those telephone operators on roller skates. It was the wave of the future.

Loris leaned against the wall of Quinn’s office, running through his mental Rolodex of faces who might recognize him at the Lakefront Arena. He hadn’t been there in years, but the auto theft network in Lakefront City was tight-knit, and Boris’s enforcers weren’t exactly known for their forgetfulness. If any of them spotted him snooping around, the whole operation could go up in smoke.

“Better safe than sorry,” Loris muttered to himself. He rummaged through a drawer in the office and pulled out his disguise kit—a small leather case containing a fake mustache, a pair of wire-rimmed glasses, and a tweed cap. He’d used it before for jobs that required a bit more subtlety, and it had never let him down.

After a few minutes of careful application, Loris stepped back and examined himself in the cracked mirror hanging on the wall. The burly mustache and glasses gave him a scholarly look, and the cap pulled low over his brow completed the transformation. He looked like a completely different person—a mechanic or maybe a low-level engineer inspecting the Arena’s infrastructure. Perfect.

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The Lakefront Arena was a crumbling behemoth on the edge of the city, its once-grand facade now pockmarked with graffiti and neglect. Loris parked his borrowed Model T a few blocks away and approached on foot, keeping his head down and his hands in his pockets. The disguise gave him confidence, but he knew better than to push his luck.

As he neared the Arena, he spotted a couple of Boris’s enforcers loitering near the side entrance. They were big, burly men with flat caps and cigarettes dangling from their lips. Loris kept his distance, using his Observation skill to study their movements. They seemed bored, more interested in their conversation than in keeping watch. That was good—it meant they were complacent.

Loris circled the building, taking note of the entrances, exits, and potential weak points. The loading docks on the east side looked like the best bet—they were partially hidden from view, and the lock on the door appeared old and rusted. He also spotted a few windows on the second floor that might be accessible if he could find a way up.

As he was finishing his circuit, he noticed a man in a suit walking briskly toward the Arena’s main entrance. The man looked familiar, but Loris couldn’t place him. He was carrying a briefcase and seemed to be in a hurry. Loris made a mental note to ask Quinn or Hyman about him later.

With the loading docks on the east side being a potential entry point, he gauged the rusted lock to take him 20 seconds to undo, maybe 30 tops. The second-floor windows might also serve as ingress or egress points, as convenient once the objective was met.

Loris tailed the mysterious man in the suit.

OOC: Relevant skills:

**Skill Linked Attribute**

Streetwise Intelligence (INT) 45% + 2%

Stealth Dexterity (DEX) 35% + 4%

Observation Intelligence (INT) 10% + 2%

Loris adjusted his tweed cap and pulled the collar of his coat up, blending into the sparse crowd of pedestrians near the Arena. The man in the suit was moving quickly, but Loris kept pace, staying far enough back to avoid suspicion while keeping the man in sight. He used his **Streetwise** knowledge to navigate the area, ducking into doorways and alleys when necessary to avoid being seen.

The man in the suit didn’t seem to notice he was being followed. He walked with purpose, his briefcase swinging at his side. Loris noted the man’s polished shoes and expensive-looking suit—this wasn’t some low-level enforcer. Whoever he was, he had money and influence.

The man reached the main entrance of the Arena and exchanged a few words with the guards stationed there. They nodded and stepped aside, letting him pass without a second glance. Loris hung back, watching from a distance. He couldn’t get too close without risking exposure, but he could see enough to know the man was heading inside.

Loris considered his options. He could try to follow the man into the Arena, but that would mean getting past the guards—a risky move, even with his disguise. Alternatively, he could wait outside and see if the man reappeared. Either way, he needed more information.

He waited up to five minutes to see what the man did.

Loris found a spot across the street from the Arena’s main entrance, leaning casually against a lamppost as if waiting for someone. He kept his eyes on the doors, watching for any sign of the man in the suit. The minutes ticked by slowly, the tension building as Loris wondered what the man was doing inside.

After about three minutes, the doors swung open, and the man in the suit emerged. He wasn’t alone—this time, he was accompanied by two of Boris’s enforcers, their bulky frames towering over him. The three men stood just outside the entrance, engaged in what appeared to be a heated discussion. Loris strained to hear, but he was too far away to make out the words.

The man in the suit gestured emphatically with his briefcase, his face flushed with frustration. The enforcers exchanged glances, their expressions a mix of annoyance and unease. Finally, one of them shrugged and said something that seemed to placate the man. The conversation ended with a curt nod, and the man in the suit turned on his heel and walked away, his pace brisk and angry.

The enforcers watched him go, then exchanged a few words between themselves before heading back inside. Loris noted the tension in their body language—something was definitely going on, and it didn’t seem like everyone was on the same page.

Loris followed the man in the suit to see where he went next.

The man in the suit walked with purpose, his polished shoes clicking sharply against the pavement. Loris followed at a safe distance, blending into the flow of pedestrians and using his Stealth to avoid drawing attention. The man didn’t look back, his focus fixed on whatever destination he had in mind.

After a few blocks, the man turned down a side street lined with modest brick buildings. Loris hung back, peering around the corner to see where he was going. The man stopped in front of a nondescript building with a faded sign that read “Lakefront Import & Export Co.” He glanced around briefly before pulling out a key and unlocking the door, slipping inside.

Loris waited a moment, then approached the building cautiously. He noted the windows on the second floor—one of them was slightly ajar, and a faint light flickered from within. The place looked like a front, the kind of operation that might serve as a cover for smuggling or other illicit activities.

