Warzone #5:

The Hunt for Raul

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Other Books in WarZone

Dawn of War

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**Chapter One:**

**Lex**

 “We already have one suspect in custody, who we are sure is involved. We are now looking for his accomplice, Raul Gonzalez, who was last scene fleeing the scene of the massacre at the Jones' residence.” The reporter on the television said. A picture of Raul accompanying his words.

 Lex stood behind the couch at Jon's place as they watched the news unfold. Jon's mother was at work, she wouldn't be home for a few hours so they had time to plan. Will and Christina sat next to Jon, while Trinidad stood next to him. He looked to be on the verge of a panic attack and had been since he found them and told them about Chris being arrested.

 “So I take it Chris is the suspect they have in custody?” Jax asked, he was sitting on a chair Jon had brought in from the other room. He wasn't used to having this many people in his apartment. Just as Lex wasn't used to having this many people involved in what they were doing. It was supposed to be just the four of them, Lex, Jax, Jon and Will. Christina and Trinidad being here was not part of the plan. And Raul and Chris being dragged into it by the police was the last thing Lex wanted.

 “Yeah.” Trinidad said. His voice cracking as he spoke. This was clearly hard for him. Lex couldn't blame him. He always thought of Chris like a little brother. The fact that he was sitting in some lock up for something he didn't do wasn't sitting right with him.

 “So we have two problems, that kind of go together.” Jon said, standing up and moving about. A nasty habit he had, every time he started to get stressed out.

 “Three problems.” Lex said.

 “Fury has the manuscript and the translator.” Christina said, putting voice to the thoughts running through Lex's mind.

 “Which is a problem, granted. But we can't let Raul and Chris take the fall for this shit.” Jax said. Lex knew he had an added worry. Part of what they were being blamed for was the bombing of the local collage. Something that Jax had done to stop Ares.

 “So what are we supposed to do? Because I for one, don't think the police are going to be too accepting of the whole, vampires did it excuse.” Will said. He had a point. They couldn't just go into the police station and tell the cops what really happened. They would be laughed out of the building. If not thrown in a loony bin.

 “We have to do something!” Jon shot back.

 “We can't let them put all this on Chris.” Trinidad said, finding his voice.

 “Or Raul!” Jax said.

 “Where is Raul?” Will asked. “Has anyone seen him since that night?” Everyone answered the same. No. The truth was, the last time that Lex had seen him was when he went home to go get more beer. He never came back. He hadn't thought much of it at the time because of the attack. Everyone was so busy running for their lives that it just slipped his mind, but what if he didn't make it. What if the vampires got him, like they got James and Charles.

 “What if he's dead?” Christina asked, once again putting words to his thoughts.

 “Than we need to know.” Lex said. Attempting to take charge of the room again. It was all spiraling out of control faster than he would like.

 “How?” Christina asked.

 “We could check the local hospitals.” Jon suggested. Lex nodded.

 “Okay, we break into three teams.” Lex said, looking around the room at his friends. If they were going to do this, they had to do it right. He just hoped they could pull it off without getting anyone else dead or arrested.

 “Three teams?” Jax asked. “Three? You can't seriously be thinking of having two of us go up against Fury and his fanged freaks. All of us going up against them would end with us dead. Two of us. . .you're out of your god damn mind!”

 “Which is why I'm not sending anyone after Fury.” Lex said, doing everything he could from blowing up at Jax. He was already so unsure of what he was about to suggest. Having someone else question it as well wasn't doing him any favors.

 “But who knows what they want with the manuscript.” Christina pointed out. “Whatever it is, it has to be bad.”

 “She has a point.” Will said, almost to himself. When he spoke next he had more confidence in his voice, almost as if he was forcing himself to commit to something. Lex took it as a good sign that he was coming around. “If we want to do this whole, vampire hunting bullshit, we can't halfass it. The bloodsuckers want something, we need to stop them.”

 “But what about Chris?” Trinidad said.

 “And again, Raul. The police just called him out on TV. Everyone is going to be out looking for him. We have to find him first.” Jax demanded. Lex knew he was right. Leaving Raul out there to fend for himself was out of the question.

 “Which is why I said three teams.” Lex snapped. “Jon and Christina will deal with Fury.”

 “We will?” Jon asked, normally he was as gung-ho as Lex about all this stuff, but that goes out of the window when you get tasked with a suicide mission.

 “By ourselves?” Christina asked, just as afraid as Jon.

 “No. I don't want you anywhere near Fury. That's not your task.”

 “Than what is?” Jon asked.

 “I need you guys to find Gambit.” Lex said. Knowing that Christina would be all for it and Jon would be pissed. Sure enough he was spot on. “The two of you have had the most interactions with him, and when we move against Fury, we are going to need all the help we can get.”

 “Fine.” Jon said, his voice saying that it was anything but fine. Christina on the other hand seemed to like their new mission.

 “Jax, I need you and Trinidad to go to the command center and start looking up anything we can use to help Chris.” Lex said.

 “Like what?” Jax asked.

 “I don't know. You're the smart one, you figure it out. But we can't leave him behind bars. Figure something out.” Lex snapped, knowing he was giving them an impossible task. He wanted Trinidad out of the way, so that he wouldn't get hurt, or end up hurting anyone else. He also knew that if anyone could figure out a way to help Chris it would be Jax.

 “So what are we going to be doing?” Will asked.

 “Looking for Raul.”

 “How are you going to be doing that?” Jax asked. “Going to every hospital in the city?”

 “If we have to.” Lex said.

 “That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard.” Jax said, he turned to look at Jon. “No offense.”

 “It's fine.” Jon said, his mind on other matters.

 “That's the first place the police are going to look, and we don't even know if he's there.” Jax finished.

 “I'm open to other suggestions.” Lex said. Jax made some good points, but Lex didn't know what else to do. It seemed to him like they were working blind.

 “I have one.” Trinidad said. All eyes were on him, which only seemed to make him more nervous. When he didn't offer up his plan for a few seconds Jax snapped at him, “Spit it out.” he nodded. “Right, sorry, um well. . .if you have something of his. . .I could do a locator spell.”

**Chapter Two:**

**Detective Singer**

 Nothing was making sense to Singer. It was far too early to tell the media they had someone in custody. There was no case against Chris. Not really. He was a victim in all of this. Singer was sure of that. As far as the bombing and the attack on the collage, there was no way he could be behind that.

 As far as the other kid, the one they were looking for, Raul Gonzalez, well, the truth was he more than likely another victim. It was only a matter of time before he showed up dead. The media kept reporting on the deaths at the Jones' house, but there were bodies all around. True it seemed like most of the people killed were attempting to flee that party, but it stood to reason that this Raul kid was trying to flee and ended up dead. Painting him as the mastermind behind it all, there was something else going on here. Singer just couldn't figure out what it was. At least not yet.

 The whole thing just felt wrong to him, and if there was anything his time on the force taught him, it was to trust your gut. It rarely ever led you astray. And it stood to reason, if there was something wrong with the way the case was being handled than there might be something off with man handling it. Special Agent Tim Ostrander.

 His record, what Singer could find, was spotless. He seemed to be the perfect agent. Only no one that Singer knew had ever heard of him. True the FBI was a large organization and Singer only knew a few people, but still, it seemed odd to him that no one knew anything. An old partner of his who moved up to the FBI around the time Singer became a detective said he would call back when he could find out more.

