The War For San Diego #2:

Assault on Precinct 619

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**Chapter 1**

 The calm silence of the night was interrupted with the deafening explosions of gunshots as Kyle Newman ran for his life. He was all of twenty years old and had never done anything to get on the wrong side of the law. Not really, okay, maybe the occasional speeding ticket, but nothing that warranted the police chasing him down, gun blazing. At least not till the war with the self-proclaimed war god broke out. When the homeless population of the city had finally had enough and took to the streets demanding justice, demanding change.

 It didn’t take long for the government to declare martial law. Institute curfews and started arresting, or outright killing, anyone they thought might be homeless, or poor enough to be homeless soon. It was open season on the lower class, and while Kyle might not have been homeless, he was certainly poor.

 It was the reason he was out, in the dead of night, past curfew. His mom had gotten sick, with cancer a few months back, which in and of itself was hard enough, but when you added it to the fact that she was the only bread winner in a house with three kids, well, it was downright disastrous. Kyle did the only thing he could think to do, he dropped out of college and got a job. A job working for an asshole by the name of Paul Camacho. He didn’t give a damn about anything but money. He ran a local corner store off of Mt. Alifan Drive, and worked Kyle until the last possible second. Trying to milk in as much money as he could. Never mind the fact, that he himself, went home hours before curfew, just to make sure he made it in time.

 Kyle was forced to run from his job to his apartment in the Stratton, normally he would be able to make it, but tonight was different. There was a battle between the army and the homeless, forcing him to change directions and attempt to get home another way. The longer way, which is how he came to be out after dark, past curfew.

 He was only a few blocks from home when he came across the pair of cops. They spotted him, just he spotted them. He had no time to turn around, or hide. He just smiled and attempted to explain what had happened, they played along, nice enough at first, and then sent him on his way. Kyle recalled the sense of relief as they let him walk home. He did his best to walk past them without seeming nervous. He even made sure not to look back, at least until he heard them call his name. He turned back to find them walking towards him, their hands on their guns.

 “You know, it doesn’t matter the reason, you really can’t be out past curfew.” The taller officer said, he had a smirk that told you trouble was coming.

 “I know officer, I’m really sorry. I promise it won’t happen again.” Kyle said, his voice cracking as he tried to keep his terror in check.

 “But how do we know that?” The second officer said, slowly unhooking his gun and pulling it out. “For all we know, you could be part of this uprising.” His gun was out now, Kyle couldn’t think, could hardly breath. He was going to die, he felt it in his bones. “Just out and about, scouting out the location so you can run back and tell your friends. You’re trying to hurt more innocent people, and our job, our job is to protect innocent people.”

 “Now would be the time to run.” The taller officer said, all but laughing. Kyle turned and started towards his apartment, but the cop’s gun went off and Kyle tripped and fell to the floor. “Not that way, not towards your home. Where would the fun be in that.” Kyle looked back as the officer nodded towards his left.

 “Run that way, that way we know you aren’t running towards your friends, to ambush us. Last thing we would want, as the protectors of this city, is to be led into a death trap by the likes of you.” Said the other cop. Kyle didn’t know what to think, what to say. After all, he could barely hear them over the pounding of his own heart.

 “Five, four, three” The first cop started counting. Kyle jumped to his feet and ran in the direction they told him. He ran as fast, and as long as he could. For the longest time he didn’t hear anyone behind him. He stopped and caught his breath and that was when he heard the loud explosion from the gun shot. The police had found him again.

 He wasted no time, he just started running again. He had to survive, not only because he very desperately wanted to live, but because he had to live. His mother was sick, he had to be there to take care of her. His little brother was only 15, while his sister was 8. None of their father’s gave a damn about them. Kyle was the only could take care of them. Who could put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads. If he didn’t make it home, his whole family would suffer. He couldn’t let that happen.

 He leaped over a small barrier, outside a McDonalds, ducking down low, hoping the officers didn’t see him. He tried to control his breathing, not an easy task, seeing as he was terrified and exhausted from the running. If it wasn’t for the adrenaline, he would have passed out long ago.

 Just as he started to feel home for the first time, an explosion sounding more like thunder than anything else, went off not far behind him and the window of the McDonalds exploded. He could hear the cops laughing behind him. They knew where he was.

 Troy watched on as the police taunted the man hiding behind the tiny curb. He wanted desperately to do something to help him, but he was a child, still in middle school. What the hell was he going to do? Add to that, he had already come face to face with these blood thirsty cops once tonight, he didn’t fancy doing it a second time. Not after what had happened to Jon. He was still back at the drive through market, being cared for by his friend, Christina.

 Troy had never met her before tonight, but there was nothing like running for your life, to help build a bond. He was responsible for getting them both out of the market and to a hospital. After all, they only needed the hospital because they had saved his life. Something, even his own brother didn’t do. Choosing to flee with the girl he was hooking up with, leaving Troy to fend for himself.

 “I was hoping you would put up more of a chase.” The taller of the two cops said, his words pulled Troy out of his own mind and back into the present. Kyle had attempted to crawl along the little curb to find a place to make a run, but the cops had split up and blocked off both paths. He was now stuck between the two of them.

 Troy couldn’t make out what the poor guy said, but the cop’s laughter was unmistakable. Ever instinct that Troy had, told him to look away. He knew what was about to happen, but he forced himself to stay still and watch. He didn’t want this man, this man who he didn’t know, but had seen once or twice in their apartments, to die alone. He was determined to stand witness at his execution, no matter how painful it was for.

 The shorter cop looked hungry for the kill, Troy was almost positive it was going to be him who pulled the trigger, he wasn’t expecting both cops to empty their clips out in him at the same time. They seemed to take an almost sick pleasure in the killing. It sickened him to his stomach. Until the day he died, Troy would never forget the sound of the guns, or the blood spraying out. The sound of the man’s screams, or his body hitting the floor. Or the worst sound of all, that of the cop’s laughter.

 After what felt like an eternity, the two cops reloaded their guns and walked off, no doubt looking for their next victim. Troy came out from his hiding place and slowly made his way over towards the corpse. He stopped a few feet away and said a silent prayer. Hoping that the man had found peace somewhere beyond this cruel world.

 After he had finished, Troy got to his feet and started once more out onto his journey of finding a clear path the hospital. He wasn’t going to let Jon die at the hands of these corrupt cops like this poor guy had. Troy was going to make sure of that.

 Christina held Jon close to her as the sounds of gun fire filled the air. She kept her eyes locked onto the gate protecting her from the outside world. The broken lock laid a few feet from the entrance, if anyone came close to the door, they would be sure to see it. All they would have to do would be to pull it open and they would find her here with Jon, still out cold and bleeding worse than ever.

 Troy had been gone for at least an hour, tasked with finding a clear path to the nearest hospital, but the longer he took to come back, the more she feared that he wasn’t coming back. Either because he had said screw it, and just run home, or because he had gotten caught or killed. She tried to shake those thoughts from her head, but every time she heard a noise outside, she felt a fresh wave of panic. She wanted to call for help, but Lex had insisted that they all leave their phones back in the bunker. It was protected by magic after all, so no one would be able to track them, something that wasn’t true while they were running around the streets after curfew, trying to help people.

 She had wanted to be apart of this. Downright insisted, forcing Jon to convince the others into letting her on the team. After all, she had been there the night of Kimberly’s party. She had seen the massacre first hand. Had lived through it. Come face to face with vampire’s just like everyone else on the team. She had just as much right as they did to take part in the coming battles. To get a chance to get to know the mystery man, Gambit, better. He had shown up out of nowhere and saved their lives. Not before a few of their friends had died along the way, but still, none of them would have made it out alive if not for him.

 She had a special bond with him. Yes, he was older. If she had to guess, maybe 25, 26, and she was 16, but age wasn’t important. It was what was inside that counted. They had a connection.

 Jon let out a little cough without waking up, causing Christina to look down at him. He looked so weak, so helpless. He could die, right here in her arms and there was nothing she could do about it. She wiped the tears away from her eyes, not even thinking about the smear of blood she was leaving in its place. The truth was, she had a connection with Jon as well. She knew he liked her, and she liked him too. If it wasn’t for Gambit, he might even have had a chance.

 A rumbling noise caused her a fright, when she saw the gate start to slowly pull open. She braced herself for the worst, it was too late to try and run and hide. If it was anyone but Troy, they were as good as dead.

 “How’s he doing?” Troy asked, as he pulled the gate over his head and made his way inside, pulling it back down behind him. She let out a sigh of relief.

 “Not any better. He’s not going to make it if we don’t get him help soon.” She said truthfully. Troy, with a grim look on his face just nodded. “No luck?” She asked fearing the worse.

 “Both sides are out in force. I found a path around them, but it has some trigger-happy cops, running around. I think we can make it, but it won’t be easy.”

 “I don’t think we have a lot of choice.” She said truthfully. It wasn’t that she wanted to go out there and risk getting killed, but she knew she wouldn’t be able to live with herself if she didn’t at least try to save Jon.

 “I agree.” Troy said, his voice heavy. If she didn’t know better, she would have sworn he looked older now than when he had left an hour ago. Whatever had happened to him out there, had aged him. She couldn’t help but feel responsible for that as well.

**Chapter 2**

 “I’m scared!” Carla said over the phone. Her voice shaking, Sam could tell that she was doing the best she could not to cry. She was trying to be brave for him, even while admitting how scared she was. Not that he could blame her, these were scary times. There was a literal war going on, right in their backyard.

 “It’s going to be okay sweetie, just stay inside and everything is going to be fine.” Sam said, attempting to sound as reassuring as he could. The fact that he was scared shitless himself didn’t help matters, but you don’t admit that to your eight-year-old daughter. That would just make things worse. No, instead you put on your most brave face and made like everything was fine.

 “Why can’t you just come home?” She asked, not for the first time.

 “I will, just as soon as I make sure everyone is safe. You know that’s daddy’s job. I help people. I keep them safe.”

 “But. . .but if you’re out there, who is going to keep me and mommy safe?” She asked, the sadness seeping into every word, and each and every syllable a dagger to his heart.

 “Mommy will keep you safe. You know she’s the strong one.” He said in what he hoped was a playful manner. He wanted her to smile, to feel comforted. “I might keep the city safe, but she keeps our family safe. When you’re with her, nothing can harm you.”

 “You promise?”

 “I promise!” He said, with as much excitement as he could muster. The truth was, he wasn’t sure anyone could keep his family safe. The past few days, since this war started, all he had seen was hell. When order falls away, the worst of humanity comes out to play. It was something the older cops had told him when he was a rookie, but he had never believed it. He wanted to believe the best in people. Part of him still did.

 A small part. Since the war broke out, San Diego had become hell on earth. Raping, murder, thief, beatings that left people damn near dead. In some cases, Sam honestly believed death would have been perforable to the half-life the person was left with.

 “Winston, let’s go!” his partner, Donald Anderson, called out. Sam looked over and held up a single finger, asking him to hold on. He wasn’t going to go until he made sure his little girl was okay.

 “I’ll see you in the morning, when you wake up.” He told her, wishing that morning was already upon them.

 “As soon as I wake up?” She asked, her voice sounding hopeful for the first time.

 “First thing you’ll see is me. You have my word.”

 “Yay, okay. I love you daddy!” she said, sounding happy at last.

 “I love you too! But I have to go. Tell mommy, I love her!”

 “I will!”

 “Now Winston!” his partner screamed, he nodded, said his goodbyes to his little girl and hung up the phone. He hated the toll this job was taking on his family. He had become a cop to help people. To try and be the change he had wanted to see in the world, but it wasn’t what he thought it was. Too many people in the department were jaded, angry at the world and too many people out in the world resented them. It was a bad combination that was only getting worse by the day.

 Henry marched his men through the city streets, he took a quick glance back and couldn’t help but feel amazed at the army he had marching to his command. Even when he was in the military, he never commanded this many men.

 Ares had shown him a great deal of trust, something that he intended to prove himself worthy of. The first step in that, was winning the victory that was asked of him. He was tasked with taking over a police station, simple enough. At this exact moment, four other armies, under the command of other members of the council, were heading to other targets, mainly other police station and military encampments. The plan was simple, in one swoop, Ares was going to double his territory. Push the Americans back.

 Henry couldn’t help but feel a bit strange at the way his life had turned out. Right out of high school, he had singed up to serve and protect America, and now, all these years later, he was fighting a war against her. The thought of it made him feel sick to his stomach. How could he turn his back on his home land? On his nation, which he loved so much?

