



The time had come for an update, or what Cavanaugh deemed ... a progress report. Cavanaugh pulled his phone from his pocket.

The timing couldn't have been worse, though. Jonan had just been told that Venusberg would be postponed for a day. Evidently his pilot had attempted to bring illegal substances back from Amsterdam. The man wouldn't be flying an aircraft anytime soon.

Not only did Jonan have to find another pilot, but he also had to reschedule everyone for the following night. Otherwise, he'd have to pay for an airplane that would never hit the clouds. His phone rang. He lunged for it.

"Are you my pilot?"

"Pilot. Right. Jonan, it's me, Cavanaugh. I'm at the police station down here in shitsville. You won't believe this, but ... this guy, CJ? He went off on me. He tried to rip me apart, Jonan. I'm pressing charges as we speak."

"What? No. Not good, Cav. Drop the charges."

"Huh? This guy didn't just swing in the air, Jonan; he connected!" Cavanaugh faced CJ and raised his voice. "He's getting what he deserves."

"Drop the charges, Cav. I'm telling you, we need what he's—" Jonan stopped mid-sentence. "Wait! Do *not* drop the charges. You got this guy. Do you see that? You got him where you want him, Cav. You got me? You can nail his ass to the wall!"

Cavanaugh faced CJ and cracked an evil smile, then said, "Yeah, I got him in jail right now. I'll make sure he rots in here."

"No, that's not what you want. Geez, Cav ... you could fuck up a wet dream. Look, I'm sending in a lawyer. Don't move a muscle, okay? Stay right there! You got me?"

"I'll be here, Jonan. I'll put this lunatic in his place. He can't mess with me and get away with it. Once I get—"

"No, Cav ... you won't. This is just what you wanted. This is your opportunity to talk to him."

“Just what I wanted? Are you saying ...” Cavanaugh turned his back and lowered his voice. “Are you saying I *wanted* to be hammered on, Jonan? Cause that’s just crazy.”

“I’m saying ... you got him by the balls, Cav, that’s what I’m saying. Now listen to me. Listen good. What you’re gonna do is strike a deal. Tell him you’ll drop the charges if he’ll tell you about his gimmick. It’s that easy! You got me? Am I clear? Just talk to him in private. Don’t let anyone hear you offer a bribe. Now ... don’t fuck this up!”

Cavanaugh stood silent, not so keen about letting CJ off the hook.

“Look, Cav. Sit down and chill the hell out. Don’t get your panties in a wad. Think about it. The chase could stop right here—am I right?”

“Well, I don’t know how I could pull him aside, Jonan. He’s in a jail cell. I don’t even know if I can talk to him.”

“That’s beautiful! That’s wonderful news, Cav! You got him. Now ... someone’s gonna bail him out pretty soon, and believe you me, he doesn’t want to come back to that shithole for a trial. The minute he’s released ... get to work—you got me? Make it happen!” Jonan slammed the phone down.