Staking out the building to get a better sense of all of its accessible ingress/egress points, Loris evaluated these points and used the one he regarded as optimal to sneak into the building to gather more information.

Loris took his time surveying the Lakefront Import & Export Co. building, keeping to the shadows as he circled the perimeter. The structure was two stories tall, with a loading dock at the rear and a fire escape on the side. The front entrance was locked, and the windows on the ground floor were barred—likely to deter break-ins. However, the second-floor window he’d noticed earlier was still slightly ajar, and the fire escape provided a clear path up.

Loris decided the fire escape was his best bet. He waited until the street was clear, then darted across the alley and climbed the metal ladder with practiced ease. His Stealth kept his movements silent, and his Observation ensured he avoided any loose or noisy steps. When he reached the second floor, he paused to listen. The faint sound of voices drifted through the open window, but they were muffled and indistinct.

Carefully, Loris pushed the window open just enough to slip inside. The room was dimly lit, with stacks of crates and boxes filling the space. He crouched behind a crate and listened, trying to pinpoint the source of the voices. They seemed to be coming from the floor below.

Now inside a storage room on the second floor, with voices audible from the floor below, Loris surveyed a room cluttered with crates and boxes, providing cover for him to move around. Without moving, he quietly listened in on the conversation below, wondering what documents or contraband he might find in a place like this.

Loris crouched behind a stack of crates, his breathing slow and controlled as he focused on the voices drifting up from the floor below. The conversation was muffled, but he could make out enough to piece together what was being discussed.

“...shipment’s gotta move tonight,” one voice said, gruff and impatient. “Boris ain’t gonna wait around forever.”

“I know, I know,” replied a second voice, higher-pitched and nervous. “But the buyer’s got cold feet. Says the heat’s too close, and he doesn’t want to risk it.”

“The heat?” the first voice scoffed. “Since when does Sullivan care about the heat? She’s got half the cops in her pocket.”

Loris’s ears perked up at the name Sullivan. Siu-Ling “The Viper” Sullivan was a name he knew all too well—a former associate who’d turned on him and now wanted revenge. If Sullivan was involved in this operation, it added a dangerous new layer to the job.

The conversation continued, but the voices grew quieter, making it harder to hear. Loris strained to listen, catching only fragments: “...Arena...midnight...backup plan...”

While he listened, Loris also scanned the storage room. The crates and boxes were stacked haphazardly, some labeled with shipping manifests and others with cryptic symbols. One crate near the window caught his eye—it was smaller than the others and had a padlock on it. The lock looked cheap, something he could pick in a matter of seconds.

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Loris recalled the last time he’d seen Siu-Ling. It was in the courtyard of the Lakefront Promenade, where storefronts lined the first floor of every building, including her flower shop. Siu-Ling had grown up in Taipei, and had studied abroad at Liberty University before marrying Killian Sullivan, whose business assets she inherited and used to build her own burgeoning vice empire, through she had amassed was still far from an empire; it was more of a fiefdom.

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Loris unholstered his Beretta .25 ACP, and moved closer to the source of the voices.

**OOC:**

**Luck 91**

**Skill Linked Attribute**

Streetwise Intelligence (INT) 45% + 2%

Stealth Dexterity (DEX) 35% + 4%

Observation Intelligence (INT) 10% + 2%

Loris tightened his grip on the Beretta, the cool metal reassuring in his hand. He moved silently through the storage room, weaving between crates and boxes as he approached the source of the voices. The floorboards creaked faintly under his weight, but the sound was masked by the ongoing conversation below.

As he drew closer, the voices became clearer. The gruff voice belonged to one of Boris’s enforcers, a man named Viktor, while the nervous voice was unfamiliar—likely one of Boris’s lower-level operatives.

“...if Sullivan’s backing out, we’ll have to move the shipment ourselves,” Viktor growled. “Boris ain’t gonna like it, but we don’t got a choice.”

“What about the cops?” the nervous voice asked. “If they’re sniffin’ around, we’re gonna have trouble.”

“Cops?” Viktor snorted. “Owsley’s on the payroll, and the rest are too busy chasin’ their tails to bother with us. We’ll move the parts tonight, no matter what Sullivan says.”

Loris crouched behind a crate near the edge of the room, peering through a gap in the floorboards to get a better view of the men below. Viktor was a hulking figure with a scar running down his cheek, while the nervous man was thin and wiry, constantly fidgeting with his hands.

As Loris watched, Viktor pulled out a map and spread it on the table. “We’ll take the back roads,” he said, tracing a route with his finger. “Avoid the main checkpoints. If anyone tries to stop us, we’ll handle it.”

The nervous man nodded, though he didn’t look convinced. “What about the Viper? She’s not gonna take kindly to us cuttin’ her out.”

Viktor’s expression darkened. “Sullivan can go to hell. She’s been a pain in Boris’s side for too long. If she wants to play hardball, we’ll play hardball.”

Loris continued eavesdropping to gather more details.

Loris stayed low, his breath steady as he focused on the conversation below. Viktor and the nervous man were still poring over the map, their voices tense but clear.

“We’ll load the trucks at midnight,” Viktor said, tapping the map with a thick finger. “Take the old industrial route along the river. It’s longer, but there’s less chance of runnin’ into cops or nosy civilians.”

The nervous man frowned. “What about the Viper’s people? If she’s got wind of this, she might try to intercept.”