 Then he reminded himself of a simple fact. He hadn’t turned his back on this country. The country had turned it’s back on him and people like him. The second you left the military you were thrown to the wolves. He knew many and more vets who were living in the streets with nothing, much like he was. He knew others, who had lost limbs for this country, only to be thrown out, back to the lands of their births. All promise of citizen forgotten when they were no longer needed.

 Every politician spoke elegantly about how much they loved and respected the troops, but the truth was, they didn’t give a damn about them. Just like none of them cared about the poor, or the sick, or the lost. They only cared about their own greed, their own power, and everyone else were just pawns in their games.

 That was why Ares’s war was so important. It was going to change everything. He was going to give voice to the voiceless. Had power back to the powerless. Fix all the problems that had moved America so far away from the dream it had once held so dear.

 Not far behind Henry, but completely unknown to him, was a man, or rather, a teenager, he had once come close to meeting. A few weeks back, the war god was caught in an explosion that took out a local community college, the explosion was caused by a group of kids attempting to stop him. They were led by Lex, a young ambitious man, who felt much the same way as Henry. He loved his nation and wanted to make it better. Wanted to do his part to protect the people who had been forgotten by the rest of the world.

 That was why he was here, with his newest friend and teammate, Gambit. To once again, attempt to stop Ares, and free their city from the wrath he was bringing down on them. Lex and his friends had spent the past few weeks trying to stop a vampire gang from finding something called the Dreamer’s chest, and that is where he had sent his friends. To keep looking into that task, while he and Gambit, the most experienced hunter of them all, snuck into a homeless camp and joined up with Ares’s army, in the hopes that he could once again come face to face with the god and finish what he had started.

 Only things hadn’t worked out that way. At least not yet. Instead of ending up in Ares’s camp, they ended up in Henry’s. Nowhere near Ares and no way to find him. Gambit was all for accepting defeat, at least for the night and regrouping the next day, but Lex wanted to play this out. He wasn’t going to stop until he accomplished what he set out to do.

 “This is foolish.” Gambit whispered, not for the first time. The older man was started to lose his cool. The longer they marched, the angrier he seemed to become. “We are marching into battle; do you truly wish to battle on the side of the god you are attempting to slay?”

 “Of course not!” Lex replied, a bit too loudly. A few of the other soldier’s turned to look at him, he did his best to act unfazed, but he couldn’t help but worry they could overhear more than just his little outburst. “We just have to see this out. Trust me.”

 “I’m trying, but I’m starting to think you aren’t acting rationally.” Gambit said, with a bit of an edge to his voice.

 “You agreed to this mission.”

 “You said you had a plan.” Gambit snapped.

 “I implied I had a plan. Not the same thing” Lex said, with a smirk. Gambit couldn’t help but chuckle at that.

 “I won’t kill humans.” Gambit said at last, sounding defeated. “I got into this line of work to protect people, not hurt them.”

 “And I would never ask you to. I just want to see how this unfolds. Trust me, we aren’t the bad guys and we aren’t joining this damn crusade.” Lex said, and he meant every word. Although, as he looked around, at the army of the homeless, he couldn’t help but understand some of their rage. The question entered his mind, what would he have done if he was in their shoes? He knew the answer.

**Chapter 3**

 It was slow going as Troy and Christina half carried, half dragged Jon between them. He was far heavier than either one of them would have guessed, but Troy did his best to push it out of his mind. He wasn’t going to let his friend die, that was the important part in all of this. He was going to get him to the hospital.

 Retracing his steps from his earlier journey hadn’t been as simple as he thought it would. The first time he had come out here, he had come alone. He didn’t take into account how much Jon and Christina would slow him down. He felt like an idiot for that. Jon was out cold, and no matter how many times they had tried to wake him, up he just wouldn’t wake up. How the hell was he going to be anything but a burden?

 Still, it could have been worse. All the fighting laid behind them and far off to the sides. The path they took was clear of any interference, save one. When they passed by the McDonald’s, they saw an ambulance, picking up the body of the poor man that Troy had witnessed getting shot. Christina wondered aloud what had happened, and Troy avoided her glaze. How was he supposed to tell her that he had stood by and done nothing when an innocent man had been shot and killed?

 It was already hard enough knowing that truth, how was he supposed to tell anyone else? They wouldn’t understand. Truth was, he didn’t understand. He knew what was going to happen before it happened. All the signs were there, the way those cops just toyed with their food. It was a game to them. A sick, twisted game, one that Troy was terrified they would force him to play if they found out he was there. So, he stayed silent and watched the horror unfold. It was something that he would never forget. Both, because the image of the man being shot was burned into his memory and because he would never allow himself to. Someone had to know what happened.

 They laid Jon down against the side of the apartment building, while they sat down next to him and rested, every few minutes, one of them would get up to see if the ambulance was still there. After what felt like both, an eternity and not nearly long enough, they heard the ambulance pull away. Reluctantly they got to their feet, made sure the two cops were gone, lifted Jon back up and were once more on their way. It was nearly an hour before anything else of note happened. An hour passed more or less in silence as the two of them used all their energy to keep from buckling under the weight.

 “Stop right there!” A voice screamed out from behind them. Troy felt his heart sink, they had come so far and were only 5 or 6 blocks from the hospital. They had come so close and now Jon might die because they had gotten careless.

 They slowly turned around and found a cop, mid 30’s standing there, his hair dark black and he looked as scared as Troy felt.

 Sam had promised his daughter that he would make it home in one piece. He intended to honor that promise. No matter what happened. He was going to go out, keep the peace as best he could, clock out, go home, shower and wake his baby girl up and everything would be right with the world. That was the plan, but as they say, when man plans, God laughs.

 He was on the streets for less than an hour when their car was hit, with what, he had no idea, except it was enough to flip the car over and send it sliding down the street. For a moment Sam thought he was going to die, but that belief was soon proven false by the unbearable pain he was in. He was bleeding profusely from his head, he whole right side of his arm felt like it was about to fall off. His ribs hurt; his head felt cracked in two. Donald looked as bad as he felt.

 “What the fuck hit us?” He asked, spitting blood out as he asked. His question was answered pretty quickly as two men, one of which was carrying a rocket launcher started towards them. Sam’s eyes went wide, but he was too petrified to say anything. Donald got the hint and turned around. “Holy fucking shit!” He screamed as he hastened to undo his seatbelt. Sam followed his lead. They both knew that this was how they were going to die. That is until a gunshot changed everything. The man with the rocket’s head exploded and he fell forward, the second man spun around, pulling out a Glock from the back of his pants, but a second shot took him out as well. Walking towards them were two officers, one tall and one short. It took Sam a few seconds to recognize them, it was Lawrence Hawk and Raymond Parks.

 “Are we glad to see you!” Donald said, as the cops helped them out. Sam smiled along and said the pleasantries, and while he was certainly glad to be alive, he was much excited by being saved by these two. They were everything wrong with policing. Between the two of them, they had more corruption complaints than Vic Mackey and the whole damn strike team on The Shield.

 “We were in the neighborhood.” Hawk said.

 “Saw our brothers in blue in need and came running.” Parks added. Sam said nothing as Donald started talking with them. Sam just kept his eyes glued onto the side of the police car, at the spot where the rocket had hit them. He was dumbfounded as to how anyone could do this, as to why anyone would do this. They were here to help, maybe they didn’t always do it the right way, but they were the good guys, weren’t they?

 “We should call the station.” Sam said, more to himself than anyone else.

 “Already did, Capt’n said you guys are welcome to patrol with us.” Parks said. Donald nodded his consent, leaving Sam no choice but to go along with it.

 “Great! You guys are just in time to join us on the hunt.” Hawk said, using the callous humor that police sometimes used when going onto patrol, or at least that was what Sam had thought he was doing. Had hoped he was doing. He soon learned the truth. When they said hunt, they meant hunt. The four of them walked around the warzone that had become their home for about 20 or 30 minutes before coming across a homeless man, who was attempting to find a place to sleep. It was clear to anyone paying attention that he had no connection to Ares or his army, but Hawk and Parks didn’t care. To them it was a game. They even gave him a head start, intending to hunt him down like a dog.

 “We can’t do this!” Sam demanded. He turned to Donald for support, but he just lowered his head and said nothing. No help was coming from him.

 “We’re just having a little fun.” Hawk said.

 “Not to mention, we’re protecting people. For all we know, he could be a scout for the invading army. These people want to kill us, each and everyone of us. We can’t let him just walk free, we have to take him out, before he takes us out.” Parks added.

 “Kill or be kill, it’s the law of the jungle.” Hawk said, a twisted grin on his face.

 “You’re sick, both of you.” Sam said, he felt as if he had just been gut punched.

 “Maybe me and Sam should just head back to the station. I don’t think I’m up to doing much.” He held his head. Sam didn’t buy it and neither did Hawk and Parks, but it seemed like they were going to give him the out.

 “Yeah, maybe you had better.” Parks said, patting Donald on the back.

 “Last thing we want is to put our brothers in a compromising position.” Hawk said, his eyes shooting daggers at Sam. If he didn’t know better, he was sure the man was about to attack him.

 “Let’s go Sam.” Donald said, taking him by the arm and attempting to pull him away. Sam wanted to pull free and force the others to see sense. This was evil. They couldn’t just hunt human beings for sport, but Sam relented and allowed Donald to pull him away. He knew if he didn’t, he wouldn’t go home to see little girl or his wife ever again.

 “Okay.” He said, his heart heavy. They hadn’t gotten really far when they heard a gunshot go off in the distance. Sam knew the homeless man was dead. More than that, he knew he was partly to blame. “We should have saved him.” Sam said, more to himself than to Donald.

 “How? Hawk and Parks weren’t going to stop. They’ve always crossed lines, it’s what made them good cops, but since the world turned to hell, they’re the law onto themselves. The last thing we want to do is get mixed up in that.” Donald said.

 “Mixed up in that? They just killed an innocent man!” Sam yelled, he was no longer walking, but screaming in Donald’s face, who at the least had the decency to properly ashamed.

 “We don’t know that. The guy could have been a drug addict, a wife beater, who knows.” Donald said.

 “Who knows? WHO KNOWS! Not us. Not fucking us! We don’t know what his deal was, who he was. And so what if he was all those things and worse! We don’t have the right to just kill him!” Sam said, he was all but screaming.

 “Yeah, well, I’m not going to lose sleep over getting a scumbag off the streets. I mean, you saw him, he was. . .he was. .” Donald struggled.

 “Homeless?” Sam shot at him.

 “Well, yeah. Even if he wasn’t part of Ares’s army, he was a potential recruit, and I’d rather our guys take him out today, than he takes out one of ours tomorrow. I mean shit Sam, they shot us with a fucking rocket launcher, or did you forget?” Donald said, all but screaming by the end.

 “That man didn’t. That man didn’t do anything but exist and we let them kill him, because we didn’t want to rock the boat.” Sam said, he hated himself for what had just happened. “We need to turn them in.”

 “Are you out of your fucking mind?” Donald screamed. “You don’t turn in your brothers. In case you missed it, the whole fucking world is against us. All we have is each other, and no, I don’t agree with what they did, but I’m not going to ruin their lives over it. I’m not going to nuke their careers. God forbid they get locked up. Do you know what happens to cops in prison, that’s a death sentence. We can’t do that to the people who have our backs. That’s crossing a line!”

 “That’s crossing a line?” Sam said. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing. This was his partner he was talking to. The man he had worked besides for the past ten years. The best man at his wedding. The man he shared everything with. How could he of all people be saying these things, and worse, be believing them?

 “I can’t let you cross the blue line.” Donald said, it wasn’t a request. Sam understood it for what it was, a threat. “They won’t just come for you, they’ll come for me.” His gun was out. Sam eyed the gun nervously.

 “What are you doing with that?” He asked, his voice shaking. Donald looked down at the gun, shock on his face. He shook his head and put the gun back in its holster.

 “Nothing.” Donald answered, the shame clear as day in voice. “Nothing.” He shook his head, as if he was trying to shake the memory of pulling his gun out from his head. “Just don’t do this. Don’t put me in a position where I have to chose between my best friend and my family.”

 “Your family? Those assholes are your family?” Sam snapped.

 “Yes! Yes, they are, but I wasn’t talking about them. I have 3 kids, my wife works part time, I lose this job, what the fuck am I going to do? No, I’m not risking my children’s future for your fucked up sense of ethics.” Donald said. “I won’t do it. You want to report them, I can’t stop you. I wish that I could, but I can’t. But don’t expect me to back up your version of events. And know, I’m putting in for a transfer.”

 “Are you serious?” Sam asked, he couldn’t believe what he was hearing. “You, you can’t be serious.”

