**Chapter 1**

**Zeal in the new world**

It has been 130 years since the world went to shit, nothing is left, the majority of cities now rubble lay dormant with people hiding under their remains; gunfire and explosions are still echoing through the empty streets, which have been painted crimson red more times than I dare count.

Governments and militia groups have tried to maintain order but have failed time and time again, chaos is the one true reality. All the people run but no one knows why; something big is coming I can just feel it, I don’t know why but people are starting to ask questions.

Life in this world is hardly easy, you have to question how you are going to get your next meal or where you can hide from the bandits and head hunters; the world we now live in is a trading world one item for another, with few people doing well and those that are at the highest risk of a visit from what we know as the reaper colony. The bandits are the least of our problems but they still pose a threat, they tend to work in small groups raiding travelling traders with pitch forks and any other sharp bladed item they could find. Head Hunters or HH’s are a slightly higher risk to a person like me, but we will go into who I am in a while; these people are either singular people or parties up to three, they are the assassins of this world who work from the shadows to collect bounties and target richer individuals. Now the real problem, the Reaper Colony, they are called a colony purely because any person associated with this work tends to share a tattoo of a singular teardrop under their left eye, this is to show that they have no fear or regrets about what they do, frankly they don’t give a fuck about people like us. They take what they want when they want, that’s was until they met me.

People know me as Fright, I am one of the last people who stand up to these so called reapers; I also refuse to help these false governments and their bullshit policies, I give the people who feel the need to follow them a reason not to; I reward them for their so called crimes against these corrupt assholes providing them protection and food supplies here and there. Sleep with one eye open, I take that saying literally, I never stay in an area for more than 3 nights for obvious reasons; it is becoming more difficult to navigate my way through the cities avoiding both the governmental forces and that of the HH, but this will change soon, very soon.

I was born into this world and was raised by my mother until the age of 15 when she was taken by the government’s so called police, where she was raped and then executed for “allowing it” to happen. After that I was taken in and trained by a defect of the Reapers who was known as Zeal, he trained me to read the city, the weather, he taught me how to scavenge and fight; mentally he prepared me to kill and told me about the old world and what needs to happen, I watched him cut his own flesh to remove his tear.

Scavenging was an easy task for me at 19, I was able to climb, run silently and get under the smallest of crevices’ all to get food and weapons; it had been a silent day and I was out looking for some tools to help repair our so called hideout, that’s when I heard it, a single gunshot that shook my very bones, I knew the direction it came from and I instantly took the 3 blades I had found as well as the water and food I had collected piled it into my backpack which I had traded from a traveller for a can of beans and I sprinted back. That is when I saw the blood dripping from the base of his severed head, they had shot him square in the head from behind whilst he was making repairs to locals shacks; the cowards then took his head off and dragged him back into our place.

Our place was dark and cold but hard to find only few people Zeal trusted knew of it, one of them must have told the Reapers about it; we had all we needed there food water weapons and info. The info was all we had on the current locations of all groups and key figures, including the leader of HH and the scumbag Reapers, well we assume he is by the fact he has a double teardrop instead of that single tear.

Knowing what they had done I snuck back into our place using a secret entrance through a small crack that was hidden by a concrete door we had designed; once in I knew where the 5 members inside where, purely from their conversation I could tell they were looking for something specific, but they were laughing as they did it; I decided to stop them where they were, throwing a small piece of metal I had picked up whilst out scavenging to distract their attention, then one by one I snuck up and slit their throats. With blood on my hands and a few cuts myself from the struggle; I decided to keep the last alive, but I thought I’d send him back with a message, not only did I take his trigger finger I also decided to cut his face and put a cross deep through his teardrop and told him remember this face for I shall haunt him and come for them all.

I didn’t choose the name Fright, but after that incident it became my sort of call card, every time I found a group of Reapers I’d leave one alive but take his finger and scar his face. Soon it will be all over, I’m close to finding the head of the Reapers and when I do he will suffer and the world will know to fear me and once that’s the case I will return order and make this world safe.

**Chapter 2**

**Alone again**

During my life I have gotten used to being alone, laying on cold concrete floors listening to the sounds of a dying world; but some nights I wonder to myself, what would life be like if I had been able to protect my mother or even saved zeal, these thoughts drive me insane, and anger me to my core.

Now and then I will let my anger out on some low life Head Hunter or bandit and call it an excuse for practice, pathetic I know but in this world one less bounty hunter the better it is for the likes of you and me. I never claimed to be a nice guy nor will I say I regret the things I have done and said, but the world has changed enough for me to say with certainty that I’m doing the right thing; eliminating the biggest threat to the current world and taking the scumbags down with them.

Often on these lonely nights after taking out my rage I will wander the city streets freely, not hiding my face and not caring about who finds me; is this confidence? Or is this just arrogance? Neither I feel, I believe that it is the strength to stand up and face the darkness that keeps the world from progress; so what if the Reapers find me, let them and ill remind them why tears really exist.

The streets are normally pretty damn quiet when I go for these “walks” but sometimes I will spot odd things that make me wonder if I’m really having an impact on this world or not; like scattered bullet shells, blood stained clothes, bones and even corpses of children.

This night was no different, same sounds, smells, feelings of anger and questions, so many questions; that was until I heard it, the same scream I had heard 6 years ago, the scream of a woman about to fall victim to a man’s cold touch; with my blood already boiling and hands already dirtied from practice, I decided I wouldn’t let someone else fall the same way as my mother; I picked up my pace turning my walk into a run, now following trails of hair and ripped clothing, by the looks of the clothing, the woman was a similar age to me, as I got nearer the screams getting more and more frequent they must have stopped.