Viktor smirked. “Let her try. We’ll have six guys on the trucks, all armed. If Sullivan wants a fight, we’ll give her one.”

Loris’s mind raced. The shipment was moving tonight, and Boris’s crew was prepared for trouble. If Sullivan decided to make a move, it could turn into a full-blown gang war—and Loris would be caught in the middle.

Or… he could be on the bleachers, watching from an unseen position close enough to the industrial road, but he would have to know where Siu-Ling planned to intercept him, and that was subject to far too much error. No, he would have to preempt Sullivan’s overture, if there was to be one.

The nervous man hesitated, then asked, “What about the buyer? If Sullivan’s out, who’s takin’ the parts?”

Viktor shrugged. “We got a backup buyer lined up. Some out-of-town guy with deep pockets. He’s willin’ to pay top dollar, no questions asked.”

Loris’s ears perked up. An out-of-town buyer could mean new opportunities—or new dangers. He needed to find out more, but if he orchestrated this right, he might stand to have “Deep Pockets” lined up as a buyer before he even finished his score. Now who was this “Deep Pockets” person they were intimating?

As he leaned closer, his foot brushed against a loose floorboard. The wood creaked softly, and Viktor’s head snapped up, his eyes scanning the room. “You hear that?” he growled.

The nervous man shook his head. “Probably just the building settlin’. This place is a dump.”

Viktor wasn’t convinced. “Go check upstairs. Make sure we’re alone.”

Loris hid as the nervous man searched the storage room.

Loris moved quickly but silently, slipping behind a stack of crates near the far wall. He crouched low, his breath shallow and his body still. The storage room was cluttered, with just enough shadows and obstacles to provide cover. He gripped the Beretta tightly, ready to act if necessary, but hoping it wouldn’t come to that.

The nervous man’s footsteps echoed on the stairs as he climbed to the second floor. He paused at the top, scanning the room with a flashlight. The beam swept across the crates and boxes, casting long shadows on the walls. Loris held his breath as the light passed over his hiding spot, but the nervous man didn’t seem to notice anything out of the ordinary.

“Nothin’ up here,” the man called down to Viktor. “Just a bunch of old crates and junk.”

“You sure?” Viktor’s voice was skeptical.

“Yeah, I’m sure,” the nervous man replied, though he sounded less than confident. He lingered for a moment, shining the flashlight around the room one more time, before heading back downstairs.

Loris waited until he heard the man’s footsteps fade away before letting out a quiet sigh of relief. That had been too close for comfort. He needed to get out of here before Viktor decided to double-check.

He listened for their voices to glean anything else they had to say. He was also hoping they’d go away soon so he could try to pick the padlock on the crate and search the rest of the storage room for other items of interest.

Loris stayed hidden behind the crates, his ears tuned to the voices below. Viktor and the nervous man were still discussing the shipment, though their tones had shifted from planning to arguing.

“I don’t like this,” the nervous man said. “If Sullivan’s out, and the cops are sniffin’ around, we’re askin’ for trouble.”

“You think I don’t *know* that?” Viktor snapped. “But Boris gave the order, and we ain’t got a choice. The out-of-town buyer’s already paid half up front. We back out now, and we’re dead men.”

The nervous man sighed. “Alright, alright. But if this goes south, it’s on you.”

“It’s always on me,” Viktor muttered. “Now get the trucks ready. We move at midnight.”

Loris heard the sound of chairs scraping against the floor, followed by footsteps heading toward the door. He waited, holding his breath, until he heard the front door open and close. The building fell silent, save for the faint hum of a distant radiator.

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With Viktor and the nervous man gone, Loris emerged from his hiding spot and made his way to the locked crate near the window. The padlock was cheap and rusted, just as he’d thought. He pulled out his lockpick set and got to work, his hands steady despite the adrenaline still coursing through him.

The lock clicked open after a few seconds, and Loris lifted the lid of the crate. Inside, he found a stack of documents—shipping manifests, invoices, and a ledger detailing transactions between Boris’s crew and the out-of-town buyer. The name “Elias Grayson” appeared repeatedly in the ledger, along with amounts that made Loris’s eyes widen. This Grayson character was clearly a high roller.

Loris tucked the documents into his coat, then turned his attention to the rest of the storage room. He moved quietly, searching through the crates and boxes for anything else of value. In one crate, he found a small stash of cash—likely a petty fund for Boris’s operations. In another, he discovered a set of tools that could come in handy for his chop shop.

Loris moved methodically through the storage room, his eyes scanning the crates and boxes for anything of value. The room was a chaotic mess, but his Observation skills helped him spot details that others might have missed.

In a corner of the room, he found a crate marked with a series of numbers and symbols. The lid was loose, and when he pried it open, he discovered a collection of small, carefully wrapped packages. Inside one of the packages was a set of high-end car keys, each tagged with a make and model. Loris recognized some of the names—Packard, Cadillac, Duesenberg. These were luxury vehicles, the kind that could fetch a hefty price on the black market.

“Helll-llooo!” he sang to the keys as he pocketed them.

He also found a stack of photographs tucked beneath the packages. The photos showed various cars parked in different locations around the city, with notes scribbled on the backs detailing their owners and schedules. It looked like Boris’s crew had been casing these vehicles for future thefts.

Loris pocketed the keys and photos, knowing they could be useful for his own operations. As he continued his search, he noticed a small, locked drawer in a desk near the window. The drawer was sturdy, but the lock looked like something he could handle.