 It gave him some hope that he could get to the bottom of this and maybe help those kids. It was a hope that didn't last long when his ex-partner called back and said everything was on the up and up. Only that didn't help him feel any better. In fact it made him more uneasy. He was partners with the man for years. They played poker together countless times, Singer always knew when he was lying, and he was lying on the phone.

 This was bigger than some kids getting railroaded for something they didn't do. Singer just didn't know how much bigger. But it was only a matter of time until he figured it out.

**Chapter Three:**

**Lex**

 Waiting for the door to open was the longest three minutes of Lex's life. He had always been close with Raul, they were best friends after all. And his parents loved him. That made this whole mess so much more. . .distressing for Lex. He was going to distract the Gonzalezs while Will snuck into Raul's room to steal something of his.

 The door finally opened and Mrs. Gonzalez was standing there. Her eyes bloodshot, as if she had spent most of the morning crying. Lex could imagine she spent most of the past few days crying. Her son had been missing since the party. A party that saw the deaths of almost everyone who had gone. It had to have been terrifying for her.

 “Lex, Lex honey what are you doing here?” She asked, trying to keep her voice even. Keep the pain out of it. She failed.

 “I. . .” he started to say when some hope seemed to spring forth on her face.

 “Do you know something?” She asked, grabbing a hold of Lex's arms. “Do you know where he is?”

 “Let go of him, Liz.” Mr. Gonzalez said as he appeared in the door way. She turned her head to look at her husband, not letting go of Lex. In fact she was starting to hurt him, she was holding on so tight.

 “He knows what happened to Raul!” She turns back to face Lex, a bright smile on her face. It made Lex feel like shit. He never meant to get her hopes up.

 “Look at the boy, Liz. He isn't here with news. He's here to see how we are doing.” Mr. Gonzalez said, as he pulled his wife off of Lex. His eyes were just as bloodshot as his wife's. But if Lex knew him as well as he thought he did, it wasn't from crying. It was from a lack of sleep. He wouldn't be able to rest until he was sure his son was home safe and sound.

 “I'm sorry.” Lex said, wishing he had never come. The whole plan was a mistake. There had to have been a better way to track him down. Letting Trinidad do some stupid magic trick wasn't going to save the day. It wasn't going to fix things. Nothing ever could.

 “You. . .you really don't know what happened to our boy?” Mrs. Gonzalez asked, all hope deflating out of her like an old balloon.

 “I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry.” Lex said, he could hear himself crying before he even realized he was.

 “Don't be.” Mr. Gonzalez said, putting his hand on Lex's shoulder. “You're a good kid, and a good friend for checking in on us. Thank you.” Lex just nodded, avoiding the man's eyes. He couldn't stop thinking about how hard all of this must have been on them. How bad he felt for them. He was lost in these thoughts for a few moments until the door closed and they were gone, back into the house. Back to the despair of not knowing what happened to their child.

 The walk back to the end of the street where he was supposed to met Will and Trinidad felt like an eternity. He had never felt so much guilt. Raul was one of his best friends. One of the people he was closest too in this world and he hadn't even noticed he was gone for days. What kind of friend was he? What kind of man was he?

 No matter what happened, they would bring Raul home. Nothing else mattered. Not Fury, not the manuscript. Nothing. He was going to give the Gonzalez family some piece of mind.

 “I got it.” Will told him as Lex finally caught up to them. He was holding an old watch that Raul's grandfather had given him when they first started high school.

 “Can you do this?” Lex asked, turning to face a nervous looking Trinidad. Who just nodded. “Good. Let's go.”

**Chapter Four:**

**Jon**

 “So where do we even start?” Jon asked, as they left Christina's house. She had wanted to go home and get a sweater before they started looking for Gambit. It was a chilly night. Jon couldn't help thinking maybe he should have gotten one too, but he was too preoccupied with the task at hand. He didn't trust Gambit. He didn't like him.

 He was real enough with himself to admit that a lot of that had to do with just how much Christina did seem to like him. She trusted him, that was for sure. It seemed like all of his friends did. He had to imagine it made it easier for them. All this supernatural stuff was new to them. They were still trying to figure it all out, but this Gambit guy. He seemed to know all the ropes. He wasn't feeling around in the dark. He knew the score. Jon hated to admit it, but he could be a big help to them.

 “I don't know. He always just seems to show up when we need him.” Christina said. She was right, every time they were in trouble Gambit would show up and save the day. “He's like our own private guardian angel.” She said, making Jon feel sick to his stomach. He couldn't even argue against that. It was accurate. Or was it?

 “No he doesn't.” Jon said, pissed that he never saw the connection before.

 “What?” Christina asked, as if she had been shaken out of a day dream.

 “He doesn't always show up when we need him.” Jon said, he was brimming with excitement at figuring it out, but Christina just gave him a look of pity.

 “I know you don't like him, Jon, but he has saved your life more than once. Don't you think it's time you get over. . .over whatever it is you have against him?”

 “No, it's not that. He wasn't there when we faced Ares! Or the random vampires at the warehouse.” Jon said, the connection finally making sense in his head. “He only shows up when we fight Fury. Fury is the connection, not us!”

 “You think he has a vendetta against Fury?” She asked.

 “It would make sense. He's never been tracking us, he's been tracking Fury's movements.”

 “Which means we need to find him all the more for Lex's plan to work.” Christina said. For the first time, Jon saw the logic in it. She was right, Lex was right. They needed Gambit if they wanted any shot at stopping Fury. Odds are, he knows a lot more about what Fury has planned than Jon and the others could ever figure out on their own.

 “Which I might have an idea on how to pull off.” Jon said, feeling proud of himself.

 “How?” Christina asked, she seemed excited. Jon knew it wasn't at him figuring out how to find Gambit, it was about the fact that she would see him again. That thought quickly evaporated the pride he had just gotten for himself.

 “We need to find Fury and his men.”

 “What?” Christina yelled.

 “It's the only way to drag Gambit out into the open.” Jon said.

 “But Lex said he doesn't want us going anywhere near Fury.” She pointed out.

 “What Lex doesn't know, won't hurt him.” Jon said, his mind already racing with ways to pull his plan off.

**Chapter Five:**

**Jax**

 The command center was chilly at night. Jax bundled up in a blanket he had brought from home. It did little to keep him warm, but it was better than not having it at all.

 He looked at the computers that he put together for their team, not sure how any of this was supposed to help with the task at hand. He was a computer guy. He was the brains. This was a fact that everyone on the team would gladly admit. It was a fact that Jax took some pride in. But just because he was smart, didn't mean he knew how to get someone out of jail. That logic didn't even track. He wasn't a lawyer. He didn't know any lawyers. He knew a bit about the law, but so did everyone else.

 He had no idea what it was that Lex was wanting him to do. Or where he should even start. He wanted to help Chris, he did. He just didn't think he was the right one for the job.

 After what felt like a life time of watching the computer screensaver, he woke the computer up and went online. If he couldn't help Chris, he figured he could see how much trouble he was in. He read everything he could find about the school bombing. When he finished reading the stories written about it on the record, he hacked into the police files and read those too.