 “I am, I won’t risk my. . . .” whatever he was about to say was cut off by the sound of a gunshot and a rapidly growing pool of blood just under his shirt. Donald looked down at his chest, his expression one of confusion. He collapsed forward, Sam caught him, and lowered him to the floor, just as he died. He looked up just in time to see Hawk and Parks walking towards him.

 “I can’t believe that bastard we killed, killed Anderson before we could get to him.” Parks said, an evil grin on his face.

 “It’s even sadder that they got Winston too.” Hawk said, rising his gun up to aim it at Sam. Sam put his hands up and slowly got to his feet, his heart pounding in his chest.

 “What are you guys doing?” he asked, already knowing the answer.

 “Protecting our fellow officers.” Hawk said. “We can’t have someone stirring up trouble. Getting good, loyal officers in trouble whose only crime was protecting the community and doing their jobs.”

 “The truth is, you’re a danger to us all. A turncoat who isn’t fit to wear that uniform.” Parks said, his gun leveled with Sam’s head.

 “We’re brothers!” He cried, hoping that he could talk sense into them. “We can’t just kill each other, whenever we disagree.”

 “We aren’t going to kill you. That homeless guy we found is going to kill you, just like he killed Anderson here. We’ll then kill him before he gets us. It’s all very clean.” Hawk said.

 “Very by the book.” Parks added. Sam was trapped, dead to rights. As far as he could see, there was no way out. They were going to kill him right here and now. He was never going to get to go home and see his daughter again.

 “Hunting!” He all but shouted. It came to him in a flash, the only chance he had. He just needed a head start. “Let me get a head start, wouldn’t that be sporting?” Sam said, praying that they would go for it. They exchanged looks, and said nothing. Just as Sam had given up all hope, Hawk agreed.

 “Really?” Sam asked, he couldn’t believe his luck.

 “Why not?” Parks asked, walking up to him and handing him his gun. “You also might want this back.” Sam looked down at the gun being offered, a sinking feeling entered the pit of his stomach and he felt for his gun, only to find it was missing. “It fell out back in your patrol car.”

 “It sure came in handy when avenging your death and well. . .” He looked down at Donald’s body. The truth came crashing down on Sam. They killed both men with his gun. If he tried to turn them in, they would just turn it all around on him. They had him dead to rights.

 “Tell you what.” Hawk said. “We’ll give you a five-minute head start. You make it till sunrise, and we won’t kill you.”

 “But you will spend the rest of your life in prison for the murder of your partner and that poor innocent homeless man.” Parks said, he actually laughed as he spoke. Sam just stared at the gun in his hand, not knowing what to do with it. Not knowing what he could do. His whole life was over. In a flash of a rage, he lifted the gun up and shot Parks right in the face, only nothing happened. The gun was empty. He should have felt that by the weight, but the stress of the moment was too much for that. Both men just started laughing.

 “Might want to start running.” Hawk said with a laugh. So, Sam did the only thing he could do, he ran. As fast and as far as his feet would carry him. That was when he came across the three kids walking alone in the dead of the night. Two of them holding up the third who more than likely had had too much to drink. He ordered them to stop, pointing him empty gun at them. He wasn’t sure what his plan was, not really, he just figured if he could get back to the police station and have a reason for staying there, at least for a few hours, it would give him time to think. To figure out a way from under all this. Putting these kids in the drunk tank, or even locked up for a few days for breaking curfew was worth it if it kept him alive and free and allowed him to see his daughter once again.

 “You’re all under arrest!” He said, as he started marching them back towards the station, the whole time praying that he got there before Hawk and Parks caught up with him.

**Chapter 4**

 The cop pushed them hard, not letting them stop for even a second to catch their breath. If Troy didn’t know better, he would have sworn this guy was running from something, but what could scare a cop? They had the whole government on their side. It was people like Troy and Christina who had to be afraid. No one gave a fuck about them. Even Jon, who was slowing them all down, much to the frustration of the cop, didn’t have too much going for him. Poverty in this country was in many ways a prison that kept you grinding away, always making other people money, but never keeping any for yourself. Troy had spent his whole life watching his mom work her ass off, only to see her come home and struggle to pay the bills. You turn on the news and some idiotic Politian or other would tell you that poor people just needed to get rid of the cell phones and stop spending so much money. As if that was the miracle cure as to why people were poor. As if before the invention of cell phones everyone lived an amazing life full of wealth and privilege.

 “How much farther?” Christina asked, she looked exhausted. The weight of carrying Jon between them and the rapid place the cop was forcing them to keep was enough to wear out the Rock, what chance did two kids have?

 “Just a few more blocks, we’re almost there.” The cop said, his voice cracking as he spoke. He kept looking around, as if he was expecting someone to just jump out at them. Troy wondered briefly if he had been ambushed by Ares’s army? If that was why he was so jumpy. Which then led him to wonder if they were about to be ambushed by Ares’s army and what that would mean for them? Would they be freed or killed, or just change one captor for another?

 Luckily, he was never forced to find out. They made it to the police station without incident, unless you count the whole mess they were in as an incident, which Troy very much did. His mother was going to kill him. If he made it home. The thought wasn’t lost on him, on how much trouble he was really in. They had broken curfew and the stories of what cops were doing to those out past curfew weren’t good. They almost always ended up with someone being killed. Troy supposed that they were lucky they were just being arrested, although the thought of being arrested didn’t strike him as lucky.

 On the outside the police station seemed dead. Most of the cars were gone and hardly anybody was coming or going from the building. Once inside it was a bit more alive. In the lobby alone there were about a half dozen cops, all bringing in people for different crimes. Being taken into the back one at a time for processing. The cop who had arrested them had sat them down and handcuffed them to their seats as he walked off to go and get someone.

 “How do we get out of here?” Christina asked, she was on the verge of tears. Troy wished he had something to say to her to cheer her up, but he had nothing. He was as scared as she was, if not more so.

 “We just have to stay calm.” Was the only answer he had to give. He prayed that he sounded calm saying it, but couldn’t be sure. Inside he had never been so nervous, so frightened. After a few moments, a few officers came and picked Jon up. They started asking all kinds of questions about what happened to him, how he got shot, who he was. They decided to stick to the truth as much as they could, with one big change, he was shot by one of Ares men while leaving a party and not by a cop.

 The cops seemed willing enough to believe their story, so they took Jon off to some hospital, leaving Christina and Troy alone in a room full of strangers. Troy looked around at the 5 or 6 other people waiting to be processed and wondered how many of them were actual criminals and how many of them were just in the wrong place at the wrong time like they were? He also couldn’t help but wonder if that made any difference.

 After what felt like hours, but was probably no more than 10 or 20 minutes, the cop who had arrested them had come back. He was named officer Winston and he seemed a lot more at ease now that they were off the streets and back inside the police station. He started moving them into the line to get processed, it seemed to Troy that any hope he had of getting out of this without a record or without his mother finding out had now passed.

 Henry took a deep breath in as he stopped on a low hill overlooking the police station Ares had assigned them. They were here at last, and truth be told, Henry wasn’t sure how he felt about this. He agreed with the movement. With holding the establishment to task for the horrible way in which it treats people, but he really didn’t want to hurt anyone, not really. But he couldn’t help but agree with the war god, nothing gets done without force. The government won’t change its way on their own, or even through peaceful marches. Not until the vast majority of people come over the cause, and the truth is most Americans are apathetic about anything that doesn’t affect them directly. Most people are just trying to get through their day, they don’t have the strength to take on other issues, not when they are stressing out about keeping a roof over their heads and food on the table. Not when they are concerned that their boss is going to fire them for any number of bullshit reasons, or that their job once again fucked up their pay. Do they complain about it and risk their job, or do they let it go? Their kids aren’t doing well in school, their kids are getting picked on. A million and one issues affecting people, all keeping them too busy to worry about anything else. You can deal with other people’s problems when you get some breathing room from your own issues. That’s the stance most people take, it’s the one that Henry always took. But the truth is, you never get a break from your own day to day bullshit. You get a holiday bonus and suddenly your car has issues that need to get fixed. Here’s your tax returns, oh look a speeding ticket and a small flood in your house, now your back in debt. Life was nothing but a series of loses that kept you down at every turn. At least that’s how it felt to Henry. Maybe this was his chance to change that. Maybe Ares was the one to change that. To finally give people the chance to be in charge of their own lives. To give people the breathing room they needed to start caring about their neighbors. That was a dream worth fighting for, worth dying for and yes, even worth killing for. That last part, Henry wasn’t sure he believed a 100%, but he had killed before, in the defense of this nation, he would do it again, in defense of its people.

 “You all know why we are here!” He said, turning around to face his men. “You’ve been assigned to different units, see that you follow your commanders’ instructions, this is not a game, not a drill. We don’t kill unless we have to, but we take that building no matter what.” His men cheered and Henry felt a wave of excitement, the same one he felt every time he went into battle. He was going to do his best to make Ares proud, and with that thought foremost in his mind, he led his army into battle.

**Chapter 5**

 Troy was tossed into a cell with at least 8 other people. He was the youngest of them, by far. He could feel his body shaking as he moved over to the bench and sat down, doing his best to go unseen. He could feel the other prisoner’s eyes on him, but he refused to look at any of them. He kept his eyes glued to the ground. He didn’t want to give anyone a reason to mess with him. Not that any of them needed a reason.

 As worried as he was for himself, he was more worried about Christina. They had taken her away just after they were processed, to who knows where. She had been crying as they dragged her away. Jon was in the wind. Supposedly to hospital, which, if true, meant that the task they set out to accomplish was a success, but the truth was he had no way of knowing for sure. The cops weren’t forth coming with information. He had seen enough movies to know he was entitled to one phone call, but who would he call? Who could help him? Even if he had someone to call, it wasn’t like he had anyone’s phone number. He had lost his phone somewhere between the party and being arrested. It could be anywhere. Just another reason his mom was going to kill him when he finally made it home.

 “What you in for?” A voice asked, Troy looked up and found a man with more muscles than he had ever seen in his life towering over him. “You look pretty young.”

 “Breaking curfew.” Troy said, his voice cracking as he spoke. He had never been so afraid in his life. This man was going to kill him with his bare hands and he wouldn’t even break a sweat.

 “You’ll get out in the morning, don’t sweat it kid.” He said, not unkindly before walking off, leaving Troy there alone, not knowing what to think. For the first time, Troy took a good look around the room. At first it had seemed filled with dangerous men who would hurt him if he so much as glanced at them, now that he took a real look, he found that it was filled with people who looked just as small and scared as he was. It was as if some part of their humanity had been stripped from them.

 Suddenly, the lights cut off. They were swallowed by complete darkness for a few moments before an alarm went off and emergency power cut one. The lights were dimmer than the lights that were on before and there was a commotion outside the door that led to freedom. Something was happening, Troy just didn’t know what.

 Chaos was everywhere. Lex had never seen anything so terrifying in his life. There was a plan in place, one designed to cost as few people their lives as possible. It was a good plan, one that the man in charge had clearly thought a lot about. They cut the power, set up cell phone jammers, cut the phone lines. Henry, the man leading the attack, wanted to take the place in a bloodless coup, and maybe that was working out elsewhere in the station, but the unit that Lex got swept up in had no interest in that. As soon as they entered the police station, they started killing and didn’t want to stop. The leader of their unit, a man Lex knew only as Badger, had been beaten by cops and watched on as they shot his old man for running a red light when he was only 6. The kicker, he had told them, was that his father never ran the red light. The cop had lied. Lex understood why he hated the police, but this was too much. They had pried open the back door and caught the first cop unaware, as the emergency lights were just coming back on. He slit his throat with a rusted old knife. They moved in, securing the armory. That was the job assigned to them. Only these guys didn’t get their bloodlust satisfied, so they emptied the armory of weapons and started moving through the station shooting anyone they could find. Cop or civilian, it didn’t seem to matter to them. Gambit was right, they should never have come here.

 Lex would have gladly admitted that to him, if he had any idea where he had gone. He was no longer in their group. He must have gotten stuck with another unit, entering this hell at another part of the building, which gave Lex a serious problem. He couldn’t leave without finding him first. You never leave a man behind, least of all a man who you all but forced to come with you, despite their numerous misgivings. He had to find Gambit.

 It wasn’t hard to escape Badger and his friends, he wanted till they started torturing some cop, and then he just slowly backed away, until he came to a corner, then he turned and ran, as fast and as far as he could get. He wanted no part in what he saw. He just wanted to go home.