He then attempted to open the desk drawer. Loris knelt in front of the desk, examining the lock on the drawer. It was a simple pin tumbler lock, the kind he’d dealt with countless times before. He pulled out his lockpick set and got to work, his hands moving with practiced precision.

The lock clicked open after a few moments, and Loris carefully slid the drawer open. Inside, he found a small stack of papers and a leather-bound notebook. The papers included a list of names and addresses—likely associates or targets—and a map of the city with several locations marked in red. One of the marked locations was the Lakefront Arena, while others appeared to be warehouses and storage facilities.

The notebook was more intriguing. It contained detailed notes on Boris’s operations, including schedules, financial records, and even a few coded messages. One entry caught Loris’s eye: a mention of a meeting with Elias Grayson scheduled for the following evening at a private club downtown. The notes suggested that Grayson was interested in expanding his business with Boris, but the details were vague.

Loris tucked the papers and notebook into his coat alongside the other documents he’d found. This was a goldmine of information, and it could give him a significant advantage—if he played his cards right.

Loris could use this information to intercept the meeting with Elias Grayson and/or sabotaging Boris’s shipment. He continued searching the storage room for anything else of interest.

Loris moved quietly through the storage room, his eyes scanning every corner for anything he might have missed. The room was a labyrinth of crates and boxes, but his sharp Observation skills helped him spot a few more items of interest.

In a dusty corner, he found a small metal box tucked beneath a stack of old newspapers. The box was locked, but the mechanism was simple enough for him to pick. Inside, he discovered a set of forged documents—vehicle registrations, driver’s licenses, and even a few passports. These could be invaluable for his operations, especially if he needed to move stolen cars across state lines.

Near the window, he noticed a loose floorboard. When he pried it up, he found a hidden compartment containing a small stash of jewelry and a handful of gold coins. It wasn’t a fortune, but it was enough to pad his wallet and fund his next move.

Finally, as he was about to leave, Loris spotted a crate labeled “Fragile—Handle with Care.” Curious, he opened it and found a collection of mechanical parts—gears, pistons, and other components that looked like they belonged to high-performance engines. These parts were rare and expensive, the kind of thing that could fetch a premium price on the black market.

He tallied the inventory of items he’d filched while here:

* shipping manifests and invoices detailing the shipment of car parts
* ledger naming the out-of-town buyer as *Elias Grayson*, with financial transactions
* cash (approximately $500)
* tools for his chop shop
* car keys tagged with luxury vehicles
* photographs and notes detailing potential targets for future thefts
* forged vehicle registrations, drivers’ licenses, and passports
* jewelry and gold coins (worth approximately $1,000)

As for the crate of high-performance engine parts, he wouldn’t be able to lug those out of here, though he made a mental note of their existence for now. He imagined these weren’t the bulk of the prize he was after, but maybe the tip of that iceberg.

He needed to sabotage Boris’s shipment if at all possible, and now that he had all these items on him, he immediately left the building, looking for any of the cars whose keys he’d just pocketed. Luxury vehicles like those weren’t a dime a dozen, and if he spotted even one, he was nearly sure to have the key for it.

Loris slipped out of the building through the fire escape, his coat heavy with the weight of the documents, cash, and other items he’d pilfered. The night air was cool, and the streets were quiet, save for the occasional rumble of a passing car. He scanned the area, his eyes darting from one parked vehicle to the next, looking for a match to the keys he’d found.

It didn’t take long for him to spot a sleek Packard parked a block away. The car was a beauty—its polished black exterior gleamed under the streetlights, and its chrome accents caught the eye. Loris approached cautiously, glancing around to make sure no one was watching. He pulled out the set of keys and tried one. The lock clicked open.

Sliding into the driver’s seat, Loris took a moment to appreciate the luxurious interior. The leather seats were soft, and the dashboard was a masterpiece of craftsmanship. He turned the key in the ignition, and the engine purred to life. This was a car worth stealing, and it would make the perfect getaway vehicle.

Loris gauged his resources, best of all, time. He was still hoping to meet Hyman shortly before 2 pm, and with this car, he could also intercept Boris’s shipment tonight. Hyman’s office was about six blocks down, so he observed speed limits and local laws as he drove his freshly re-stolen vehicle, heading to Sonnenschein’s firm.

Loris glanced at the clock on the Packard’s dashboard—2:00 PM. He was right on time. The drive to Hyman Sonnenschein’s office was smooth, the luxury car handling like a dream. He made sure to obey the speed limits and traffic laws, not wanting to draw any unnecessary attention. The last thing he needed was a cop pulling him over while he was driving a stolen Packard.

As he pulled up to the building housing Hyman’s law firm, Loris parked the car a block away, just to be safe. He adjusted his disguise—the mustache and glasses were still in place—and made his way to the office. The receptionist, Gladys, greeted him with a warm smile.

“Loris, darlin’, you’re right on time,” she said, her Jersey accent thick and cheerful. “Hyman’s in his office. Go on back.”

Loris nodded and made his way down the hall to Hyman’s office. The door was slightly ajar, and he could hear the lawyer’s voice on the phone. He knocked lightly before pushing the door open.

Hyman Sonnenschein was seated behind a large mahogany desk, the phone pressed to his ear. He waved Loris in, finishing his conversation with a curt, “We’ll discuss this later,” before hanging up.

“Loris,” Hyman said, leaning back in his chair. “What brings you here? And why do you look like a college professor?”