 The news was right, Chris was being charged with the pool massacre, the school bombing and the massacre at SDSU. He was just a kid, Jax couldn't understand how they thought he was behind all of this, and it seemed he wasn't alone. A detective Jared Singer, had said the same thing. He had filed complaint after complaint up the ladder saying that there was no way Chris had anything to do with it.

 It didn't take Jax long to figure out that the feds were the ones putting all of this on Chris. Why? He had no idea, but if he could figure it out, maybe he could help him. For the first time since they left Jon's place, Jax felt like he might actually be able to pull this off.

**Chapter Six:**

**Trinidad**

“Invenire Scopum Meum!” Trinidad said. He was sitting on the floor of his room, the lights off, nothing but candles for light, the watch floating just above his hands. Lex and Will were standing against the wall. He could just make out how freaked out they were.

 Ever since Trinidad had told Lex about his plan, he could tell that Lex didn't really buy it. He was willing to listen, because the whole vampires being real made it easier to believe, but he still didn't buy into it. Now that he was standing there watching it unfold in front of his eyes, it was a whole different story.

 “What the fuck?” Will asked, he sounded as freaked out as Lex looked. Trinidad looked down at the watch, all three hands were pointing towards the three. That was a good sign. He just had to test it, he turned the watch the other way and the three hands moved to point at the nine. No matter which way he directed the watch, the hands always moved to point at the wall on his right.

 “It worked.” Trinidad said, putting the watch on his wrist.

 “You know where to go?” Lex asked, doing his best to sound in control.

 “We just have to follow the hands.” Trinidad said, showing them the watch.

 “Okay, let's do this.” Lex said.

 “Follow a watch?” Will said, following them out of the room. “This is my life now. I'm following a watch.”

 “Where do you think you're going?” Aria asked, coming out of her room. Lex and will didn't say a word, just shot Trinidad a look, telling him to hurry up and handle it.

 “Out.” He said.

 “To help Chris?” She asked, looking at Lex.

 “We're working on that.” Lex said.

 “Than I'm coming too.” Aria said. Her voice firm, she meant it.

 “Not happening.” Lex said. “Take care of this.” He told Trinidad before walking past him and heading outside.

 “We not going to watch the show?” Will asked as he followed him outside. Trinidad was glad they were waiting outside. His fights with his little sister weren't always his proudest moments.

 “You can't come.” he told her.

 “Why not?” She demanded.

 “Because it's dangerous.” he pointed out.

 “I don't care. Chris is my friend, and I want to help him.”

 “I know, but right now, we have to help our other friend.” Trinidad said. He told her everything, well almost everything. He left out the vampires, there was no need to scare her more than she already was. “I just need you to stay here and cover for me. Please?”

 “Fine, but if you don't save Chris, I'll never forgive you.” She said, storming back into her room.

 “Neither will I.” He said to himself. He found Will and Lex waiting for him outside, they were watching Chris's apartment. Trinidad knew they were wondering the same thing he was. How were Chris's parents holding up. Trinidad hadn't seen them since Chris was arrested. He knew they had to be taking it hard. Hopefully Chris could figure something out to help them. Hopefully.

 “You ready?” Lex asked. Trinidad nodded. It was a lie. He wasn't ready, but he didn't think he ever would be, so why not just get started.

**Chapter Seven:**

**Christina**

 Jon’s plan was insane, as far as Christina was concerned. He wanted to track down the big bad vampire gang that had been making their lives hell since day one. The same gang that the rest of his friends warned them to avoid, and he wanted to do it just the two of them.

 He was convinced that Gambit was following Fury and his gang, which made sense on the surface. He did always seem to show up when they went up against Fury, but that wasn’t the only thing that those times had in common.

 There was no way she could point out to Jon what he missed, not with his jealousy at an all time high. He hated Gambit, he hated the relationship that she had with him. She felt bad for him, he was a great guy and she really liked him, but Jon just wasn’t Gambit. He never would be. Which was something she wasn’t sure if he could accept.

 “This is going to work.” He said, not for the first time, while he sat next to her scrolling through his phone. He was trying to track down any reports of mysterious deaths, of which there seemed to be a lot. Normally this would be Jax’s job, but Jon wanted to keep the others out of it. He knew they wouldn’t like the idea of him going after Fury alone. Which was the argument in favor of pointing out what he missed. Gambit’s real interest. It wasn’t Fury. It was her. He always showed up when she was in trouble. He came to her house to check up on her. They had a connection. It was real, and it was powerful. She needed to find a way to use their connection and fast, before Jon got them killed.

 “What if it doesn’t?” She asked, trying to work up the courage to tell him the truth.

 “It will.” He didn’t even look up. He was so desperate to prove his worth. To show his friends, to show her, that he was worthy. That he could handle everything in front of them. Maybe he could. But he wasn’t a hero, not like Gambit, swooping in and saving the day. Fighting evil off and making a difference. Whereas Jon and his friends were just children playing with things they didn’t understand.

 She couldn’t help but wonder if Gambit would look down on her for joining them. For fighting by their side. Would he believe that she only did it to try and find him? She couldn’t be sure.

 “I got it!” Jon smiled at her. He was so proud of himself. She couldn’t help but smile herself, it was cute.

 “What do you have?” She asked. He got to his feet and showed her his phone. It showed reports of a spike of murders outside of bar near the collage. It mostly students who went out drinking alone.

 “You want to go there?” She could hear how scared she was in her own voice.

 “This is where they hunt.” He said. He was as excited as she was terrified. “This, this is where we find them.”

**Chapter Eight:**

**Will**

 Will still wasn’t sure if he bought into the whole magic tracking spell nonsense. He knew there was no real reason he shouldn’t, after all, in the past few weeks he had gotten proof that vampires were real. Even seen an honest to god. . .well, god, come to life. But the notion that magic was real, that the loser kid who hung out with Chris could do magic? That was too much for him.

 Not for the first time, Will thought about leaving all this behind. It was all too much for him. They were about to be sophomores in high school, they should be worrying about dating and grades, not vampires and war gods. He didn’t want this kind of responsibility; he wasn’t ready for it.

 “How much farther?” Lex asked, the longer this took, the more on edge he was. Not that Will couldn’t understand it. Raul was one of Lex’s best friends. They grew up together, the same way he grew up with Jon. That bond was hard to break. Which was the only reason Will was still involved in any of this. The truth was, he was also worried about Raul. The media was trying to paint everything that happened on him, well, him and Chris. They were just easy targets for the police to use to close the case, instead of doing real police work. Not that he was surprised. His whole life, he’d never met a cop who gave a damn about anyone. As far as he was concerned, you couldn’t trust the lot of them. The sooner people understood that, the better off they would be. The problem was, people were sheep. Put Nathan Fillion on TV in a police station and people forget all the footage of cops shooting innocent people. It was a sad truth he learned when he was really young and saw it firsthand.

 “I have no way of knowing.” Trinidad said in his sped-up voice, which Will couldn’t figure out if it was his normal way of speaking, or if he was just nervous. Either way, it put him on edge. “The spell just points me in the right direction. Doesn’t give me any information about it.” He glanced back at Lex, as if he waiting for him to hit him. That settled it, the kid was nervous.

 “We have to find him before the police.” Lex said, not for the first time. Lex wasn’t the type of guy who liked to feel helpless. He always wanted to be in control. No matter what the situation. He was a bit to anal to just go with the flow.