 The battle was over almost as soon as it started. Henry found that as soon as he swept in with force, the police lost heart. Most of them turned over their weapons and gave up without a fight. Not all of them were so smart. A few put up fights, managing to take out his men here and there, but in the end, they fell before the overwhelming odds that were brought against them. Henry had the cops locked up in the very cells that they had used on civilians. It seemed a sense of justice to him. The prisoners in those cells were moved into other cells, until every cell in the building was filled to bursting. It wasn’t going to be a long-term solution, but it would hold for now.

 He took up residence in the captain’s office as he coordinated the rest of the attack. It seemed there were still a few pockets of resistance in the police station, something he had expected, and was ready for. What he hadn’t expected, was for a dozen of his men to go rouge and just start killing everyone. A man by the name of Badger, had taken the armory and started passing out weapons. They were hunting cops down throughout the building. On the other side of the station a man that Henry had trusted, by the name Andrew Miller, had died in the initial attack, taking command of his unit was a man Henry had never met, named Chris Tyler. As soon as leadership fell to him, he lost his mind. He would take his prisoners out one at a time into the police underground parking lot and he would chase them down with the squad cars. Running over them, laughing the whole time.

 When Henry had gotten the reports, he felt sick to his stomach. He was responsible for this. He was in charge, it was his duty to see that this conquest was done with some sense of justice, not wholesale slaughter. He couldn’t allow this to continue. He had to root out the pockets of police resistance, as well as those of his men who had gone crazy, all before alerting Ares that their job was done. The night was growing old, and he still had so much work left to do.

**Chapter 6**

 “Where’d you go?” Badger asked, his voice taunting. His men laughing like hyenas, as he let loose a few shots from his gun. “Come on out, turncoat. We just want to talk.” More laughter, followed by more bullets flying through the hallway. Lex kept his head down; he was ducking behind an old trashcan in the janitor’s closet. It wasn’t the best hiding spot, in fact, it was kind of the worst, but he didn’t have much time to find some place. He had gotten away from them clear. He figured it gave him all the time in the world to track down Gambit and get the hell out of there, but his new found friends, noticed he was gone and decided that they missed him. So, they came looking, with guns.

 “Where you think he went?” Boyle asked. He was the largest, and by far the stupidest of the badger’s men. It sounded as if they were feet from the closet in which he was hiding. He knew for sure that he was caught.

 “He was only gone a few minutes. He has to be close.” Badger answered, a flash of anger in his voice. He was growing tired of the chase, which meant if Lex could just hold out a bit longer, he might just give up. After all, what did he care if Lex got away?

 “Why don’t we just leave him?” Sal asked, he was younger, some kind of executive who had been let go from his job a few months back, due to some kind of scandal. He was black listed from every corporation he could find, he refused to get a regular job, believing them to be beneath him, so he blew through his savings. It was only when he was flat broke that he turned back to retail, but it wasn’t near enough pay for the life style he was living. It didn’t matter how much he cut back on the luxuries of life, he couldn’t afford his rent or his car. The car got repoed, which fucked up his credit and he got behind on rent. It wasn’t long before he was evicted, and learned to his dismay, that once you get evicted, it’s incredibly hard to find a new apartment. Most won’t even look at you. Most people would turn to family and friends, but on his rise up, he turned on most of them. Seeing them as lesser than he was, because they didn’t make the kind of money he had. When his fall came, he was very much alone.

 “Because if he goes to Henry, we’ll have a fight on our hands. He might even send us to answer to the war god. You want that? Because I sure as hell don’t!” Badger snapped. Lex could hear the fear in his voice as he spoke about Ares. Now that he was alone, hiding in a closet, scared for his life, it made him feel a bit ashamed. What was he going to do to the god of war? Last time they came face to face with him, he had escaped by the skin of his teeth. What made him think he could take him on single handedly? He was going to die because of that arrogance, and so was Gambit if he didn’t do something.

 Badger was growing tired of the hunt, but he meant what he had said. He couldn’t afford to have Henry come after him. He could care less what the man thought, he had every right to make these fools suffer, it wasn’t as if cops had ever been kind to those living on the streets. This was a life time of payback, at least the way he figured it, but that didn’t mean he was willing to die for it. He intended to fall back into the fold when he had had his fun. If Henry came down on him now, it would spell his doom. They had to find the turncoat and quickly. They could kill him and blame this whole mess on him. The cops killed him and they fought back, it was simple.

 If only they could find him, but he could be anywhere. Where could they even start looking? That was when he noticed the janitor’s closet a few feet away. He motioned to his men, as quiet as he could to move towards the door. If he was in there, he didn’t want to give him any warning. After all, he could still be armed.

 “One, Two, Three” he mouthed to his men, holding up fingers to drive the point home. On three, they kicked open the doors and opened fire into the room. Shooting the place to smithereens. When the dust settled, they found that the runaway wasn’t in the room. Badger was about to give up and start the search again when he noticed the vent was pried open. He had been in here, but escaped through the vents.

 “Fuck!” He screamed out.

 Christina sat with her back against the cold hard wall in the tiny cell that was crammed full of prisoners. When the homeless had taken over the prison, they forced all the prisoners into one cell, so they could put all the cops in the second, it made for a really uncomfortable situation. Add to that, the fact that a number of prisoners were taking a kind of sick joy from taunting the police, who in turn yelled back insults of their own and it was a noisy hell that Christina saw no way out of.

 She was terrified when they brought her in here, scared out of her mind when she was locked in the cell, but part of her knew she would be okay. Her parents would be called and she would be able to go home and be killed by them in the morning. When the invasion came, that no longer seemed like an option. Now she was stuck here, maybe forever. She wanted to cry, but knew that would show weakness, and that was something you didn’t want to give off in a situation like this. She needed to be strong.

 “Move!” A woman a few years older than her said, standing in front of her. She had tattoos and looked as if she could pick Christina up with one hand. This was the moment of truth, would she back down? Or would she prove that she was strong and worthy of respect?

 “No.” she said as calmy as she could, but she could hear how strange and weak her voice sounded. Still, she refused to get up. The tattooed girl was not happy with that, she grabbed ahold of Christina’s shirt and pulled her up, so that they were face to face.

 “What the fuck did you just say to me?” She demanded, anger sweeping through every word. Christina pushed her back, actually making her stumble back a few steps, she was very proud of herself.

 “I said no. I was sitting here first. Find somewhere else.” Christina said, in her head she sounded like a badass, but in reality, her words bled together, making one long, almost incomprehensible sound. A few nearby prisoners, who had overheard started laughing as they turned to look. The tattoo girl’s face flushed red, she was embarrassed, and by the looks of it, she didn’t like feeling embarrassed. She got to her feet and without warning, hit Christina right across the face, knocking her back. It hurt like hell, but more than that, it pissed her off. Christina pushed off of the cell bars and tackled the tattoo girl, hitting her as hard as she could. The tattoo girl tried to protect her face, but Christina was all fury and no skill when it came to fighting, she was just hitting as hard and fast as she could.

 After a while the prisoners got tired of the fight and pulled Christina off of her, putting themselves between them. Christina walked back to her seat, only to find it taken by a rather large woman. Christina let out a sigh and walked towards the edge of the cage, where she stood. Now that the adrenaline had subsided, she could feel how much the punch to the face hurt and how much her hands were aching now. All she wanted was to go home, but that was never going to happen. She let the truth seep in, and did her best to accept it.

 Lex was climbing through the vents for what felt like forever, every once in a while, he would look behind him to make sure Badger and his men weren’t following him. So far, he had been lucky. He was alone in this incredibly tight space.

 He wasn’t sure what he was looking for, or where he was going. His only real goal had been to escape. Once he was a safe enough distance from them, he would climb out and start looking for Gambit again. That had been the plan, but all that changed when he heard a fight break out underneath him. He looked through the vents and saw Christina fighting some other woman. He was impressed, he was starting to understand why Jon liked her so much.

 For a moment he wondered why she was locked up, but then the only possible answer came to him. It was his fault. She had been on patrol with Jon, passed curfew. They must have been stopped by the police and arrested, which meant that Jon was here too. Lex cursed under his breath. This was just what he needed, more of his men trapped in this hellhole. There was nothing else he could do; he had to free her and then go and free Jon. They were his men, his responsibility.

 He scooted back in the tunnel and kicked the vent open, it popped off with a loud crashing sound as it hit the floor, everyone in the room, cop and criminal turned to look. He lowered himself through it and dropped, falling when he hit the floor. He silently cursed himself. That wasn’t the cool entrance he had been going for.

 “Lex?” Christina called out; she had the start of a black eye. Lex got to his feet and dusted himself off.

 “Yeah, hold on.” He walked over to the desk where there was a pile of paper work and a key chain, with far too many keys. He picked it up.

 “Don’t do this boy!” A large cop called out. He did not seem the happy sort. “You let them out, and you’re going to hurt a whole mess of people. Come let us out, we can help.” Lex looked over at them, and then laughed.

 “Right, a cop help someone. That’s a laugh.” He walked over to the cell door and opened it, allowing Christina and every other prisoner in the cell to storm out. Some offered thanks, most just ran from the room and towards their freedom. When the last had left, Christina offered Lex a small smile. “Come on, we got to find Jon and Gambit and get out of here.”

 “Gambit’s here?” Her face lit up. Lex couldn’t help but feel bad for Jon.

 “Yeah, we got separated.” He answered, pretending to not notice how excited she got.

 “Oh, okay.” She said, trying and failing to suppress her excitement. “But Jon’s not. They sent him to the hospital.”

 “What? Is he okay?” Lex demanded. She shook her head sadly.

 “He got shot. It was pretty bad, but that will have to wait. Troy’s here, he helped me save Jon. We need to find him and get him out of here.” Lex nodded, he had only met Troy once or twice, but he knew he was good friends with Jon, and if he had saved him, they owed him no less.

 “Let’s go.” Lex said, the weight of his leadership was starting to become too much for him. His men, his friends, were starting to get hurt because of him. Innocent bystanders were ending up in prison. He couldn’t be responsible for this. It was all too much.

**Chapter 7**

 “Keep moving!” A large man with bad BO and a face locked in a look of pure hatred, demanded as he pushed Sam forward. Everything had gone to hell since he returned to the police station. He was so sure that all he had to do was get back here, for everything to be fine. Once he was safe and sound amongst his fellow officers, he could figure out a way to escape the wrath of Hawk and Parks. Figure out a way to clear his name, and protect his wife and daughter.

 But as they say, no plan survives first contact with the enemy. He was sure that Parks and Hawk were the only people he had to worry about, but no sooner had he sat down at his desk to figure out his plan, then the whole station was attacked by Ares army. All the officers were either killed or tossed in cells. Sam was taken by some loud mouth named Tyler. He wasn’t sure if that was his first name, or last, but it didn’t matter. The man was insane.

 “On the floor!” The large BO man shouted as he shoved Sam to his knees. They were outside the police station, in the yard behind it, where all the police cars were parked. The BO man roughly seized Sam’s head and turned it, so that he could see a fellow cop running from a patrol car, that was speeding down at him with the serins blaring. There were crowds all around cheering. Sam felt sick to his stomach. He tried to pull free, but the BO man was too strong, he held him firmly in place.

 No matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t make out the face of the man running, but even from here, he looked young. He was more than likely some poor rookie. Sam’s heart broke for the poor man. This was no way to die, he wouldn’t wish it on anyone, not even Hawk and Parks.

 The young man dived out of the way of the car, narrowly avoiding getting hit, the car slammed on the brakes and attempted to drift the car into a turn, which resulted with the car ramming against the concrete wall surrounding the yard. A wave of laughter echoed through the yard before the car once more started moving, pulling away from the wall with a loud scratching sound.

 The young officer got back to his feet; he was favoring his arm far more than before. His dive must have hurt it, but he did his best to ignore the pain as he started running. The patrol car, with half the paint scrapped off the side, was once more closing in on him. Sam knew what was going to happen before he saw it. He used all his strength to try and look away, but BO man was too strong for him.

 “Naw, naw, little piggy, don’t look away. You’re next, don’t you want to see whats to expect?” The BO man said with pure unadulterated glee in his voice.

 “I have a daughter! She’s only 8, please don’t take me away from her.” He was crying as he begged for his life, he wasn’t sure what he expected his plea to do, but the reaction of the BO man caught him by complete surprise.

 It started with his massive fist swinging down and catching Sam right in the gut, forcing all the air from his lungs. He had never felt such pain as he grasped for breath, but the pain from his stomach was driven from his mind as moments later, BO man’s hand gripped his hair and pulled him up, so that they were face to face, Sam was standing on his tippy toes. The pain from his scalp was enough to make him want to black out, but he knew that would mean death. The BO man got right in his face. His teeth were yellow, some were even missing, he had scars down his unwashed face.