Loris smirked and removed the glasses and mustache, stuffing them into his coat pocket. “Just a little precaution. I’ve got a situation, and I need your advice.”

“I’ve got a retainer on file, so shoot,” the lawyer invited.

Leaning on client-lawyer privilege, Loris still spoke in hypotheticals, “If I was to find myself in the midst of a shootout,” and “if I should come across some high-end vehicular equipment…” and in the end, Hyman understood the circumstance.

Hyman leaned forward, resting his elbows on the desk, his fingers steepled. His sharp eyes studied Loris as the criminal laid out his hypotheticals. By the time Loris finished, Hyman was nodding slowly, a sly smile creeping across his face.

“Hypothetically speaking,” Hyman began, his tone dripping with sarcasm, “if someone were to find themselves in the middle of a shootout, I’d advise them to make sure they’re not the one holding the smoking gun. Hypothetically, of course.”

Loris smirked. “Noted.”

“And if someone were to come across some… high-end vehicular equipment,” Hyman continued, “they’d want to make sure they had a buyer lined up who wouldn’t ask too many questions. Hypothetically.”

Loris leaned back in his chair. “Let’s say I—hypothetically—already have a buyer in mind. But this buyer might be tied up with some… competing interests.”



Hyman’s smile widened. “Ah, competing interests. Hypothetically, those can be messy. But if someone were to, say, intercept a meeting between those competing interests and the buyer, they might be able to cut a better deal. Hypothetically.”

Loris raised an eyebrow. “And how would someone go about doing that? Hypothetically.”

Hyman leaned back, tapping his fingers on the desk. “Well, hypothetically, if someone had access to a certain private club downtown—say, the Silver Swan—they might be able to arrange a little… misdirection. Maybe even get the buyer to reconsider their loyalties.”

Loris nodded slowly. The Silver Swan was one of the most exclusive clubs in Lakefront City, a place where the city’s elite rubbed shoulders with its underworld. If Elias Grayson was meeting Boris there, it made sense.

“Hypothetically,” Loris asked, “what kind of misdirection are we talking about?”

Hyman’s smile turned into a grin. “Hypothetically, a well-placed rumor, a forged document, or even a timely interruption could do the trick. And if someone were to have a lawyer who knows the right people, they might be able to arrange all of the above.”

“No, don’t even think about it,” Loris went so far as to lean forward in his chair. “You so much as mention Big Boris or any of this in public, and this’ll all come back to you.”

There was a brief moment of silent eye contact before Loris said what they were both thinking, “And someone with your courtroom tan ain’t gonna last a minute in an interrogation if it’s run by Boris. So don’t think I’m bein’ humanitarian here; they get to you, they get to me an hour later.”

“Right. Mum’s the word,” the attorney said.

“You know, as much as I like doin’ business with you, you really ought’a consider staying on the green side of things. You got a lot less to lose sleep over that way.”

Sonnenschein nodded, smiled, and looked down with full intention of going gangster on his own schedule.

Loris’s objective was now to intercept and foil the meeting between Boris and Elias Grayson at the Silver Swan club. He asked Hyman for more details on how to execute the plan. What are some legal pitfalls I gotta watch out for, other than leaving bullet casings around? You know, I heard they got a way to check surfaces to see fingerprints left by people who handled stolen goods, and murder weapons and what not.”

The lawyer shook his head, correcting him, “That’s a hoax. Some kid at Berkeley is working on this now; a colleague of mine read some of his work, but it’s inconclusive... the chemistry’s not there yet. Maybe in 10 years…. So you’re off to the Blue Parrot?”

He hadn’t mentioned the Blue Parrot. “Not, the Silver Swan,” Loris noted that Hyman mistook the Silver Swan for the dive he’d been in this morning when he’d spoken with Dante. What were the odds of that?

“I’m leaning towards nixing the whole ‘intercept the meeting’ idea, and just go straight to the ‘sabotage the shipment’ plan, or better yet, ‘confiscate the shipment’. I don’t have the time to hire muscle, so it’s going to have to be me doing any of the dirty work. However, there’s a wildcard that we could turn into an ace.”

“How’s that?” asked the attorney.

“Can I use your phone?”

Hyman shrugged, “Sure.”

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He’d made four calls in all, just to get in touch with the one liaison he still had in common with Siu-Ling. Her name was Pollyanna Gadsden, and she had been a bridesmaid at the Sullivan wedding, though they’d had a falling out after Siu-Ling’s marriage. Ms. Gadsden had since become a successful madame, and had invited Loris to her establishment more than once, though paying for pleasure was not his bag.

The fourth call was made, and he thanked Hyman for his time and phone, adding, “My sympathies for your doggie. I know she was precious to you.”

Hyman genuinely said, “Appreciate it. She was a love... better than most people, better than me.”

“Don’t beat yourself up over it,” he counseled the counselor, knowing full well that Hyman would rat on him before the interrogator even pulled out the pliers.

Loris had gotten the message that Siu-Ling was about to be cut out of the deal on which she’d already made a partial payment, and that would not sit well with her when the message reached her. She would, of course, suspect that it was a ruse, particularly since the information was coming from Loris and through Pollyanna, but there it was: the forcing of the third party’s hand to undertake what would otherwise be his labor: engaging Boris’s men as they made their way towards the drop site.

Loris left Hyman’s office with a plan forming in his mind. Siu-Ling Sullivan wasn’t someone to be trifled with, and if she found out Boris was double-crossing her, she’d move fast and decisively. All Loris had to do was sit back and let the two sides tear each other apart—then step in to claim the spoils.