 “We’ll find him.” Will said, attempting to reassure his friend while also saving Trinidad from having to reply. Nothing he said was going to make this go smoother. Will finally figured out why he was on this team. It wasn’t to back Lex up in a fight, it was to save Trinidad from Lex. He was babysitting.

**Chapter Nine:**

**Jon**

 The sun was just starting to go down when Jon and Christina found the bar in the reports. It looked a lot closer on the GPS, but walking there wasn’t the best way to travel. Especially when the person you were walking with was scared out of their mind and trying to talk you out of it every step of the way.

 Not that he could blame her. His track record with vampires wasn’t something to write home about. He had done okay, but not as good as Lex or even Will. And never by himself. Not like Lex. The fact that he was going to be alone against a nest was enough to even give him pause. Add to that the pressure of protecting Christina, who had never really fought the undead, it was a lot.

 But this was the life he had asked for. As long as he could remember, he had always wanted to be somebody. To do something important. To make a difference, now was his chance. He wasn’t about to mess it up. Not when so much was at stake. Whatever was on that manuscript, it had to be important. Fury had to be stopped, and there was no one else who could stop him.

 “I really hope Gambit is close by.”

 *Right*, Jon thought bitterly as Christina spoke, *there was one someone else who could stop him, that’s why they were here after all, to find Gambit.*

 “I’m telling you; he’s tracking them. He has to be, it’s the only thing that makes sense.” He told her for the millionth time. He was positive that he was right, how could he not be. There was no other reason for Gambit to take such an interest in them. They were nobodies, even less so back at the night of the party.

 “I hope your right.” She said, if he didn’t know better, Jon would have sworn she was hiding something from him. What it could be, he had no idea. What could she possibly know that he didn’t? They’ve had the same interactions with the man. Unless you can’t the time Jon stormed off. He might have done that more than once. He didn’t like the guy, didn’t trust him. Some voice inside told him that this was a mistake. This was all a big mistake. Gambit couldn’t be trusted.

 “I’m right!” He said, far more angrily than he had meant to, as he gave her a boost to reach the bottom ring of the latter. The plan was to stake out the bar from the roof of a neighboring building. In this case it was a New York style pizza place.

Christina gave him a hurt look, before starting to climb up the latter. He didn’t know what it was, but every time he thought about Gambit for too long, he would start to feel an uncontrollable rage. As if he had been wronged by him in some way. He couldn’t explain it. No, that wasn’t true, he could. It was jealousy, pure and simple.

 “Sorry.” She said, as he moved an old crate under the latter so that he could reach. It wasn’t easy, and really hammered home Lex’s spill about needing to work out more, but he did it. He managed to get on the latter and started to climb up after her.

 “No, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to snap.” He said once he was on the roof with her. He couldn’t help but feel guilty. He didn’t want to upset her, and he didn’t want her mad at him right before seeing Gambit. The last thing he needed was to see her swoon over him. Again. “I’m just. . .” There was no way in hell he was going to admit to being jealous. He had no idea why he kept talking after apologizing. It was a nasty habit.

 “You’re scared.” She finished for him. It wasn’t at all what he was about to say, but it was far less embarrassing. “It’s okay, I am too.” She took his hand in hers as she said it. He could feel his heart start to speed up and the blood rush to his face. Sometimes he hated being white, well most of the time.

 “Yeah.” He said, as he settled onto the ledge of the roof next to her. Maybe tonight wasn’t going to be so bad after all.

**Chapter Ten:**

**Trinidad**

 “Where the hell are we?” Will asked, not for the first time. The truth was, Trinidad had no clue. They were heading farther and farther into the city and getting nowhere fast. The big drawback on the spell was that it didn’t tell him how close he was to his target, just a direction to go in. He wasn’t sure how much larger he could hold it together.

Trinidad could feel the weight of the spell starting to catch up to him. He was exhausted. He had never held a spell together for this long. While his mother was all about the occult and taught him and his sister as much as she could, their father always tried to keep it from them. They lived the bewitched show.

 “We need a ride, wherever we are going, we can’t keep walking.” Lex said, stopping at last. Trinidad let out a sigh of relief. He let his concentration drop and watched as the old watch fell into his hands.

 “Thank god, I don’t know how much longer I could hold on.” Trinidad said, lowering himself to the floor as he attempted to catch his breath.

 “So, we just giving up?” Will asked, he avoided looking at Trinidad. Once again making it clear that he didn’t trust him. Didn’t want him around. It hurt. His whole life he had always wanted to fit in and no one had ever accepted him. No one except for Chris. He was the only real friend he ever had, which was why he wasn’t about to let him down now.

 “We could take a bus?” He threw out there, Lex and Will turned to look at him. “I have some cash on me. Maybe it’ll help.”

 “The bus? How far out do you think he is?” Will demanded.

 “He might not even be in the city anymore.” Lex said, a sense of defeat in his voice. “We should probably start heading back.”

 “Wait, we’re really giving up?” Will asked, he was genuinely surprised.

 “No, but we can’t keep Trinidad out all night. We take him home, and head back out.” Lex said, he turned to look at Trinidad. “You gave us a direction to head in, thanks. Now let’s get you home.”

 “No.”

 “Excuse me?” Lex said. Will just took a step back.

 “I’m not going home. I’m not going to leave Chris in jail, I’m not going to leave Paul to get railroaded like they are doing to Chris. I’m not going to do it! I’m coming with you.” Trinidad said, feeling proud of himself. He never stood up for himself. He didn’t know how. He always just went with the flow and let people walk all over him, but for the first time, he was putting his foot down.

 “Raul.” Will said. Lex said nothing, just eyed Trinidad. As if he was sizing him up. “His name is Raul, you know, with an R.”

 “Fine.” Lex said after what felt like a life time. “But we can’t just keep walking all night. We need to find a more precise method to track him down. You have any ideas?” It was a fair question, one that his mother might have a better answer to, but the truth was, he didn’t. Magic was something that he dabbled in, not excelled at. He couldn’t help but think that if Chris were here, he would be able to pull something out of thin air, he was a natural.

 “Maybe there’s something in my mom’s old books?” Trinidad said, throwing out the only hope he had to still prove himself useful.

 “Let’s go.” Lex said. They started back towards their apartments.

 “We couldn’t have figured this out before we walked all this way?” Will asked. A loud growling sound came from behind them, causing them all to start and turn around, where they came face to face with not one, but five giant red dogs that looked like something out of a horror movie. They had razor sharp fangs that were as long as Trinidad’s fingers, with piercing red eyes. They drooled out what could only be blood.

 “What the fuck are those?” Will asked.

 “I have no idea!” Lex said, sounding as scared as Will.

 “Hellhounds.” Trinidad said. He recognized them right away from his mother’s old books. One of them had a list of supernatural creatures in it. There was a whole page on hellhounds, that had given Trinidad nightmares for years. They were beasts that roamed purgatory, dragging people who were looking for redemption into the pits of hell and feasting on their souls for all of eternity. They rarely ever ventured onto Earth, unless they were summoned by a powerful sorcerer or warlock. Every instance that Trinidad had ever read of that happening, ended with hundreds of dead. “We’re not going to survive this!”