 “Piggies like you, took me from my parents when I was about that age, left me in a rotten home full of sick perves, who got their rocks off to kids. I took to the streets at 10 years old, just to survive. You think I give a good god damn about the daughter of a nasty, sick, deprived monster like you.” His whole body was shaking with rage as he screamed at Sam. “I’m doing the world a favor, ridding it of the likes of you!”

 With that he threw Sam to the ground, just in time for Sam to watch the poor rookie get smashed into the wall as the patrol car rammed into him. Sam would never forget the sound of his body being torn in half, nor the sight of body smashing between the car the wall. It was nothing short of a living nightmare.

 Before he could even think about getting back to his feet, two men grabbed him by the arms and lifted him to his feet, marching him out to the center of the yard. Sitting on top of the guard tower was a man with a evil grin on his face and a rifle across his lap.

 “Is this our next defendant?” The man who could only be Tyler asked.

 “That he is sir.” BO said. He had followed behind them into the yard. “I has me case ready.”

 “Case?” Sam asked, weakly. One of the men holding him, hit him across the face.

 “Speak when spoken too, pig.” He spat at him.

 “Present it, so that I may give my verdict.” Tyler said. Sam could hear the patrol car reversing away from the body of the rookie, he could hear the body sliding down to the ground. All he could think about, was how he was next.

 “This piggy, came into my home, when I was only abouts 7 or 8. My moms was in lock up, cause some other piggy, didn’t like her using her meds to stay healthy. She got these shakes, when, when she didn’t take her shot.” His voice trailed off for a few moments, as if he was thinking back to those long-lost days. “When. . .when she had her meds, she was so sweet, so kind. She was my moms. But, but these. . .these animals, just couldn’t let her have her meds. They locked her up because of it. Put her in some hospital, where. . .where she died without her meds. Pops said her heart gave out, on account of not being with us, but I knew, I knew these filthy monsters left her with out her shots and she died from the sickness. It was murder sir, it was.”

 “Sure, sounds like it to me.” Tyler said, a note of sympathy in his voice. “Shall I give my verdict?” He asked, not unkindly.

 “Don’t I get to . . .” Sam started to ask, but once more he was hit in the gut, and ordered silent.

 “If it pleases you sir, I’m not done.” BO said. Sam looked up at him, what more could he say? He already blamed the police for his mother dying from what sounds like withdraws from a heroine addiction. What other bullshit crime was he going to lay at Sam’s feet?

 “By all means, continue. We are after all, here for justice. Justice against the cruel system that eats us alive and then blames us, for their crimes against us. Let it not be said, that we silence the righteous when they call for justice. Tell us good man, what more did the blue brotherhood do to you and yours, so that we might know the true sins of the man next to you.”

 “I didn’t. . .” Sam tried to say before being silenced once again.

 “We will not hear from the oppressor.” Tyler shouted, hoping down from the gate tower. “You’ve had your day to speak, in court, when locking people away. Lying about bullshit evidence you claimed to have found, so you can earn yourself a nice little bonus. You’ve had your day to speak, on tv, where all the pretty little reporters eat up your lies about your victims. You’ve had your day to speak. . .” Tyler was inches away from Sam’s face as he spoke, there was a righteous fury in his voice as he rattled off his accusations. “When you tricked innocent people, some even children, into confessing to shit they didn’t do.” With those words, he swung his rifle, using the butt of it to hit Sam across the face.

 Sam felt himself cough up blood and even saw a tooth fly out with it. He was going to die at the hands of these crazy people, all because some other cops had done some shady things in the past. It wasn’t fair, he didn’t deserve this. He wasn’t bad. He just wanted to go home to his family. He had never done anything to hurt anyone. . .only he knew that wasn’t true. Just tonight, he had brought in two kids, for no other reason than to protect himself. Yes, they had broken curfew, but their friend had been shot. They claimed by Ares army, the same one now holding his life in their hands. If he was really trying to help people, really trying to be a good person, he would have taken them to the hospital, instead he arrested them, so that he could protect himself. Their lives might end tonight, at the hands of these same madmen, all because Sam had used them. Maybe he deserved this.

 “Now it’s our turn to talk.” Tyler said, turning away from Sam and speaking to the crowd. “Now it is time for the oppressed, the downtrodden, to speak our truths. To tell our stories, that we never got to tell. Now it is time, for people to learn about the crimes of the blue brotherhood.” The crowd erupted in celebration at his words, as Tyler walked back over to the gate and lifted himself back onto his seat of power. He motioned for the crowd to quiet down before he spoke again. “Now my brother, tell us of this criminal’s crime.”

 BO bowed his head. “Thank you, sir.” He said, before lifting his head and looking Sam right in the eyes. “This monster, came into my home, as I said, I was only a boy of 7 or 8, and I was with my pops. He had just gotten home from work a few hours ago. It had been a bad day, but he got paid. Bag full of money, enough to get us out of the shack we was living in, get us a real house and get mom the help she needed, for she wasn’t dead yet. That would come a years or two down the road. She was still in the hospital. Being murdered by this lot. Pops, he got me some toy I had been crying about. . .” BO gave a sad half-hearted laugh as he pulled a rotten, mold infested, torn action figure out of his pocket. It was so dirty that Sam had no idea who or what it was supposed to be, but BO looked at it as if it was the most precious object in the world. “I wanted it so bad, but not at the cost.” He let out a sob as he held the toy close to him.

 “It’s okay, we’re with you brother.” Tyler called down from his throne.

 “He was in his chair, smoking, as I sat at his feet playing. It was the greatest. . .the last. . .the door busted open. My pops jumped to his feet and bullets sprayed everywhere. I didn’t know what happened. One moment, I was happy, the next I had my pops blood all over me. I started crying and some. . .some. . .you!” he spat at Sam. “You grabbed me, pointing your filthy gun in my face and told me to shut the fuck up.” He looked back at his mishappen toy. “You then pulled this from my hands and tossed in on the floor. Breaking his legs off. It wasn’t until I escaped that torture house you forced me into and made my way home, that I found it. Right in the same room that you stole my pops from. Still covered in his blood.”

 Sam didn’t know what to say. How do you respond to a story that sad, that brutal? If it was true, those cops were monsters, but it wasn’t Sam. He didn’t do those things. Tyler once more hopped off his throne and walked over to BO, pulling him into a big hug.

 “Thank you for sharing your story with us. It could not have been easy, reliving the trauma that the blue brotherhood put you through.” He told him. BO just nodded. “But we are here for you, now and for always. And we will deliver justice onto you.” The crowd cheered. Tyler motioned around at all the cars. “Pick a car and have your justice!” BO nodded, putting away his keepsake as he headed towards a car. Tyler walked over to Sam. “You put on the uniform of monsters. You carried on their reign of terror, hiding behind their blue shield. Now you pay for their crimes.” Tyle said, spitting in Sam’s eye when he finished. Without another word, he turned and walked away, leaving Sam with the two men holding him.

 BO picked a patrol car and drove it out in front of Sam. “Ready to die?” The man who kept hitting him whispered, before hitting him in the gut and letting him fall to the floor. The two men ran to the sidelines and rejoined the crowd as Sam slowly got to his feet. BO’s car started revving the engines, for no other reason than to drive more fear into Sam’s heart. He didn’t deserve this, no one did! And he wasn’t about to let these people take him away from his daughter. He was going to get out of here alive, no matter what it took.

 He got to his feet and faced the car, BO’s eyes locked on him. Sam scanned around the yard. Everywhere he looked, there were BO’s brothers in arms. Behind them were walls or fences. He was trapped, but maybe, just maybe, he could get back inside. The police station was his chance to free himself once, it could be again. He just had to be smart and quick. He could do it.

 The car lurched forward, raining down on him faster than Sam could think. For a second, he thought he was going to die right then and there, but at the last second, he jumped out of the way, just as a gunshot rang out through the yard. For a moment, Sam thought that Tyler had shot him, only he didn’t feel pain. Well, pain, other than the bruises he took diving onto the hard ground.

 All around him he heard screaming and shouting and a loud crash. He turned to look, and BO’s patrol car had crashed into the wall, full on. It had even caught on fire. Sam did his best to crawl towards more patrol cars, figuring it would give him some cover. Part of him knew it was a hopeless exercise, one of Tyler’s men would just drag him back out and hold him accountable for what happened to BO, but he had to try.

 Amazingly, he made it. He made it under a patrol car, where he turned around and watched as what looked to be the Army, the US Army came rushing into the yard. They were taking back the prison. He was saved!

 That was when the explosion happened. BO’s car had finally succumbed to the flames and it sent everything to help. Tyler’s men started fighting back. The raid wasn’t nearly as one sided as it had been moments before. Sam wished he could do something to help, but he had a daughter to think about. He promised her that he would make it home, and he intended to do that.

 He crawled under patrol car, after patrol car, until he came as close to the station entrance as he could. He would have to run for it, which meant he was opening himself up to being killed by either side. The military wouldn’t know he wasn’t one of Tyler’s men, and Tyler wouldn’t want him to escape. It would ruin his whole bullshit sense of justice.

 He looked back at the warzone behind him, it was far bloodier than he would have expected. Both sides had numerous dead covering the ground. In some spots, guns had been tossed aside and people were fighting hand to hand. It was chaotic and Sam was glad to be well away from it. He turned to look at BO’s patrol car. Inside the flames, he could just make out his burning face, the toy that meant so much to him held tightly in his hands.

 Despite that fact that the man had tried to kill him, Sam couldn’t help but feel bad for him. With a heavy heart, he turned away from the horrid sight, and made his dash for the door. He felt bullets fly past him, but by some small miracle, he made it not only to the door, but inside, alive and in one piece. He was getting the hell out of here.

**Chapter 8**

 “Stop right there, or we will open fire!” A rather large man in a military uniform shouted. Natalie stopped in her tracks, as did the rest of the escaped prisoners. As soon as that guy who fell out of the vents, had opened the cell door, it had been a mad dash for the nearest exit. All hell was breaking loose in this place, even down here, you could hear the gun fire from up above. All She wanted was to get out of here, and never return.

 She didn’t even really belong in here, not really. She had tried to make a yellow light, but it had turned red. Some cop pulled her over, which in and of itself, sucked. She couldn’t afford a ticket right now, not after loosing her job. Which was a whole other issue. No one would tell her why she was let go. They told her it was in an email they sent her, but she never got any email. They wouldn’t return her calls, and she hadn’t even received her last paycheck. It was all such bullshit, but what could she do about it? She had no power, no money. She just had to take it and hope she survived long enough to find another job, which lead to the yellow light she ran while trying to get to her job interview. She had mixed up the days and only noticed last minute. She couldn’t afford to be late and miss the interview.

 A ticket would have really hurt her, the waiting for the ticket could have cost her the job, but both were miner setbacks. It wasn’t until the cop asked her to step out of the car that everything went to hell. He told her that her car had a number of warrants on it, that had never been paid. That she was going to have to sit them out in jail if she couldn’t pay them off. None of it made any sense. She had never not paid a ticket before; how could they have turned to warrants? It wasn’t until she was sitting in the cell, that it clicked on her. She had let her brother use her car. He must have gotten the tickets, this was all some big misunderstanding, but no one seemed to care. They just left her sitting in a cell, while they went about their day.

 So, when the chance to get out of here presented itself, she leaped for it. She would figure it all out on the outside, where she had room to think, and when she wasn’t in the middle of a warzone. She didn’t want to die, least of all inside some tiny cell, for something she didn’t do.

 The escaped prisoners had all but ran down the corridors, until they came to the lobby, they had thought they were home free, when a dozen or more military men stormed into the room, with their guns raised. Natalie was scared out of her mind. She didn’t want to die.

 “We’re unarmed.” One of the other women shouted. “We work here, but those. . .those men, who. . .who stormed the place, they locked us in a room. Luckily, a cop managed to get the door open and told us to run. Please, don’t hurt us, we just want to go home!” She all but cried as she spoke. A lot of Natalie’s fellow inmates seemed momentarily confused, but then started to shout out in support of her story. The soldiers seemed to buy it and even ushered them past and led them outside.

 Natalie couldn’t believe it. She was free and clear. She could go home and forget any of this ever happened, well, after she went to her brother’s house and kicked his ass for getting her in this trouble in the first place.

 Bullets were flying everywhere, it sent Henry’s thoughts back to his days in the war, not a happy place to go, not happy memories to return too. He did his best to pull himself back to the present, to the situation at hand. He had found Badger and his men and come to put a stop to his killing spree. He wasn’t sure what he was expecting to find when he cornered him, but it sure wasn’t him putting up this much of a fight.

