

*Le temps passe et coule...*

The room is dark and shakes when they argue. The gravity of our situation dawns on us when we have barely four minutes left, and the vibrations in their voices rise in panic in a way that reminds me of bees stinging someone when they are frightened.

"This isn't good."

"How can you tell?"

"How can I- see that *bomb* ticking on the darn table? That's how I can tell!"

Lisa snorts. "It's called sarcasm. And darn table? How American are you?"

Thomas blanches "Americans aren't the only ones who-"

"Oi, can you stop acting like juveniles-"

"You're one to talk, James, you always side with him!"

I breathe. The situation is not... optimal. I am locked in a room with the UN ambassadors for America, France, and Australia, bickering with each other like children. It's exhausting. They're so loud, I've had to turn my hearing aids down *multiple times*. So eloquent in expressing their ideas and speeches on how to better the world, yet apparently absolutely frustrating in times of immediate crisis.

Ah yes, speaking of said crisis- there *is* actually a bomb on the table. We are on the uppermost floor of the UN general assembly headquarters in Manhattan. Exits are sealed, and-

"Bachmann!" Lisa exclaims, snapping her fingers, "*es-tu en vie?* Any ideas? Thomas is being an idiot and thinks we should jump out the window."

Huzzah. He'd be doing me a favour.

"There's law enforcement there! Fire fighters-"

"And I assume you will try jumping the hundred metre gap between the window and the ladder?"

"What in God's green earth is a *metre*-"

"*Il ne parle pas anglais?* Not my fault your garbage education system did not teach you *le systeme metrique*-"

"What do you think we should do, Anna?" James interrupts loudly. Three pairs of eyes turn on me. I glance at the bomb. Three minutes.

"She's Swiss, it's her job to be neutral," Thomas mumbles. Ever so sensitive.

I glare at him. Lisa rolls her eyes and signs to me- "*this* is why Europe hates him."

Ignoring them all, I relate my thoughts to the group, hands flying around urgently:

"We are on the uppermost floor, exits are all sealed, law enforcement *are* outside, but they have limited ways of reaching us, and require more numbers due to the district-wide blackout. Conveniently, moments before the blackout, the four of us were locked in here."

"Definitely not a coincidence," sighs James from his place on top of a nearby table where someone probably gave their speech on humanitarian equilibrium today.

"Oh, *c'est dingue!* I didn't think of that!"

"How are you so casual about dying?" he demands, arms crossed.

"I'm French."

"That's not an explanation!"

"I use it as one and usually people aren't so impertinent to question me as you are, *imbécile.*"

Thomas wastes time suggesting meaningless tactics while Lisa accepts her fate. James is doing something somewhat productive; staring into space, trying to figure out how everything went wrong, but I watch him give up and just... lie down on the desk.

"Why don't we just disable the bomb?"

I gape at Thomas and sign; "if we knew how, don't you think one of us would have done so by now? You intolerable, arrogant, annoying-"

"What's that last one?" He asks James.

"Um... douchebag."

"Really?"

I scrunch my face; "no."

"I can't believe this is how it ends."

James is talking. Sits up. He looks wrecked.

I watch police lights flash outside, I repeat information in my head- *all exits are sealed, uppermost floor, blackout.*

I watch Thomas' face turn white and Lisa's expression hardens the longer she stares at the bomb. I watch James close his eyes, listening intently to the beeping of the explosive like it's death knocking on the door of his life, or a piece of music he knows he'll never hear again.

*Beep. beep.*

*Exits sealed, uppermost floor-*

I feel hope abandoning me.

"When I was six, I accidentally broke my first pair of hearing aids," I sign, "I blamed my brother for it and he sold his phone to buy me new ones. I don't know why I'm remembering that now. I'd like someone to know, I suppose."

Thomas stares at me.

*Beep. Beep.*

James sighs, "I cheated on my finals in uni."

"*Idiot*," Lisa mutters.

"I haven't voted in a single election in my life!" Thomas blurts.

I'd smack him in the face if I wasn't thinking about death right now.

*Beep. Beep. Beep, beep, beepbeepbeepbeepbeep-*