**Chapter Eleven:**

**Will**

 The hellhounds, or whatever the hell they were, were closing in on them. They were far scarier than any vampire they had faced in the past. Possibly even scarier than Ares. Will’s heart was pounding, although he couldn’t help but suspect that part of that was from how fast he was running.

 Trinidad had told them that they were doomed, to which Lex ignored. He told them to run, bent down, picked up and stick and threw it before turning and running with them. What he thought that was going to do, Will didn’t know. But at least he tried something. The kid who had actual magic powers just cried and stood there. If Will hadn’t forced him to start running, he’d be dead by now. That was for sure.

 They were in a part of town full of old office buildings, most of them at least five stories tall. While it was clear that people still worked out of here, it was also clear that those who did, didn’t have any money. This was the poor part of town, which meant they didn’t have a lot of options on where to run.

 “In here!” Lex said, pulling them into an old building that was boarded up. Only someone had pulled off some of the boards so that you could enter the building. Once inside they made sure to get as far away from the entrance as possible. Not even slowing down until they made it to the second floor.

 “I think we lost them.” Will said, looking down the stairs. There was no sight of them. Trinidad threw up in the corner. His face pale white.

 “There’s no way we should have been able to outrun them.” Lex said. It was a fair question, those beasts looked fast.

 “We didn’t.” Trinidad said, making his way back over towards them.

 “What do you mean?” Lex demanded.

 “Hellhounds like to play with their food before going for the kill.” Trinidad told him. He looked like he was going to be sick again as he said it. “If that’s even their goal.”

 “What do you mean, ‘if that’s their goal’?” Will asked, he could feel himself losing patience with the kid. Now wasn’t the time for cryptic bullshit!

 “What do you know?” Lex asked. Doing his best to sound friendly, but Will knew him better than that. Lex was just as annoyed as he was. Trinidad started telling them everything he knew about hellhounds. About who they eat, how they hunt. How they could be on Earth and why. Which only brought up more questions. Namely, who would summon them, and why would they send them to hunt down a couple of kids?

 It was the question on all of their minds, but none of them had a chance to put it forth before the hounds showed up again. Not from the foot of the stairs like they expected, but from behind them. They had some how gotten past them and circled around back.

 The three of them ran downstairs, where they were once again faced with one of the deadly beasts. They turned and ran in another direction. On and on this went, till they found themselves in what used to be the ballroom. It was emptied out, but for a single chair on stage, where a green skinned demon sat, a giant grin on his face.

 “Welcome! I’ve been expecting you!” He said, his voice had a weird ring to it, almost like you were listening to a bad recording of an old radio play. There was something just off about it. Behind them they heard the low growling of the hellhounds. They turned around to find all five of them standing by the door.

 “Anyone else feeling like we were set up?” Will asked, Lex just shot him a dirty look. To be expected, this might not have been the best time to make stupid jokes. It was more of a Jon thing to do anyways. Will was just scared this demon was new. He had never seen anything like it.

**Chapter Twelve:**

**Lex**

 “I’ve been so eager to meet you; I’ve heard oh so much about you.” The green skinned demon said, as it got to it’s feet. His movement had a grace to it, as if he was gliding through the air.

 “And who the fuck are you?” Lex demanded, taking a step forward, putting himself before the green skinned demon and his friends.

 “Who the fuck am I? So elegant, my young friend.” The demon said, the hellhounds behind them started making noises that could only be described as laughter. The hair on the back of Lex’s neck stood on end.

 “You didn’t answer the question!” Lex said, doing his best to still sound in charge. He knew deep down that he was losing any pretense of control. In that moment, he didn’t care about anything but getting Will and Trinidad out of there, alive. Even if it cost him his own life.

 “The name is La’tol. I’m a shepherd of sorts. As you can see, my flock of choice are my beloved hellhounds.” They howl in acknowledgement of his words. Trinidad whimpers behind them.

 “You’re going to take us to hell.” Trinidad said, he sounded as if he was crying. Lex didn’t want to look back at him. He wasn’t about to turn his back on this freak.

 “Now why would I do a thing like that?” The green skinned demon asked. He was mocking them, there was more going on here than Lex could figure out.

 “Why are you beating around the bush? Just get to the point.” Will said, more forcibly than Lex had ever heard him before. The green skinned demon smiled; it was enough to send chills down your spine.

 “But alas, that is my task. The three of you are to be my guest for the evening.” He said, all but gliding off the stage towards them. The closer he got the more Lex could make out his features. His skin was silky smooth. Almost as if it was made of cloth more than skin. He had mass, but at the same time seemed to slip in and out of focus. It was almost as if he was here, but not here at the same time.

 He came face to face with Lex. His eyes were bright Purple, which was even more off putting when you took into account his lime green skin. He had a smell about him, almost like used rubber, only sometimes he didn’t. The smell came and went, just like everything else about him. Lex did his best not to flinch, not to give any sign that he was uneasy.

 “Who set that task?” Lex demanded.

 “Wouldn’t you like to know.” La’tol said, laughing as he spoke. The hellhounds laughed along.

**Chapter Thirteen:**

**Jon**

 “This is kind of nice.” Christina said, smiling at Jon. Her smile always seemed to brighten his day, no matter what was going on. Just being around her made the world a better place, at least for him.

 “It is isn’t it.” He said, smiling, while doing his best not to over do it. So far, the night had been more or less a bust. There wasn’t a single vampire, at least that they’ve seen. Thus, ruining Jon’s big plan to follow Fury and his goons to find Gambit, but the night wasn’t a total waste. They passed the time talking, joking around. He’s had a crush on her forever, but this, this was the longest real conversation they had ever had. He didn’t think it was possible, but she was even better than he had imagined. She was smart, funny, a bit of a nerd. She was perfect.

 “Who knew we had so much in common?” She asked, rubbing his arm as she spoke. He was hyper observant of everything she said, everything she did.

 “I’m glad you’re here with me.” He said, the words just rushing out. He was sure he skipped some syllables, if not whole words, but she smiled as if she understood.

 “So am I!” she said. She was moving in closer to him. He could feel the warmth radiating off of her, without even touching her. His heart was pounding so loud that he was sure she could hear it, but she made no indication that she had. Her lips looked so inviting, all he could think about was kissing her. She moved in closer.

 Part of his mind was telling him to kiss her, the other part was sending out warnings, telling him to abort. To turn and run, that she was going to slap him. The two voices in his head were screaming at each other, but he could no longer hear them. All he could think about was her.

 He started to move in, she did the same. He closed his eyes and kissed her. She kissed him back. It was an intimate kiss, the kind that you can only share right after a near death experience. He and Jessica had been through so much together, even though they had only known each other a short time.

 It was over far too quickly, but as he looked into her eyes afterwards, he knew she was the one. He hadn’t felt a connection like this since Alyssa, and she had changed his whole life. He could already tell that Jessica was going to do the same.

 She leaned in and kissed him again. Her hands clawing at his back as she tore his shirt off. They were on her couch, about to make love for the first time. It wasn’t his first time, but he hadn’t been this nervous since it was.

 The butterflies were so bad, that he felt as if he was going to throw up. Not the best idea when you just asked the woman you loved to marry you. It wasn’t the proposal that he had wanted to give her, but you sometimes have to make do with what you have.

 “I do.” Jessica said, she looked stunning in her wedding gown. She was the woman he was going to spend the rest of his life with. Nothing would ever drag him away from her.