 “We can talk about this Badger.” Henry called out, after letting loose a few shots towards the renegade brigade.

 “What’s to talk about? We came in here to take this place by force, we used force and now you’ve turned on us.” Badger shouted back, as he fired off a few shots. This was getting Henry nowhere. He had better things to do then sit here and trade snappy comebacks with a madman like Badger.

 “I told you, we were going to try and take the place with as little death as possible, you’ve left a trail of bodies that would make Jim Jones think twice. That’s not what we are about, not who we are.”

 “We are in an army, founded by the god of fucking war. This is who we are. If you aren’t man enough for the job, step aside, I’d gladly take over.” Badger said, his men laughed. A few of Henry’s gave him puzzled looks, no doubt, some of them agreed with Badger. He was almost positive Ares would, which was why he wanted to take of Badger, here and now.

 “Our aim, is to make a country that protects it’s people. Not exploits them and then hangs them out to dry. A country that provides justice for everyone, not just the people on top. We want to make a land where everyone, even the poorest among us, can feel safe and happy. Have a home and hot meals and a warm bed. We are fighting for the dream that America promised us and then stole away to fatten up the wealthy. We are not! I repeat, not! Fighting to punish people. Fighting to get our rocks off, killing people. We aren’t monsters, we aren’t them. Do I make myself clear?” He demanded, doing his best to sound intimidating. He was trying to channel General Patton, but he wasn’t sure he pulled it off.

 When the gun fire started back up, he knew that he hadn’t. This was getting him nowhere, and he had other issues to deal with. There were still pockets of officers in the building fighting back, not to mention, Tyler killing cops out in the yard. He needed to do something and quickly if he was going to accomplish this mission for Ares. He didn’t want to let him down.

 “Sir!” A young man called out to him, he was running scared, as if he had just seen a ghost. Henry attempted to remember his name. He knew it was something with a T, he just couldn’t place it. Henry had left him at his command post, with orders to come find him if something went wrong. Seeing him, here and now, was not a good sign. Henry waved him over, and motioned him to stay low. The last thing he needed was this kid dying before he told him what fresh hell had just broken loose.

 “What are you doing here?” He snapped, a little too harshly.

 “The army has breached the building in a number of locations.” T said, he was all but crying as he spoke. Henry could tell he was afraid. He patted him on the arm, attempting to make him feel better.

 “Thank you for telling me. . .” He said, once again trying to remember his name.

 “Tai.” He said, and Henry kicked himself, he should have remembered that.

 “Tai. Let’s get back to HQ, we have to deal with this now.” He turned to George Landon, his second in command in this side quest to stop Badger and his men from doing more damage. Landon was a former Air Force pilot. He had seen combat before, most from the cockpit of a fighter jet, but still, he knew how to handle himself. “Take care of Badger, we got a whole new fight on our hands.”

 “Understood.” He said, his face grim at the prospect of what is expected of him. He knows, just as Henry did, that they couldn’t let Badger or his men live. If they broke off and started killing for sport once, they would do it again, not to mention, they might inspire others to do the same. No, they had to be put down, and quickly, if the movement was to have any chance at succeeding.

 The police station was a mad house. Members of Ares’s army were battling cops, escaped prisoners, the Army and even other member of Ares’s army. Lex and Christina did their best to stay out of the way. They just wanted to rescue Troy, find Gambit and get the hell out of this madhouse, but it was proving a much harder job than Lex had expected.

 He couldn’t help but wonder what he had been thinking, when he set out with Gambit to try and find Ares to take on himself. It was a foolish thing to do, a rash thing to do. The only good that came out of it, was that he was here when Christina and Troy needed him. He just hoped it didn’t cost Gambit his life. He hadn’t seen him since before they stormed the station, and he was starting to get really worried about him.

 After a lot of dead ends and near misses with people out to kill them, Lex and Christina finally found the other holding center. Just like in the women’s side, the police were all locked up in one cell, while the prisoners were in the second. No sooner had they entered the room, then everyone, from both cells, started calling for their attention, demanding to be let out, some even threatening.

 Lex lifted up the police rifle he had found in the armory and shot it in the air. His subtle way of telling them all to shut up. He turned to Christina. “You see him?” He asked, scanning the prisoner cell.

 “There!” She pointed, and sure enough, there he was, standing against the bars, being pushed around by bigger guys. Lex tossed Christina the keys as they walked over to the cell.

 “Alright, this is how it’s going to work.” Lex said, doing his best to sound in control. He pointed at Troy. “He’s coming with us, the rest of you. . .back the fuck up, if you don’t want today to be your last day.”

 “Fuck off, you can’t kill all of us.” A big red headed man, with a tattoo of a knife over his eye said.

 “But I can kill you. The rest of your friends are free to go, just as soon as we leave the room.” Once he said that, a lot of the prisoners fell back, allowing Troy to walk forward, it seemed freedom was more enticing than death. Who could have guessed?

 “You came for me.” Troy said to Christina as she opened the cell door and hugged him.

 “Of course! I wasn’t going to leave you here!” She pulled him out and started to close the door, the prisoners, started to rush forward, but Lex stopped her from shutting it and pulled the keys out, all the while leveling the gun at them. He motioned for Christina and Troy to get out of the room, the ran towards the door, neither one needing to be told twice.

 “Not till we leave!” He said again. The red head didn’t move, just glared at him. He was going to be a problem. Lex made it to the door, he pulled it open and glanced at the cops, who had not stopped shouting at him since he entered the room. The battle of the war upstairs made its way down to him. He took a deep breath and then tossed the keys into that cell. “No one deserves to be trapped down here, your fellow female officers are still locked up, you might want to go save them.

 With that, he exited through the door, was reconnected with Christina and Troy and they took off running. Who knew how long it was going to take before everyone came running out of that door, and they didn’t want to be anywhere near it when they did.

 When they were well away from the holding center, they stopped to catch their breath. They were all tired and sore and wanted nothing more than to go home. If it wasn’t for Gambit, that would be the plan, but Lex got him into this mess, he couldn’t leave him behind. It wouldn’t be right.

 “You two need to get out of here.” Lex said.

 “What about you?” Troy asked.

 “I’m not leaving Gambit behind.” Christina said, her voice firm. She wasn’t about to argue about this. Which was fine, because neither was Lex.

 “I need you to tell the others what happened to Jon. Including his mother. She is going to be worried sick.” Lex told her; her face softened. “I promise you; I’m not leaving Gambit behind. I’ll get him out.”

 “You better!”

 “I will.” He said, and he meant it. He wasn’t leaving here without him. Christina hugged him, and then turned and left, Troy right behind her. “Wait!” Lex called out. They stopped and turned back towards him. “Take this, just in case you need it.” He handed her the rifle, she didn’t say a word, just nodded and took it.

**Chapter 9**

 George Landon was no stranger to war. He had seen three tours in Iraq. Those weren’t times that he liked to talk about, but they were times that he had never forgotten. He knew the hell of battle, what to expect and how to get out the other side. The part he always had trouble with, was what to do once you made it to the other side. It was how he ended up living off the streets, no friends or family to turn to. He was alone in this world, forgotten by everyone who had ever claimed to love him. At least, that was the case until he met Henry. A fellow Vet, who welcomed him in and showed him the world that Ares was trying to build, one he wanted to belong to. One that had a place for him.

 It was a mission that he believed in, one that he wasn’t going to let anything stand in the way of, least of all, some two-bit criminal like Badger. Henry had tasked him with eliminating the traitor, and that was what he planned to do, a task made considerably harder, by the fact that Badger and his goons had raided an armory. They were all heavily armed, while Landon and his men had a few guns and hardly any ammo. It wasn’t a fair fight, not that many fights in life were fair.

 “What do we do? They have us pinned down!” Roman Diez said. He was a young man, who had lost a great deal in his life. Landon had never pushed him for information on his past, but his haunted eyes spoke volumes about the pain he had experienced. Landon’s heart went out to the young man, it was the main reason that he kept him at his side during the war. He wanted him to be his new right-hand man.

 “We fight.” Landon said, doing his best to seem in control, despite the fact that he was terrified. After all, that was a large part of being in charge. Putting on a brave face to get your men through whatever was thrown at them. The mission was important, but so was getting his men home alive. He was determined to do both. “I need you to keep them occupied, but don’t push them too hard. Trade fire with them, if they start pushing forward, flee.”

 “Flee?” Roman asked, unsure if he heard him correctly.

 “Flee. We don’t have the firepower to win in a straight on fight, and I won’t have you and the men throw your life away.”

 “What are you going to do?” Roman asked.

 “Get around the other side.” Landon said, moving back away from the front line. He wasn’t an expert on this building, seeing as he had never set foot inside it before, but it didn’t take an architect to figure out that there were most likely stairs on both sides of the hallway. He just had to go up or down a floor and he could cross the room before descending back down. If his men did their jobs and kept them occupied, then he should be able to move into position and take them out from behind. Should be, being the key part of that sentence. It was a reckless plan, but it was the only option he had, seeing as the military was making a move against them. He needed to end this, and end this quickly.

 “So, who is Gambit?” Troy asked as they made their way towards the signs leading them towards the parking garage. Lex told them to get out as quickly as possible, before Ares and his men knew they were there. A tall order when the place was crawling with not only his men, but cops still trying to fight them off. Something that was seeming more and more likely, now that Lex added to their numbers. Christina had done her best to keep them out of sight as much as possible.

 “He’s a friend of ours, helps us with. . . .things.” She answered, doing her best to avoid letting him in on the big secret. After all, she had promised Jon she wouldn’t tell anyone.

 “Things?” He asked, incredulous.

 “Things. He’s a friend.” She answered, shortly.

 “A friend, who helps you, Jon and Lex.” He said, repeating back what little information he had. “Help with what?” he pressed as they entered into a hallway, with interrogation rooms on either side.

 “Shh! Get down!” She hissed at him, grabbing him by the arm and pulling him into an interrogation room. They moved out of sight of the door and hid under the desk as soldiers, in full combat gear, stormed passed.

 “The military!” Troy hissed, Christina’s heart sank. The odds of Lex and Gambit getting out of there alive and free just vanished. She had to go back and warn them, but she couldn’t ask that of Troy, not after everything he had been through. And what of Jon? His mother had to be worried sick, or at least she would be when she found out he was missing. No one knew where he was, but for her and Troy. They had to let them know, in case he didn’t wake up.

 “What do we do?” Troy asked. It was a good question; one she was struggling with herself.

 “We trust Lex, we have to get out of here, for Jon.” She said, wishing there was another choice.

 “Can you believe they’re wasting time with us, when we could be killing cops? What the fuck would Ares say if he knew?” Badger said with a sneer to his men, who broke into laughter. He liked the feeling of being the center of attention. It wasn’t something that he got the chance to do very often. So much of his life, he was second fiddle to others. His older brother, then his younger brother. His best friend in high school ended up marrying Badger’s high school sweetheart, not even a week after stealing his promotion. He had never come first, not even close, so the fact that he was in charge, that he was running the show, it meant something. It proved that he had value, he had worth. That had been all he had ever tried to prove to anyone. That he was worthy of love.

 “Henry’s going to fuck this all to shit!” Boyle said. “Never should have let him lead us.”

 “Ares only picked him cause he’s a vet. Warrior code and all that bullshit.” Sal said, distain dripping from his mouth with every word.

 “Not to worry boys, once we get rid of his little minions down here, we’ll venture upwards and take over this here show. Hows that sound?” Badger asked, already knowing the answer. It was becoming a game to him. He would goad them into validating his worth with their praise. It was an intoxicating high that he had no intention of giving up. Even if it cost them all their lives, which he knew was a possibility. Henry had an army backing him up, Badger had a handful of men. It wasn’t even a contest, but at least if they were going to go out, it was going to be with him as a king.

 “AHHHH!!!!” The scream came out of nowhere, Badger turned to look just as Landon flew out of the vents, a knife in his hands. Badger didn’t even have time to react as the knife tore into his chest, piercing his heart before he could even react. His screaming out in pain was not only the last act he ever preformed, but it was the downfall of his followers. Roman used the scream as his signal and led the charge forward. It was only a matter of moments before Sal, Boyle and the rest were riddled with bullets and Landon was dusting himself off. There wasn’t much he could do to get the blood out of his clothes, but it was a price he was glad to pay for this all to be over. He could only hope that everything was going as smoothly for Henry and the others.

