

# THE BETRAYAL

*WAYNE STELLINI*

I FEEL SO betrayed.

Last time I ever trust him again. He didn't have the guts to take me on face-to-face, man-to-man—waited till I was injured, weakened. Hell, I would've out-classed him for sure, even with my foot the way it is: bleeding, with a hole deep enough to see the tendons. I could've easily taken him on and won.

But no. He overpowered me when my back was turned. Next thing I knew I was looking through bars—caged like an animal—and on my way to this place. The joint smells like disinfectant and wet dogs. I hate dogs. Nothing but loud-mouth schmucks.

Everyone who works here, dressed in their grey uniforms with overstarched cuffs and collars, wears a smile. They're high on their power. I had power once. Seems like a long time ago. But I was the kingpin of my block, I tell you.

Like the trip to this hellhole, my sporadic protests are predominantly met with silence—though I get an occasional acknowledgement from the one who brought me here.

Brutus: friend, captor, betrayer. All in one.

I feel sick. Nerves are kicking in now and I'm startled by a sudden noise. Another detainee comes in, jostling about. The guy's nuts—completely off

his head—and his restraints can only keep him secure for so long. Rushes of grey-shirts leap into action. This prisoner's a big, mean bastard, but he's shuffled off into another room in no time.

There's discussion among the grey-shirts. They seem genuinely concerned for the psychotic lug. But what about me? I didn't ask to be brought here. Don't get me wrong; I'm tough, dammit. Don't need help from anyone.

I take a closer look at my injury. I know it will patch itself up quickly enough and leave a stunning scar—the only good thing to come from this situation. After all, the easiest way to get pussy is with a battle wound and an impressive tale.

And that's another thing. Tom. That newbie on the block, so keen to flex his muscles that he wanted to take me out. He's a show-off; wanted to show who's boss. Whatever. Let him try just one more time. I'll get the fucker. I'm not sure how just yet, but I'll have to play my cards right when I'm out of this joint. First, I'll get that bastard Tom and then I'll work out how to fix up Brutus here.

I try to put on a brave face but we make eye contact and he smiles, asking how I'm doing. His mercilessness cuts me deeper than my wound. I thought we were mates. Best mates. If anything, *he* was subordinate to *me*. I want to hiss a big 'fuck you' but I just look away.

I see others in restraints leaving now. Yeah, this is a temporary thing all right. But what does it matter? I'm here against my will because of someone I once trusted. He could've patched me up before anyone else got wind of my injury. But no. He's a friend no more, I can tell you.

My name is called by one of the grey-shirts and Brutus approaches, leading me over to her. She's got a look on her face that tells me not to mess with her. I'll comply. For now.

She examines my foot.

'Will he be okay?' Brutus asks. As if he really cares.

'No worries, Mr Phillips. It's a deep wound but we've mended much worse before.'

'But he's so little . . .'

'You have nothing to worry about,' she tells him, 'cats are really quick healers.'

‘Well, that’s good to know.’ He turns to me, stroking the back of my neck. I’d be lying if I said that this single gesture doesn’t make me want to forgive him for bringing me here. But then he says, ‘Be a good boy, Zachariah. We’ll be home tomorrow, okay?’

*Home.* I tell him not to leave, that I don’t need these people. I call out to him, telling him to take me with him, but he just turns and walks away.

I feel so betrayed.