 “Don’t go!” She begged him. Jon in her arms. She had tears in her eyes, but Jon’s crying was drowning out her pleads. It killed him inside, knowing that he was the cause of their unhappiness. That he was standing here telling his wife, the mother of his child that he was breaking his vow. He was going back to work. He was going back to the home that he had left decades ago to face his worst enemy. . .Gambit.

 Just thinking about him and everything he had done to him over the years was enough to boil his blood. He could feel his hands bleeding from his clenched fist. He threated Ralph, his best friend for as long as he could remember. What kind of man would he be if he stood by and did nothing?

 “I’ll be back, Jessica, I promise.” He kissed her goodbye, knowing that he was telling the truth. He would be back. This was one last job, that was it.

 He watched as Jessica packed up the house, Jon running around her legs, making the task that much harder. She had lost the house when he never returned. Without his income it was just too much for her to afford. He hated himself for it, but he couldn’t come home. Not while Gambit was still out there. He had killed Ralph and wouldn’t stop there, he would kill anyone he had to, if it meant hurting Mario. It wouldn’t be safe to return home until he was dead.

 “That was nice.” Christina said, pulling back from the kiss. Jon opened his eyes, not knowing where he was, or even who he was for a few seconds.

 “Wh. . .what?” Jon asked, as he started to remember. He was Jon O’Conner. He was on the roof of an old pizza place with the love of his life, staking out an old bar looking for vampires when he finally kissed her.

 “I said it was nice.” She repeated, looking a little put off by him.

 “Yeah, yeah it was something.” He said, getting to his feet. His head pounding. He had no idea what just happened, he kissed Christina and then it was his mother. He had a whole lifetimes of memories dating, marrying his mother and then leaving her to fight. . .Gambit? None of it made sense.

 “Are you okay?” Christina asked. She had gotten up and started towards him, she sounded concerned, as she should be. There was something seriously wrong with him.

 “I’m. . .I’m. . .”

**Chapter Fourteen:**

**Christina**

 “I’m. . .I’m . . .” Jon said, only he looked anything but okay. He looked out of it, as if he had just been hit in the head and had a concussion.

 “Maybe you should sit down.” She suggested as she reached out to take his hand. She didn’t feel comfortable with him standing so close to the edge, not with the way he was looking.

 “I. . .” He said, just before his eyes rolled up in the back of his head and he fell forward. Christina rushed forward to try and catch him, but she wasn’t fast enough. He fell to the floor, hitting hard on his face, his hands to his side.

 She quickly turned him over and tried to wake him, but it was no use. He wouldn’t wake up. The only comfort she took was that he was breathing, at least he wasn’t dead. She didn’t know what to expect when she kissed him, but him freaking out and passing out wasn’t it.

 She wasn’t even sure why she had done it. She came out here to try and find Gambit, that was her goal, but being here, with Jon. Looking out at the stars and just talking. She just got lost in the moment. She really did like him, if Gambit wasn’t around, maybe she would even *really* like him.

 The kiss just happened, and it was nice. He wasn’t a bad kisser, but as soon as it was done, he had just checked out. Not in a jerk kind of way either. It was as if the lights were on in his head, but no one was home.

 She had no idea what she was supposed to do, she didn’t have any of the guy’s phone numbers and she couldn’t carry him down the ladder by herself. Calling the police were out, it would get them both in trouble. She had to think of something fast.

 “Look what we have here.” A voice said from behind her. The surprise of the voice startled her so bad she screamed and jumped up. Standing on the ledge where she and Jon had just shared their first kiss were a pair of vampires, with their game faces already on.

 “A romantic date gone wrong?” The second vampire asked.

 “I think the little girl brought us a sacrifice. Maybe she wants to be one of us and thought making us an offering would be help her case.” A voice from behind her said. She turned and found three more vampires by the stairs. She was surrounded, by herself with a helpless Jon.

 Just when she thought all hope was lost, one of the vampires was yanked back, being tossed off of the roof. Standing in his place was Gambit. The other vampires growled and charged at him.

 He fought with a grace she didn’t believe was possible. He held them at bay, knocking them off one at a time, staking one just as it fell backwards. He was magnificent. After the dust had settled, he helped Christina to her feet.

 “Are you okay?” There was genuine concern in his voice. In his eyes as well. He cared about her; she just knew it. As much as she knew anything.

 “I’m okay, but Jon.” She said, looking back at her friend. He still wasn’t moving. Gambit walked over to him, eyed him up and down.

 “How long has he been like this?”

 “Just a few minutes. He was talking and then. . . he just fell.” She didn’t want to tell him the truth. That it happened after their first kiss.

 “We need to get him out of here.” He said, picking Jon up. “You as well. It’s not safe here. This is one of Fury’s feeding spots.”

 “We know, that’s why we came.” Christina told him. Filling him in on what had happened with the manuscript and how Lex wanted his help to get it back from Fury.

 “I’ll help anyway I can.” Gambit said as he started down the ladder, still holding onto Jon. She was going to take them both back to the command center. It was the only real hang out spot they had where no one’s parents would be around.

**Chapter Fifteen:**

**Lex**

 The weird demon liked to talk, but he never said anything. At least not anything of substance. He would go on and on about random shit, almost as if he just wanted to hear himself talk. A feat which in and of itself was an oddity. No matter how long Lex listened to him, he never got used to the sound of his voice.

 “What do we do?” Trinidad asked, the panic in his voice wasn’t helping matters. Lex already felt guilty enough for letting him come along on this mission to begin with. Now having him put in danger this way, it just made the whole thing worse. Lex had to find a way out of here and quickly, but with the hellhounds blocking the only exit, there was no way out.

 “We wait.” Lex said. Doing his best to sound in control. It wouldn’t do to let Trinidad or Will catch on to just how much trouble they were in. It was his job as their leader to keep them calm and make them feel safe. A job he was failing at.

 “We wait, we wait, we wait, we wait.” La’tol started singing, his voice trailing off like a bad echo as he glided around the room, before coming to a stop before them. “What are you waiting for. . .Lex, I take it?”

 Lex did his best not to react, but the fact that this random demon knew his name was unsettling. It knocked off any possibility that they were here by mistake. They were the targets and as such, their chances of getting out of here were slim to none.

 “How do you know his name?” Will demanded.

 “I know all three of your names, Will. Am I right?” He asked. Will didn’t answer but his non-answer said enough. La’tol had guessed it. He glided over towards Trinidad, a grin across his face.

 “Which means you must be Jax, the brains of the outfit.” La’tol said.

 “I’m. . .” Trinidad started to say, but Lex cut him off quickly.

 “Shut up Jax,” Lex said, locking eyes with La’tol. “Stop wasting our time and tell me what you want with us?” For whatever reason, La’tol thought that Trinidad was Jax. Lex wasn’t sure how, but that might be something they could use against him. He just had to wait for the right moment.

 “What do I want with you? Three-fourths of the baddest vampire gang around.” The hellhounds started laughing. It was an unnerving sound. “Why, I’m just trying to keep the underworld safe from the likes of you.”

 He glided back to the stage laughing at his own joke. He might not have meant to, but he had just given Lex a whole bunch of information. He referred to them as vampire hunters, which was a fair assessment, it’s what they did. But it also told him who had sent him. Fury. It had to have been. Who else would have reason to want them out of the way?