 “We did it!” Roman said, a grin etched on his face. He was proud of himself, as he should be. He saved Landon, from what he was sure was a suicide mission. Everything went better than he could have ever have hoped.

 “That we did!” Landon said, returning with a grin of his own. His men cheered in agreement. He couldn’t help but feel overwhelmed with pride. “This was a great victory, but one that we should never have had to achieve. These were our men, led astray by their own greed and pain. Let the rest of us, remember what we are fighting for! A world where our humanity is not forgotten, not thrown aside, just because we haven’t had the same good fortune as others. A world where people are used and forgotten. A world where everyone is treated with a basic measure of respect.” His men once more cheered, their joy was deafening. It was the main reason that Landon, nor anyone else for that matter, heard the doors at the end of the hall open. Or the sound of the guns raised up, but they did hear the gunfire. That was hard to miss. Not that they had much time to do anything about it. It was only a matter of seconds before they were all gunned down and the military moved through the room, stopping only long enough to make sure everyone was dead, before moving on.

**Chapter 9**

 “Where the fuck do you think you’re going?” The officer yelled as he picked Troy up by the shirt and slammed him into the wall. Troy had never felt such fear in his life, there was such hatred in those eyes. Such fury, directed at him. Christina screamed and begged for the cop to let Troy down, but he pushed her aside as he drew his gun out.

 “You really thought I was just going to let the two of you escape? Just like the rest of your scummy friends? You people can’t just come in here like you own the place. There are rules! Laws!” spit was flying out of his mouth as he spoke. Each word blending into the next, as if the hate in his heart was pushing them out, faster and faster. His whole body was shaking, his finger getting closer and closer to the trigger.

 “We just want to go home!” Christina cried out. The cop turned his gun on her, his eyes following. Her gun laid hidden behind the wall. She figured the less reasons for the cop to open fire, the better. She was regretting that choice.

 “I said shut the fuck up!” the officer yelled, Troy did his best to get himself loose, but the cop’s grip was too strong. “Stop struggling!” the officer said, turning his glaze back onto Troy. “You’re just going to make this worse on yourself.”

 “Please! I didn’t do anything.” Troy begged, tears running down his face.

 “Like I believe that shit. We all know you’re nothing but. . .”

 “Put him down!” Sam shouted; his gun leveled at the officer’s head. All eyes in the room turned to look at him.

 “Winston? What are you doing?” The officer asked, he seemed genuinely surprised.

 “Righting a wrong. Let those kids go.” Sam said, doing his best to keep his voice even. He hadn’t yet gotten over the fear he had felt at Tyler’s bullshit trial. He had been certain that he was going to die, and the only thing he could think about, besides his family, was how he had screwed over these kids. That was something he had to make right. No matter what it cost him.

 “They’re criminals. They don’t deserve to go free, not when so many of our brother’s died because of them!” The officer said, contempt coming out with every word.

 “They’re not. They’re just kids. I should know. I brought them in, to check on their story. Turns out they were telling the truth. I was on my way to let them out when all hell broke loose.” Sam said, hoping that officer Kent would listen. It was close enough to the truth. He had believed their story from the start and had planned to let them go once he figured out how to save himself.

 “None of them are innocent.” He throws Troy against the wall, hard. Troy hits his head and slides down. Christina rushes over to him to make sure he is okay. “We risk our lives, day in and day out, to make sure they are okay. To make sure that they stay safe, and how do they repay us? They demonize us. They make us out to be the fucking boogieman, meanwhile they can just do whatever the fuck they want. They march in the streets, demanding to take money out of our pockets, so that our families could suffer. It’s all too much.”

 “They want accountability. Can you blame them? One of ours crosses a line, and the rest of us protects them. It’s been that way as long as I’ve worn a badge. Maybe it’s time things change.” Sam said, he had never really thought about it too much before. He had been raised that you protect your family and the police force had been his family for a long time. He owed them everything. But seeing how Hawk and Parks took such joy in hurting people, made him rethink some long-held beliefs. As did hearing all the hurt caused by his brothers in blue at Tyler’s hearings. Maybe it was time for things to change. Maybe he could help be apart of that change somehow.

 “Accountability? What the fuck are you talking about? They watch our every move.” He takes the bodycam off his vest. “They have us wear their fucking spy cameras, so they can try and ruin us.” He throws it against the wall, shattering it to little pieces. “We have to protect each other, Sam, because no one else will. No one else gives a damn about us. We’re on our own.”

 “We’re not. And if it feels that way sometimes, it’s because we’ve failed in our job to make the community feel safe. They feel threatened by us, so we feel threatened by them. I mean, look Jeff, you put a gun in some kid’s face.” Sam said, pointing at Troy and Christina. Jeff Kent looks back at them, as if he sees them for the first time.

 “They were trying to escape.” Was the only answer he could provide.

 “And? The building is under siege from two different armies, plus it’s full of angry cops and escaped criminals. Can you really blame two scared kids for trying to escape?” Sam said, lowering his gun and taking a step towards Jeff. “Let me take them out of here. Where it’s safe.”

 Jeff lowered his gun and just nodded, his eyes locked onto the floor, afraid to look at Sam or the kids out of shame. Sam wasted no time, he moved passed him and helped Troy to his feet.

 “Come on, let’s get you kids out of here.” Sam said, as softly as he could. He didn’t want to upset Jeff again. The kids, followed him out of the room. There was an understandable tension coming from them, but Sam would just have to accept it. After all, they were only in this mess because of him.

 “We’re pinned down!” Todd cried out. He was one of two men that Henry had left outside the main lobby where he was setting up base camp as they worked on weeding out the few cops left over. The cry came moments before the gun fire that more than likely ended his life.

 It didn’t give Henry and the others much time to find cover before the door was blown off the hinges and the army stormed in, guns at the ready. They meant business and for the first time, Henry wasn’t sure if they were going to survive or not.

 “Hold your ground!” He shouted to his men. Just because he wasn’t sure they could win; didn’t mean he was going to give up without a fight. This wasn’t just about him; it wasn’t even just about proving himself to Aries. It was about all the people this movement could help. All the lives he could change. If he was defeated here, it would not only mean that the status quo would remain, but it would mean that the next person who thought about rising up against it would think twice. He couldn’t let that happen.

 The sound of gunfire surrounds Lex. He can feel his heart pounding through his chest, as he franticly searched for any sign of Gambit. Part of him wishing he had just left with Christina and Troy. He couldn’t help thinking that he was going to die in here. Cops, criminals, Ares’ army and the US army, all shooting first and never bothering to ask any questions. And here he was, all by himself, walking along quietly down an empty corridor looking for someone who could have already left for all he knows.

 When he had first learned there was more to this world than he had once thought, he had wanted so badly to be a part of it. To learn as much as he could about it. To have a chance to be someone. Be a hero. He never in his wildest dreams thought he would end up alone in a police station, surrounded by people who wanted him dead. All of this was so much harder than he thought it would be. The truth was, he didn’t know what he thought this would be. He just wanted an adventure and he dragged his friends into it, and then they dragged others into it. The whole thing was becoming a mess and there was no way out. He was trapped and it was going to cost him his life.

 He did his best to force those thoughts out of his head. They weren’t going to help anything. He just had to find Gambit and get the hell out of here. There was still hope, after all, he was still breathing.

 “Hold it right there!” A voice commanded from behind him. Lex’s heart stopped someone had found him. “On the ground now!” Lex lowered himself to the ground, just as two heavily armed soldiers rushed up to him. So much for finding Gambit and getting out of here.

**Chapter 10**

 “This way!” Sam said, as Christina and Troy hurried after him. A large part of Troy still had a hard time accepting help from the man reasonable for him being here. There was no reason to believe he really gave a damn about them. What could have possibly have changed in such a short amount of time? Well, besides the world turning upside down.

 “The exit’s just up ahead!” Sam said as they turn the final corner. It had been mostly smooth sailing since the cop had saved them from the crazy cop with a happy trigger finger. They had run into a couple cops and even a few soldiers, who all let them pass without a second look when they saw they were being escorted by Sam.

 “Thank you so much!” Christina said as Sam pulled open the door and ushered them out. Troy followed right behind him. The cool night air rushed at them, it was a welcome relief from the cold stale air inside the station.

 “It’s the least I could do.” The cop started to tell them as he led them away from the station. “I should never have. . .I used you.”

 “To meet your fucking quota.” Troy said, the anger that had been building not just the past couple days, but his whole life came rushing out.

 “I was in trouble, and I needed a reason to come back here. Arresting the two of you, that gave me an excuse.” Sam said, coming clean.

 “What?” Christina asked. She sounded as pissed as Troy felt.

 “I was being hunted by rouge cops. They were trying to ruin my life, if not outright kill me. I did what I had to. Not that it makes it okay. I’m sorry.” He sounded sincere, which just made it worse. It was clear he had never once truly thought about how his actions could ruin other people’s lives. He picked a career where he is supposed to look after other people, when push came to shove, he put his interests first. Not just above others, but in spite of them.

 “So. . .all this. . .all this was because you were in trouble?” Christina asked. Sam didn’t answer, he just nodded.

 “Let me get this straight,” Troy said, doing his best to keep his cool. “You were worried that some cop was going to maybe ruin your life, so you tried to do the same to us?”

 “What?” Sam asked, stepping back, as if he had been hit. “Of course not. You were going to be released in the morning. I had no idea this was going to happen. You have to believe me.”

 “We are in the system now. It’s on record we were arrested!” Troy yelled. “That shit follows us! You gave us a record.”

 “It’s not. It was just. . .” Sam said, trying to figure out a way to justify his actions.

 “My parents have to be worried sick about me! You have any idea what you put them through, just to protect yourself?” Christina said. Sam stood there and took their wrath, because deep down he knew he deserved it. He put his needs above theirs, when his whole job was to protect them from harm. He was no better than Hawk and Parks.

 “You’re right.” Sam said. “I don’t know if I can ever make this right, but I will do everything I can, to try.”

 “That’ll be the day.” Troy said.

 “Just get us home.” Christina said, not believing him anymore than Troy did.

 “Of course. You have my word. I’ll get you home safe and sound.” Sam promised. The three of them set out towards the Stratton apartments. Christina wanted to make sure Troy got home first, and she had to tell Jon’s mother everything that had happened. They walked in silence, no one really having anything to say to each other. At least until Sam’s phone went off.

 “Hey, honey, everything okay.” Sam said, doing his best to keep his own voice even. He spared a glance at the kids, to see how they would react. He knew they hated him, and they had every reason too.

 “Winston, so good of you to pick up.” The voice on the other end wasn’t that of his wife. It was Parks.

 “Parks!” Sam hissed, gripping the phone hard enough that part of him was afraid to snap it in half. “What the fuck did you do to my family!”

 “Oh, they’re fine. Your lovely daughter is sitting on the couch with Hawk as we speak, having a lovely conversation.”

 “If you harm them, so help me god!” Sam screams, Troy and Christina look on in concern.

 “Hurt them? I wouldn’t dream of it, well unless you keep us waiting too long.” Parks said, a laugh in his voice. The line clicks dead.

 “Parks!” Sam yelled. “Parks!” He throws his phone, it shattering as it hits the ground.

 “What happened?” Christina asked.

 “Who has your family?” Troy asked. Sam looked at them, clearly torn.

 “The cops after me. They have my family.” Sam said, he promised these kids he would get them home. He was big on keeping his word, but his wife and kid were in danger.

 “We understand.” Christina said. Troy just shook his head. He wasn’t going to tell this man to leave his family in danger, Sam nodded his thanks and ran off, leaving the two of them alone in the dark.

 “At least we’re out of the police station.” Troy said, the bitterness in his voice. Christina just nodded.

 “It’ll be okay. Let’s just get you home.” She responded. Troy nodded his thanks and they started back off towards his apartment complex.

 Troy was lost in his thoughts as they walked, replaying everything that had happened over the night. It was easily the longest, most stressful night of his life. He wasn’t even sure if his brother was okay. Not to mention how pissed his mother was going to be once he gets home.

 The silence of the night was broken by a loud growl when a man with a messed-up face dropped down in front of them. Christina wasted no time in pushing Troy out of the way to face off against the freak.

 “Run!” Christina ordered. Troy stood there, frozen in place, not sure what the hell was going on. The freak hit Christina, she tried to block it, but it knocked her to the ground hard. Troy wanted to help her, but was too in shock to even move.

 The freak moved in closer and closer to Christina, his bangs baring. Christina yelled for Troy to run again, but it served only to wake him from his trance. Instead of running, he charged forward and jumped on the freak’s back, wrapping his arms around his neck, doing his best to choke the life out of him. The freak stumbled back a few steps before pulling Troy up and over his head, slamming him down hard on the ground next to Christina. Once more he started towards them.