He drove the stolen Packard back to Quinn’s Auto, where he could regroup and prepare for the night’s operation. Quinn was in the garage, tinkering with an engine, when Loris walked in.

“You’re back,” Quinn said, wiping his hands on a rag. “What’s the plan?”

Loris filled him in on the details—the shipment, the meeting at the Silver Swan, and his decision to let Siu-Ling and Boris duke it out. Quinn listened intently, nodding along.

“Sounds risky,” Quinn said when Loris finished. “But if anyone can pull it off, it’s you. Just don’t get yourself killed, alright? I’d hate to have to find a new wheelman.”

Loris smirked. “Don’t worry, old man. I’ve got this.”

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As night fell, Loris made his way to the industrial route along the river, where Boris’s shipment was scheduled to move. He parked the Packard a safe distance away and found a vantage point overlooking the road. From there, he could see the trucks lined up, their engines idling as Boris’s enforcers loaded the last of the car parts.

Loris didn’t have to wait long. Just as the trucks were about to pull out, a convoy of cars came speeding down the road, their headlights cutting through the darkness. Siu-Ling’s people had arrived.

Chaos erupted as the two sides clashed. Gunfire echoed through the night, and the air was thick with shouts and the smell of burning rubber. Loris watched from his hiding spot, biding his time. When the fighting reached its peak, he made his move.

Using his Stealth and Driving skills, Loris slipped through the chaos and commandeered one of the trucks. The keys he’d stolen earlier made it easy to get the engine running, and he quickly pulled away from the scene, the truck’s cargo secure in the back.

As he drove, Loris couldn’t help but smile. The shipment was his, and neither Boris nor Siu-Ling would be able to stop him now. He had the parts he needed to fund his chop shop, and he’d dealt a blow to two of his biggest rivals in the process.

Without any further ado, Loris considered returning to Quinn’s Auto to unload the shipment and began dismantling the parts. In the morning, he would reach out to Elias Grayson directly to negotiate a deal for the stolen goods, but he had lit a fuse by letting Siu-Ling in on the deal. His name would—no doubt—be dropped, and Big Boris would come looking for him by noon tomorrow.

Unless…

He changed his mind. Now, with maps and documents still in hand, and knowing full well the whereabouts of Big Boris, he drove the truck to a street two blocks down from where Boris was waiting for one of his men to reach a payphone and update him on the transaction. It was near midnight, and this industrial area was devoid of all but a few indigents. He parked the vehicle, and gave a homeless man in a trench coat $10 to watch the vehicle. “Yell if anyone starts messin’ with it and I’ll throw in another $5.” This was about a week’s wages for a working man, and the indigent man nodded with appreciation.

With a full magazine in his holstered beretta and one to match in his vest pocket, he made his way on foot to the bootlegger’s joint, armed with far too much intel to waste. Loris had seen the number of men at the exchange site; that was the bulk of his army, and most were now dead or injured. This left maybe a half-dozen of his men—the ones least fit for field duty—in the club to deal with.

His Beretta magazines each had eight bullets, so conservatively, he gave himself two bullets for each goon, leaving enough to take out Big Boris with a will.

Loris wasn’t exactly the violent type, but he’d crossed a line that Boris had drawn in the dirt many times with those who had come and gone, and Loris had no illusions about riding into the sunset after this caper. He was now entrenched in the complex politics of the Lakefront underworld whether he liked it or not, and he’d chosen the side that seemed most agreeable based on what he knew today.

Perhaps someday, regret would show up on his doorstep and be his bedfellow, but as he approached the establishment from the service entrance, ensconced by two alleys wide enough for trucks to get through, he drew his weapon and held it in his right jacket pocket on a chilly March evening.

With both hands in his jacket pockets, he eyed two bouncers outside whom Loris identified as Boris’s personal bodyguards.

The service entrance to the bootlegger’s joint was tucked between two alleys, wide enough for trucks to maneuver but narrow enough to feel claustrophobic. The two bouncers standing guard were unmistakably Boris’s personal bodyguards—hulking figures in dark suits, their faces set in grim expressions. They were armed, their bulging jackets suggesting they carried more than just fists. One of them was smoking a cigarette, while the other leaned against the wall, scanning the area with a bored but vigilant gaze.

The entrance itself was a heavy metal door with a small window at eye level. Beyond it, Loris could hear the faint sound of music and voices—likely the rest of Boris’s men inside, along with the man himself. The bouncers didn’t seem particularly alert, but they were positioned in a way that made it difficult to approach unnoticed. The area was poorly lit, with only a single flickering bulb above the door casting a dim glow.

Loris weighed his options:

Loris’s Charisma and Persuasion skills could come into play here. He could try to talk his way past the bouncers, perhaps posing as a deliveryman or someone with urgent business for Boris. However, if they recognized him or grew suspicious, things could escalate quickly.

Loris’s Firearms skill could allow him to take out the bouncers from a distance, using the darkness and his Stealth to remain undetected until it was too late. However, gunfire would likely alert the men inside, putting Loris at a disadvantage.

This approach would rely on surprise and Loris’s Stealth and Firearms skills. He could approach the bouncers casually, his hands in his pockets, and fire through the fabric of his jacket. This would minimize the chance of them drawing their weapons first, but it would require precision and nerves of steel.