 Unfortunately, it also told Lex something else of importance. They weren’t the targets. If they were, La’tol and his damn hounds would have just killed them. They wouldn’t be playing around with them. Three-fourths. That was the key. La’tol thought that he had Lex, Will and Jax here and he was playing games with them. That could only mean that the target, for whatever reason was Jon. Fury just wanted the rest of them out of the way.

 Why they were after Jon, or what they wanted, Lex had no clue. But whatever it was, it couldn’t be good. Jon was okay in a fight, not great, and Christina was just starting to train with them. Lex had no real assessment of how well she could handle herself. They were in trouble, serious trouble.

**Chapter Sixteen:**

**Christina**

 Gambit carried Jon over his shoulder like he was a rag doll. Christina couldn’t help but be in awe of his strength. She had no idea how she was going to get him down off that roof, but Gambit made it look easy. Just like he made everything look easy.

 She couldn’t help but feel proud of herself, her first assignment by the team and she was going to pull it off. Okay, to be fair, Jon was the one who figured out how to track Gambit down, but she was the one who spoke to him, who got him on board. This was her victory and she was going to savor every moment of it.

 “How did you two know where to find Fury?” Gambit asked. Changing the subject from the mindless pleasantries that they had been exchanging thus far on their walk. For a moment she thought about taking credit for finding the hotspot, but the lie wouldn’t hold. The second Jon woke up it would all fall apart. He was the one who would get the credit, even if she was one who closed the deal. In the end she told Gambit the truth.

 “He’s a smart kid.”

 “Yeah, he has his moments.” Christina said, thinking back to the kiss they shared just before he passed out. She hadn’t been able to stop thinking about it. Not just because it was a great kiss, which she had to be honest, kind of surprised her, but because he passed out afterwards. She had no idea what happened, or if he was even okay. Before she could even think about checking on him, the vampires showed up and everything went to hell.

 “We’re just lucky that you showed up.” Christina told him. He smiled at her, but his smile faded quickly. He pushed her to the ground, as he threw Jon on top of her. Her mind was wheeling, what the hell was he doing? Why did he suddenly attack her out of nowhere?

 She got her answer before she could even turn around to look. The sounds of Gambit fighting off their attackers was enough to send a shiver of fear down her spine. She turned around, pushing Jon off of her, just in time to see Gambit knock one of the vampires to the ground.

 He didn’t have much of a reprieve before another vampire was on him. He elbowed backwards, knocking him back. He spun around, a stake suddenly in hand. In the blink of an eye the vampire was gone.

 Another vampire was coming at him from behind, she was about to call out a warning when she felt someone grab her hair and pulled her to her feet. She let out a scream, causing Gambit to turn around. No sooner did he spot her in trouble than he was knocked to the ground by the vampire who was attacking them. Things weren’t going well for them, and this time there was no one to save them.

 Which meant she had to save herself. She tried to elbow him, much as Gambit had down when he was caught. Only it had no effect when she did it. She wasn’t strong enough to break his hold. Hell, it didn’t even seem like he felt her attempt to break free at all. That left her only one option. She kicked backwards, in-between his legs, where it counts.

 The vampire howls in pain and let’s go of her, his hands moving down to his groin. She spun around and hit him in the face with all the strength she had. The vampire stumbled backwards. She ran forward, picking up the stake that Gambit had dropped as she charged him. Ramming the stake as hard as she could into his heart. The vampire burst to dust right in front of her. She fell through him and landed hard on the ground.

 The fall hurt like hell, but it was worth it. She was a vampire slayer, just like Buffy. Okay, maybe not at all like Buffy, but a girl could dream. She pushed herself off the ground and turned around so that she could help Gambit, not that he needed it. He was already back on his feet holding his own against the forces of darkness.

 One of the vampires, a woman, only a few years older than Christina herself, charged at her. Jumping into the air, fangs extended. Christina caught her, in her mind she was going to throw her back and then stake her. In reality, they both fell back. Knocking the wind out of Christina, the stake falling out of her hand.

 “GRRRRR” The vampire growled in her face. Part of Christina wanted to break down and cry, instead she dug down deep and pushed her off of her. The vampire was back on her feet in seconds. Christina took a bit longer to get back to her feet.

 “That the best you got?” Christina asked, trying her best to sound tough.

 “Was that your attempt to. . .” she never finished her sentence as she turned to dust. Gambit standing behind her.

 “I had her!” Christina yelled. She was pumped and ready for a fight, the adrenaline was flowing. She had never been a fight before, let alone a life and death battle. It was exhilarating.

 “You didn’t even have a stake. What were you going to do?” He said it with a laugh. He was toying with her.

 “I would have thought of something.” Christina said, smiling.

 “Of that, I have no doubt.”

**Chapter Seventeen:**

**Trinidad**

 “We have to get out of here!” Will hissed, under his breath. La’tol sat on his chair, petting one of the hellhounds as if it was his favorite dog. His eyes locked onto the three of them. Waiting for them to doing something. Lex hadn’t taken his eyes off of the green-skinned demon once. It was almost as if he was trying to scare it off.

 It wasn’t working. If anything, it only seemed to amuse the demon. He would laugh and mock them. The whole thing was unnerving for Trinidad. He wasn’t used to this lifestyle. Facing off against things that wanted you dead. Things that could kill you without even trying. It was too much to handle. He was a homebody. Never really leaving his house if he could help it.

 “We have him right where we want him.” Lex said, his eyes still glued onto the demon. Trinidad had no idea what his plan was, but he was sure it wasn’t one that he would like. It sounded scary. To be fair, he had been afraid of this stuff for as long as he could remember. When he was very little his mother used to tell him stories about all of this and it would turn his blood cold. His father would get mad at her, screaming that none of this was real. But even as a child, he could reason that if the magic was real, it was all real.

 “I grow bored.” La’tol said, standing up. “I was told to keep you alive, but I don’t see the point.” He started gliding towards them.

 “We need to go now!” Will hissed, Lex just motioned for him to shut up. Trinidad had no idea what was about to happen, but it was bad. That he could already tell. They needed to get out of there ASAP. But the only exit was still blocked by the other two hellhounds. The first one was right at the heels of it’s master. They were trapped in here. No way out, with a demon that was bored and wanted something to kill.

 “Besides, my friends are hungry.” He stopped in front of Lex, locking eyes with him. Dearing him to say something. “You’re the leader Lexie, why don’t you pick which one of you feeds my hounds.” He chuckled as he said it, as if killing one of them was all just some big joke. Maybe to him it was.

 Trinidad could feel Will tensing up beside him. Even Lex seemed to be more on edge. Will was right, there was only one way out, and Trinidad was the only one who could pull it off. Maybe. Truth be told he wasn’t sure if he could. His mother had taught him the spell when he was a little kid, in case he ever got in trouble out in the world, but no matter how hard he tried, he could never make it work.

 Now, while their lives were hanging in the balance, seemed like a horrible time to try something he kept failing at, but what other choice did he have. If he couldn’t make it work, one of them, if not all of them were dead.

 “I’m not playing your twisted game.” Lex said. His voice full of disgust.

 “Than you all die.” La’tol said.

 “Than we all die.” Lex responded.