 “What is he?” Troy asked, his back killing him from the fall.

 “I told you to run!” Christina snapped, pulling him back as the freak closed in on them. When it was only a few feet away it suddenly burst into dust, standing behind him was a man in a long brown trench coat.

 “Gambit!” Christina yelled, jumping to her feet and rushing towards the mystery man, giving him a hug. “I was so worried about you!” Troy slowly dusted himself off as he got to his feet.

 “I saw the cop leading you two out of the station. I followed in case you needed help. What were you doing in there?” He asked, deep concern in his voice.

 “It’s a long story! But where were you? Lex stayed behind to try and find you!” She told him. Gambit let out a sigh.

 “I slipped out with the prisoners. It was so chaotic in there. I figured Lex would have done the same. We came in search of Ares, not his lackeys. I’ve been patrolling the outside of the station, looking for him ever since.”

 “We have to go back in and get him!” Christina said. Gambit shook his head.

 “Leave that to me, you two have to get away while there is still time. Both sides are going to just bring in reinforcements.” Gambit said.

 “Is anyone going to tell me what the fuck that thing was?” Troy yelled, tired of being ignored. They both turned to look at him.

 “Who is this?” Gambit asked.

 “A friend.” Christina said. “Get Lex out of there, I’ll get us home.” She told Gambit who agreed, they hugged before he took off.

 “Are you going to tell me what the fuck is going on?” Troy demanded. Christina gave him a sad smile.

 “Would you believe vampires?” She said, with a smile. They had a long walk ahead of them, and a long story to tell.

 The soldiers forced Lex through the station at gun point. There were a lot more of them here than he had originally thought. The US wasn’t taking this battle laying down. They were taking the fight to Ares with force. Not that it was going to do them much good. They had no idea what they were up against.

 Although, Lex couldn’t help but think they might have better luck than him. He might know what he was up against, but he had no idea how to overcome them. How do you fight a god? Let alone a god with an army full of followers?

 He didn’t have any answers. At the end of the day, he tried to play war and it cost him everything. Who knows how many more of his friends were in danger or hurt because of him? He had failed. Big time.

 “Get in!” One of the soldiers shouted at him as they came to a van out behind the back of the police station. It was already filled with other prisoners. Some of them homeless, others were some of the prisoners that he had helped escaped. Reluctantly Lex got into the back as the soldier cuffed him to the seat and locked them all in. Lex looked around, no one looked happy to be there and none of them looked the least bit friendly. He kept his head down and tried to avoid looking at anyone else. After a few moments the truck started up and he could feel them pulling away from the station. He couldn’t help but worry that Gambit could still be in there.

 Not far away Gambit watches the truck drive off. He curses to himself, knowing there is no way he could catch up to it. Not that he wasn’t going to try.

**Chapter 11**

 “Honey!” Sam screamed as he kicked open the door to his house. His heart was pounding a billion beats a second, or at least it felt that way.

 “In here.” Parks voice called out, with a singing quality to his voice. With a heavy heart Sam walked into the living room, where Hawk was sitting on the couch with Carla, tears streaming down her face.

 His wife, Darlene, was on the ground, blood pouring from her head. For a moment Sam was sure that she was dead, but then he saw her moving, ever so slightly. She was alive, but hurt. He didn’t have much time if he wanted to keep her among the living.

 “Darlene?” He said, his voice shaking. Parks walked out from the shadow, a grin on his face and a gun in his hand.

 “You made it, just under the wire.” Parks said.

 “Daddy!” Carla cried out.

 “Hush now.” Hawk said, pulling her back to the couch as she tried to get up. “Unless you want mommy hurt again!” She started crying louder, but listened to his commands.

 “You’ve caused us a might bit of stress.” Parks said, taking a step towards Sam, who wanted nothing more than to lash out and kill him where he stood, but the gun in Hawk’s hand made him think twice.

 “What do you want?” Sam asked, doing his best to keep his voice even.

 “I want to continue doing what we do best, helping people.” Parks said, walking towards Sam, kicking Darlene as he did so. Sam gritted his teeth, doing everything he could to not lash out. “And how the hell are Hawk and I, supposed to do our jobs, with a traitorous turn coat like you running around making shit hard for real cops?”

 “Real cops. You were hunting people for fun! How does that make you a real cop?” Sam screamed. On the couch he heard Hawk cock the gun.

 “Take a step back.” Hawk said, none of Parks’ playfulness in his voice. Sam did as he was instructed.

 “Don’t hurt her.” Sam said, it wasn’t an order so much as a request. His daughter was his whole world. He couldn’t bare it if anything happened to her.

 “We’re not unreasonable, Winston. We want a win/win here.” Parks said, putting his hand on Sam’s shoulder. “Just. . .help us out. How do we sleep easy, knowing you are out there?”

 “I won’t say anything. I promise.” Sam said, begging.

 “I want to believe you, I do, it’s just, well, there are all those dead bodies out there, and when someone asks you what happened. Why your gun was on the scene, what will you say?” Parks asked.

 “That I did it!” Sam said. “It was me! All me. I killed everyone. I snapped and just shot them all up!” Hawk laughed as he pulled out a tape recorder.

 “That’s what we were looking for.” Hawk said, as he cut the recording. Sam turned from the look of satisfaction on his face to that on Parks.

 “Can we just go. I’ll go with you, right now. Just call them a doctor. You can even say I hurt them. Just. . .just let them go.” Sam begged.

 “I’m glad you’re being so corporative Winston. It means a lot, it really does.” Parks said.

 “So that’s it, I take the fall and everything’s okay?” Sam asked, feeling hopeful for the first time since he heard Parks voice on the phone.

 “I don’t know.” Hawk said. “You did cause us a lot of stress tonight.”

 “I know, and I’m sorry. I can’t even tell you how sorry I am. Please, just please. Don’t make them suffer for it!” Sam said.

 “I think, what my friend here is saying, is that, while we love helping our brothers in blue, we feel we are owed, some. . .what’s the word I’m looking for Hawk?” Parks asked.

 “Justice.” Hawk said, the word pure venom.

 “Justice.” Parks said. Without another word he pointed his gun at the ground and shot Darlene in the head.

 “Darlene!” Sam yelled he rushed forward when Carla cried out, “Daddy!”

 “Not so fast.” Hawk said. Sam stopped in his tracks and Parks whipped him in the face with his glock. Sam fell to the ground, a new cut open on his face.

 “Don’t kill her, please.” Sam said, slowly getting up, lifting his hands up in surrender. “You got your pound of flesh, just let her go!”

 “What do you think, Hawk? We get justice yet?” Parks asked. Hawk shook his head.

 “Don’t feel like we have.” Hawk said.

 “What else do you want from me?” Sam demanded, his eyes locked onto his daughter, the fear in her face broke his heart. He wanted nothing more than to protect her, all the while knowing there was nothing he could do.

 “Everything.” Hawk said, and before Sam could so much as blink, he shot Carla in the head. Sam watched as her blood sprayed all over the living room. His whole life ended with that bullet, nothing else mattered, not now, not ever.

 He gathered up what strength he had and lunged to his feet at Parks, his only goal being to steal the gun from him, only he never got that far. No sooner had he started towards Park than two gun shots went off, one from Parks and one from Hawk, both hitting him and sending him backwards. The world going dark as he readied himself to rejoin his wife and daughter.

 Henry locked himself inside the captain’s office with the last two of his men left alive, Eric Lindberg and Ridley Marsters. He could hear the military getting ready back in the lobby, as they got ready to breach the room. Deep down inside, Henry knew this was it. The end of his story. He couldn’t help but feel a sense of regret.

 There was still so much he wanted to do. So much he wanted to change in this world. So many people left to help, instead here he was moments away from dying at the start of the war that was going to change the world. He was never going to get a chance to see the change that he was helping to bring about. He was never going to get a chance to see what kind of man Marcus was going to grow into. Never get a chance to make amends with his family again.

 Out of nowhere, the firing started up. Screams of surprise entered the room. Henry attempted to sneak a peek at what was going onside, but the glass was too thick. “What’s going on?” Eric asked, as Ridley rocked back and forth, praying for some kind of salvation that they all knew wasn’t coming.

 “That’s what I’m trying to find out.” Henry said, ducking back down as he crawled towards the door. “Just keep an eye on him.” He motioned towards Ridley, Eric nodded as he moved towards Ridley, his gun with what little ammo he had left at the ready.

 Henry made it to the door, he could still hear the sounds of battle outside. He got onto his feet, still crouching low, so as to best avoid being seen. He steadied himself for what awaited him, it had been a long time since he saw the horror of the war, it wasn’t something he wanted to ever experience again.

 He opened the door slowly, just as the sounds of battle outside died down. He pulled it open as carefully as he could, doing his best not to make any sounds, not that it much mattered. The second the door open he found a person standing there, he fell back, as he slowly raised his gun.

 “What are you doing on the floor?” Marcus asked, he was the man blocking his path. Henry couldn’t help but let out a laugh as he brushed himself off and got to his feet.

 “What are you doing here?” He asked, relieved that it was Marcus on the other side of the door and not an enemy.

 “Came to rescue you. Heard you ran into some trouble.” Marcus said, with a grin.

 “I’m just sure.” Henry said, pulling the younger man into a hug. “It’s good to see you!”

 “You saved us!” Ridley said, tears in his eyes. Henry felt a wave of embarrassment that one his men was showing such weakness, but he did his best to hide it.

 “You really did.” Henry said, patting Marcus on the arm.

 “Afraid I can’t take full credit for that.” Marcus said. “Had a bit of help.” He stepped aside as Ares the god of war walked into the room.

 “Glad to see you are still among the living.” The god of war said.

 The truck sped through town; Lex could feel the road speeding past underneath them. The others in the back of the truck looked as miserable as he felt. They all knew that wherever they ended up, wasn’t going to be good for them. The whole ride they sat in silence, each one dreading what was to come.

 Lex couldn’t help but worry about Jon in the hospital, or if Will and the others were okay. He couldn’t help worrying about Christina and Troy making it home okay and where the hell Gambit was. He only in this mess because of Lex, if anything happened to him, it would be his fault.

 The tuck rocked, as if it had been hit in the side. Everyone in the back started screaming and shouting. Lex braced himself, as the truck was rocked again, knocking it over. It rolled down a small hill, the only thing keeping Lex and the others in their seats were the chains. It caused them all immense pain.

 “Fuck!” Lex screamed with everyone else as the truck finally landed with a loud crash at what they could only assume was the bottom of the cliff. Lex looked around, everyone seemed to be alive. In fact, minus some cuts and scraps and the occasional broken arm, everyone was more or less okay. Small miracles.

 Lex did his best to get out of his chains, as did many of the others. Truthfully, they all knew that it was only a matter of time until the military showed back up and moved them to a new truck for transport.

 Lex was having no luck pulling free, he was starting to panic when the door finally opened up. Everyone stopped moving, as they waited for the door to open. Nobody knew what to expect, but it certainly wasn’t a group of homeless people.

 “Hello boy, I’m Chris Tyler, and I’m here to recruit you to my new cause.” He said, a psychotic smile on his face.

 An exhausted Jared Singer exited his car as he pulled up to the scene of the crime. It had been a long time since he had been called in, in the middle of the night, but this was one of their own. The family of one of their own, a uniform cop names Sam Winston.

 Part of him was glad to have something to do, ever since the case had been closed on the pool party, he had been just kind of moving about the office. None of it sat right with him. It didn’t seem to match this Ares’s MO at all, but he was the boogie man. The big bad that everyone was more than happy to throw the blame at. Singer wasn’t used to letting go of things he knew was wrong, but he’d rather let Ares take the fall than some scared kid who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He knew deep in his heart that Chris was innocent, and if this let the kid have his life, than he was going to be okay with it. He would have to be.

 He entered into the bloodbath that was officer Winston’s home. His wife and daughter were laying in pools of their own blood. There was more blood splattered around the house. There had been a fight here, that much was clear to see.

 “Detective Singer.” Sagar, an EMT that Singer had met a few times over the years.

 “What do we got?” Singer asked.

 “These two,” motioning the dead women. “Were shot at close range, but we have a third victim, who got up and walked out.” He motioned at footprints that led out the back.

 “Could they be Winston’s?” Singer asked.

 “Your guess is as good as mine, but I can tell you that they were hurt.” Sagar said. Singer just nodded. This was going to be a long day, he just hoped Winston was okay, and that whoever did this, didn’t catch up with him.

The End