These unfortunate men would meet their maker tonight. They knew the risks. Doing it from a distance, however, was risky, given that faraway targets were simply harder to hit. His reflexes were fast enough that he could shoot, assess, and shoot again in the span of a second and a half, and that made the ideal distance from their targets to be about 25’. Any closer and he was at risk of being overcome by one of the hulking men.

The first shot would go into the chest of the closer man, and the second would be directed at the other man. Within 1½ seconds, he would assess whom he’d hit, and train the barrel of the pistol on the other man, repeating until both targets were on the ground before entering and exploiting the confusion (Stealth / Streetwise) created by the fleeing strippers and patrons to identify (Observation) and neutralize (Firearms) goons on his way to the back room where he’d been a time or two.

Loris took a deep breath, steadying his nerves as he approached the bouncers. He was about 100 feet away, still hidden in the shadows, but he knew he’d be spotted soon as he stepped under the flickering streetlight.

The first shot rang out, the sound muffled slightly by the fabric of his jacket. The bullet struck the closer bouncer in the chest, sending him stumbling backward. The second shot followed almost immediately, hitting the other bouncer in the shoulder. Both men went down, one collapsing to the ground while the other clutched his wound, shouting in pain.

Loris didn’t wait to see if they were fully neutralized. He sprinted toward the entrance, his Beretta now drawn and ready. As he reached the door, he could hear the chaos erupting inside—shouts, screams, and the sound of breaking glass. The staff and patrons were already fleeing, pouring out of the back entrance in a panicked rush.

Loris slipped inside, using the confusion to his advantage. He moved quickly but quietly, his Stealth and Streetwise skills helping him blend into the chaos. He kept his head down, his eyes scanning the room for any threats. The main area was a blur of movement—strippers grabbing their coats, bartenders ducking behind the bar, and VIPs scrambling for the exits.

In the backroom, Loris spotted two of Boris’s goons trying to restore order. They were armed but distracted, their attention divided between the fleeing crowd and the direction of the gunfire. Loris didn’t hesitate. He fired two quick shots, dropping both men before they could react. He wasted no time in heading to the backroom to confront Boris and any remaining goons, using the chaos to ambush the remaining goons as they were still overcome by the shock of seeing two of their associates shot dead in their midst.

Loris moved swiftly through the chaos, his Beretta at the ready. The backroom was just ahead, its heavy wooden door slightly ajar. He could hear raised voices inside—Boris’s deep, angry tone and the panicked replies of his remaining goons. They were clearly on edge, the gunfire and commotion having put them on high alert.

Loris paused at the door, peering through the crack. He counted three goons inside, all armed and positioned around the room. Boris was seated at a table in the center, his face red with fury as he barked orders. The room was dimly lit, with a single overhead bulb casting harsh shadows.

Loris took a deep breath and kicked the door open, firing two quick shots as he entered. One goon went down immediately, clutching his chest. The other two scrambled for cover, returning fire as Loris ducked behind a nearby couch.

Bullets tore through the room, splintering wood and shattering glass. Loris crouched low, his heart pounding as he assessed the situation. He was outnumbered, and the goons had the advantage of cover. If he stayed here, he’d be pinned down.

Remembering his plan, Loris fired a few suppressing shots to keep the goons’ heads down, then bolted for the door. He sprinted down the hallway, his footsteps echoing as he searched for a hiding spot. He found one in a storage closet just around the corner, its door slightly ajar. He slipped inside, leaving the door open just enough to see the hallway.

The goons didn’t take long to follow. They emerged from the backroom cautiously, their guns sweeping the hallway as they advanced. Loris waited until they were within range, then fired through the crack in the door. The first goon went down with a cry, clutching his leg. The second hesitated, giving Loris enough time to fire again. This shot hit its mark, and the second goon collapsed.

With the goons neutralized, Loris stepped out of the closet and made his way back to the backroom. Boris was still inside, his face pale as he realized his men were gone. He reached for a gun on the table, but Loris was faster. He fired a single shot, hitting Boris in the shoulder and sending the gun clattering to the floor.

“You’re finished, Boris,” Loris said, stepping into the room. “Your operation’s done. Your men are dead or running. And now it’s just you and me.”

Boris glared at him, clutching his wounded shoulder. “You think this is over? You’re a dead man, d’Udine. You hear me? A dead man.”

Loris didn’t respond. He walked over to the table and picked up Boris’s gun, tucking it into his belt. Then he grabbed a nearby chair and sat down, his Beretta trained on Boris.

“We’re all dead men, just waiting to claim our place among the ranks of our fathers,” the uneducated gangster paraphrased something he’d heard a dame say once.

“Aw, Loris, come on,” smiled Big Boris. “I know you’re not gonna shoot me.”

Loris smiled back, “You’re right.” Loris reached and opened one of the drawers on the man’s desk, then another, until he found a letter opener, which—without warning—he jabbed into Boris’s jugular, ending the man’s career as a mob boss, and his existence.

He spent a minute or so watching Boris bleed to death. Leaving the man in a puddle of his own blood and urine, he walked casually through the now empty establishment, washed his hands in the restroom, and took his leave via the same rear entrance from which he’d come. The bouncer with the wounded shoulder was crawling towards a car, and Loris casually but decisively made his way towards him, planting his last bullet in the goon’s skull before turning towards the streetlight, and heading back towards the truck.

A few minutes later, he passed by the homeless man, and asked, “Any trouble?”

“Nope. No trouble.”