 “Yeah, I don’t want to die.” Will said. La’tol guided over towards him and made him the same offer. Trinidad felt his heart sink. Will would pick him, there was no way he wouldn’t. They hardly knew each other. “Fuck off.”

 Will looked at the ground, bracing himself for his coming death. Trinidad knew he had to act fast. He took a deep breath and reached out, grabbing both of their arms. “Suscipe me in domum”

 “What the fuck?” Will asked as the whole world was pulled away from them. It was a disconcerting feeling. Almost as if you were being ripped away from reality. As if you no longer fit into time and space. You were alone in a void, with nothing but the overwhelming feeling that this was wrong. That you didn’t belong here. He could feel his stomach lurch, he felt as if he was going to be sick.

 Sure enough, he threw up all over his bed. He wasn’t the only one, as soon as they found themselves reunited with the real world, all three of them threw up. All over Trinidad’s bed. Sleeping tonight was going to suck.

 “Where the hell are we?” Lex asked, his eyes scanning the room, once he recovered from the sick feeling.

 “My room.” Trinidad said, doing everything he could to keep on his feet. He felt as if he was about to pass out. That spell took a toll out of him.

 “How did you do that?” Will asked, he was dumbfounded. Showing once again how little faith anyone had in him. Not that Trinidad could blame them, it wasn’t like he had a lot of faith in himself either.

 “That’s not important!” Lex said. “We need to find the others pronto.” He was already rushing out of the room. Trinidad and Will hurried after.

**Chapter Eighteen:**

**Jax**

 The setup worked wonders for Jax. He could use two of the screens for his research while having the news on the third one. That was important to him. More and more so every day. His growing paranoia that the feds were going to break down his front door any day now made him obsessive over the news. Listening for any clues that the feds were onto him. So far, he was in clear, they were after all blaming the whole thing on Chris and Raul.

 Which was his main job on the other two screens. Find a way to clear their names and get them out of trouble. Doing so without incriminating himself, was the real challenge. One that he was determined to conquer. He wasn’t built for prison.

 He hacked into every database he could find. Everything about the cases seemed to be classified. They were on servers that were even more secured than the FBI’s, but that wasn’t the weird part. The weird part was that everything was set up to look like Special Agent Tim Ostrander of the FBI was in charge of the investigation. Except that he didn’t exist. Everything about him was invented and planted. It took Jax quite some time to figure out he was fake. It wasn’t until he started running down the rabbit hole of his past cases that he saw inconsistences. They were tiny, insignificant ones that most people wouldn’t notice, but Jax always obsessed over details. It was his gift and his curse.

 Not that it mattered much. He had dug into his old cases to try and find a reason why he was trying to pin everything on kids they had to know were innocent. Instead he just found himself more questions. It was enough to make you want to scream.

 The detective on the case, Jared Singer, was on record as stating that he believed that Chris and Raul were innocent. In fact, he was of the belief that Raul might have been a victim of the massacre. Jax prayed he was wrong. He was growing more and more concerned for his friend by the moment. It dragged him away from researching the mystery government agency, so that he could search the web for any sightings of Raul. He found nothing.

 He was hitting one dead end after another. He could only hope that the others were doing better than he was. He couldn’t believe he was even thinking about it, but he was starting to wish he was with Lex and the others. Out doing something, instead of just sitting there feeling like a failure.

 His one job was to find a way to prove Chris and Raul were innocent, instead all he found out was that a secret government agency was the one setting them up. He threw his head back and stared up at the old car roof that they used to cover their little base of operations. He was defeated, there was no use in fighting it anymore. He needed to just text Lex and let him know that he failed. Something he was not looking forward to.

 “Breaking news! A massive attack by an unknown army has just gotten under way at Camp Pendleton.” The news reporter sounded panicked as she spoke. Jax jerked up to look at the screen. His uncle was stationed at that base. His cousins lived there. What army just invaded San Diego of all places. It made no sense.

 At least it didn’t until he saw the screen. The ‘army’ as they were called were homeless people in makeshift armor. There were thousands of them, swarming the base. It was right out of a zombie movie. George Romero would be proud. Jax didn’t know what to make of it until he saw their leader, standing right in the middle of the fray, taking bullets right to the head while moving forward, swinging his sword. Ares was back.

 Jax had blown up a school to get rid of him. To save everyone from that power mad god, and it was all for nothing. He was back and this time he had an army. Shit was about to get bad, quickly. He needed to call Lex and warn him. He turned down the news and pulled out his phone, but before he could call, he heard someone up above.

 “Coming down!” Christina called from above. Jax looked up in time to see her making her way down the ladder, with Gambit following behind her. He was carrying Jon in his arms. He was out cold.

 “What’s wrong with Jon?” Jax demanded. Things just kept getting worse and worse. The thought that one of his friends, one of his best friends was hurt was too much to bear right now.

 “He. . .he was talking and that just passed out. I. . .I don’t know what happened.” She lied. If there was one thing Jax was good at, besides computers, was being a BS detector. He could lie with the best of them and see through others lies with ease.

 The lie concerned him, he wanted to know what really happened, but he also knew this wasn’t the time to push it. She wasn’t good at covering his tracks, she wasn’t lying because the truth was bad. She was lying because she didn’t want Gambit to know what happened. The way her eyes kept darting to him while she spoke told Jax that. It was more pointless drama that Jax wanted no part of.

 “Is he going to be okay?” Jax asked as Gambit put him down behind the chair. He didn’t look hurt, just asleep.

 “Honestly, I don’t know. He’s breathing so that’s something.” Gambit said. He seemed genuinely concerned.

 “This is just not our day. Lex is going to be so pissed.” Jax said. He could feel his anxiety start to stir up as he thought about what he was going to tell Lex.

 “You have no idea.” Lex said from above them. Will and Trinidad were coming down behind him. This place was going to get real crowded real soon. There were too many people for such a tight spot. They needed a bigger command center if they were going to keep inviting in strays.

 “Jon’s hurt.” Christina told Lex. Lex jumped the last few feet down and knelt down next to him. He asked what happened and Christina recounted her adventure, or at least most of it. She was leaving something out. What? Jax didn’t know yet, but he would figure it out.

 “Did they follow you here?” Lex demanded. Will climbed off the latter while Trinidad just kind of hanged on to it. There was no more space for him. As it was, Jax was starting to feel claustrophobic.

 “No. At least I don’t think so.” Christina said.

 “We weren’t.” Gambit said. “I’m sure of it.”

 “Good.” Lex said. “For what ever reason, Fury is after Jon.”

 “What makes you think that?” Gambit asked.

 “They hired a demon to keep us busy while they went after him.”

 “The demon told you this?” Gambit asked, dumbfounded. Jax had to admit that was kind of weird. Although he had never met a demon so who knows what they are like.

 Lex filled them in on what happened to them as they went in search of Raul. Where ever he was, it wasn’t close. He was still out there and in danger if the police found him first.

 “I don’t think that’s going to be a problem.” Jax said.

 “Why not?” Lex demanded.

 “Because the police and everybody else have much more pressing concerns.” He turned up the computer so they could hear the reports of Ares’ battle. “But the good news is, I’ve figured out how to get Chris and Raul off the hook.

The End

To find out more about Ares new war with the US read the mini series

THE WAR FOR SAN DIEGO