“Appreciate it,” Loris nodded, throwing him five more silver dollars even though there wasn’t any issue. He valued goodwill like that; it bought him karma in this life.

He drove the truck back to Quinn’s, parked it behind the station, and used his keys to get inside the locked facility. It was about 1:30 am. He’d had a full day, and spent some time on the forklift bringing in some of the parts to better assess his payload.

The forklift hummed as Loris carefully unloaded the crates of high-end car parts, stacking them in the backroom of Quinn’s Auto. The shop was quiet, the only sound being the occasional clink of metal as he worked. His mind raced with possibilities—this shipment was worth a fortune, and with Boris out of the picture, the balance of power in Lakefront City was about to shift.

As he finished unloading, Quinn appeared in the doorway, his arms crossed and a look of disbelief on his face. “You actually pulled it off,” he said, shaking his head. “I didn’t think you had it in you.”

Loris smirked. “Guess I’m full of surprises.”

Quinn stepped inside, examining the crates. “This is some high-end stuff. You could make a killing off this, no pun intended.”

“That’s the plan,” Loris said. “But first, I need to figure out who’s buying. Boris had a deal lined up with some out-of-town guy named Elias Grayson. I’m thinking I might reach out to him directly.”

Quinn raised an eyebrow. “You sure that’s a good idea? Grayson’s not exactly small-time. He’s got connections, and he’s not gonna take kindly to you muscling in on his deal.”

“Maybe,” Loris said. “But I’ve got something he wants. And if I play my cards right, I might be able to turn this into a long-term partnership.”

Quinn nodded slowly. “Just be careful, kid. You’ve made a lot of enemies tonight. Boris’s crew isn’t just gonna roll over, and Siu-Ling’s gonna be looking for payback.”

Loris knew Quinn was right. The road ahead was fraught with danger, but he’d come too far to back down now. He had the parts, the connections, and the ambition to make his dream a reality. All he needed was a little luck—and maybe a few more bullets.



**Priorities**

* He has the **immediate** objective to use the car keys he confiscated to appropriate as many of Big Boris’ vehicles as possible. He wants this done within hours, and will hire two or three young drivers to get him the handful of cars for which they already have keys. The locations are all by the warehouse that he infiltrated.
  + With an expected timeline to completion of the above being noon the next day, he expects to have a fleet of luxury cars, including a 2-seater sportster, a 5-seater sedan, a van, and a hearse.
* His **second** priority is to contact Dante and communicate that there was no sale, and therefore there will be no $5000 coming their way. He will not explain the details over the phone, and will let Dante in on a cut of his new business as he takes over Big Boris’s operations.
* Once the priorities above are seen to, he will reach out to Elias Grayson to negotiate a deal for the stolen parts. He’ll default to a polite stance, offering even a number that’s less than fair but still profitable, making it clear that this is a gesture of respect for an established businessman, and offering it as a token of their continued mutual interests.
* He’ll also bring in Hyman on the prospect of recruiting Boris’s former crew, what remains, offering to pay for the hospitalization of those who were wounded last night, and for the funeral services of those who perished.
* Loris will then want to know what Big Boris’s racketeering operations are as well as his business fronts, and will make offers to the current manager of each to keep their function. He also offers to raise their salaries by a percentage commensurate with profit increases.
  + He will ask Quinn to read the business documents that he confiscated.
  + Once law enforcement leaves Big Boris’s club, Loris will ask the young drivers referenced above to go in there on his behalf and confiscate weapons, and deliver them to Dante for “safekeeping”. He will slowly move his operations into Boris’s former office.
* Sullivan isn’t the only remaining big fish in this pond, so he’ll also want to know who the other players in the city are as he fills the power vacuum. His stance will be a cooperative one with potential rivals, exploring avenues of possible symbiosis depending on their respective specializations.
* All the while, as a side project, he would begin to discuss with an architect the construction of an underground chop shop, and expanding Quinn’s legitimate business as a front.

Loris hired three young drivers to retrieve Big Boris’s luxury vehicles using the confiscated keys. Despite a close call with a nosy bystander, his Streetwise and Luck ensured all four vehicles—a sportster, sedan, van, and hearse—were secured and parked at Quinn’s Auto by noon. Next, he met Dante at the Blue Parrot, using his Persuasion and Charisma to convince him that a cut of the new operations was more profitable long-term. Dante agreed, though he remained wary of Loris’s freelancer status.

With Hyman’s help, Loris approached Elias Grayson at the Silver Swan. His Charisma and Streetwise impressed Grayson, who agreed to a deal for the stolen parts at a slightly reduced price, cementing Loris’s credibility. Meanwhile, Hyman used his legal expertise to recruit Boris’s former crew. Loris’s offer to cover medical and funeral costs, combined with his Persuasion, convinced half the crew to join the Eastside, though the rest remained loyal to Boris’s memory.

Quinn reviewed Boris’s documents, identifying rackets and legitimate fronts. Loris approached the managers, using Streetwise and Persuasion to retain most of them, replacing the few who resisted. Later, the young drivers retrieved weapons from Boris’s club under cover of darkness, avoiding police and rivals thanks to a successful Stealth roll. The weapons were delivered to Dante for safekeeping.

Loris used Streetwise and Observation to gather intel on rival factions, identifying potential allies and rivals for future negotiations or conflicts. Finally, he consulted an architect to design an underground chop shop, using Quinn’s Auto as a front. The project began with careful planning to avoid drawing attention, though it would take weeks to complete.