Now it wasn’t just the screaming I could hear, but that dreadful laughter of at least 4 men; this was odd as it wouldn’t be Head Hunters and even bandits wouldn’t go this low, or so I thought; as I turned the corner into what appeared to be an old market street, which had undergone some repairs of sort, I could clearly see this was more than just a place for a small group of bandits, but this was one of their camps.

This is the moment I had been waiting for, a chance to get some more info, supplies and a place to stay where people won’t come looking, but first things first, that girl doesn’t have much time left.

After investigating the area a bit to check if any more bandits where around and dealing with the few that were, silently as possible, I came to the area where the 5 men were trying to have their way with this girl; wait, 5 men?

I swear I only heard 4, now thinking of it I’m certain I only heard 4, and there is a known rule amongst bandits, you keep what you loot, you eat what you cook, and fuck who you took. Disgusting I know, but it means that the bandits didn’t share amongst themselves, this would come to help me here as it delayed the inevitable as they argued who’d get the first meal; now this 5 man I took some interest in as he was silent the entire time, and even his footsteps where impossible to follow; clearly he was higher ranked, punishment officer? Debt collector? Or was he a Captain?

The closer I got the more I learnt of this man, the weapon tucked in his belt was distinctive, a custom made claw; most likely made by himself, 5 razor sharp blades attached to a leather looking glove.

I had heard rumours of someone who used a similar weapon, but it appears this was true, now to see if the rest of what I had heard was correct or not; jacket and jeans, showing of his singular tattoo on his chest, I had seen this tattoo before, but unlike that of the Reapers, this tattoo clearly shows the hierarchy among Bandits; even though they were greedy and selfish people they still respected the rankings amongst them.

Now then, this tattoo, and that weapon start to bring a smile to my face, as the rumours I heard must be true, I guess the real fun can now begin.

**Chapter 3**

**Debt and Payment**

Around 6 months ago I started to hear rumours of a man nicknamed as Ripper; rumours said he was a bandit, of debt collector ranking who governed a large amount of men and was in charge of the districts financing. I also heard that he is crazy and uses a custom made claw as his weapon, and would use it to tear the stomachs of those who refused to pay him or his men out and leave them still barely alive on the street to rot, but before abandoning them he would take any items they had on them even clothes in some cases claiming their debt had now been paid.

Ripper was just a start another name for me, another person I had to deal with, it is said that he has the tattoo of a debt collector which is shown by the markings of a dollar sign with a blade through it, but in his case it was his claw through the dollar sign; a general rule amongst bandits was to display their rank tattoo and Ripper was no different; he wore a leather overall jacket that came down below his knees, roughed up jeans, and no shirt with his tattoo shown clearly on his chest above his heart; as well as the rank he also had numerous smaller tattoos of names, faces, weapons, and lots and lots of money; to most people this would be enough to avoid, but to me it was enough to increase my bloodlust.

Debt collectors such as ripper would often rape and abuse people and say that this was them collecting their “protection” debt, others would just take all the person had then leave them for death to collect their souls; but those who pay these debt collectors often see their next debt increase and then again and again it was extortion to the highest degree using black mail and death threats to get what they wanted. This women was one of the unlucky ones who couldn’t afford the price of protection but lucky for her I am about to stop this man and his collection days for good.

By no means was I going to let this so called man defile this poor women, no matter who she is or what she has done, no one deserves this. I looked for a spot to make my move and decide on a window from the apartment above them, I sprint up to that window blood still dripping from my gloves from my earlier “walk” I approach the window and take out my blade that I kept in my inside jacket pocket, I knew this was going to get messy. Poised on the ledge I decide the order to take out the trash, the two armed thugs would be first followed by some beefy guy who looked like he was more muscle than man and finally I would take my sweet, sweet time ruining this so called rippers reputation.

I drop from the ledge straight behind one of the thugs planting my blade deep into the base of his skull and tearing it out in one swift movement; staring at the next thug I decided to throw my blade hitting him in his shoulder and jumping across to drag it through his jugular, the blood splattering not only my jacket but now my face as well, this brought a grin to me; I was enjoying this and planned to make it last, the muscle guy had turned to me now and started to walk in my direction slow and steady laughing and mocking me, “you are going to die now, right here in this dump of a place” or something like that my eyes were glazed and I was ignoring the taunt I just wanted to see his life leave his eyes and watch him take that final breath knowing it was me who sent him to the after-life.

Deciding to let the thug make the first move I closed my eyes attempting to make him angrier and angrier; it worked, screaming every blasphemous term under the sun he swung his giant fist in rage, dodging it at the last moment I grabbed his wrist and elbow and forced his arm to a position it did not want to go causing it to snap making an awful sound that echoed around the street; the once giant of a man now screaming in agony, causing me to just laugh and push him to the floor. Ripper now looking shaken tried to get some words out but the screams of his pal made it inaudible, so I told him to wait and reached my hands down to the thugs neck and head snapping it with no regrets; “much better” I exhaled turning my head to ripper “what did you say” lost for words ripper could do nothing but grit his teeth and clench his fist, it was now time to end this.

The girl he still had grasp off shaking with fear, but what of? Ripper or me? That didn’t matter right now, as long as ripper ended up dead; “going to move or stand there scared?” tormenting the man, I was going to make him suffer before ending his miserable excuse of existence. Still not moving I decided to hell with it and darted forward slicing his arm that had clutch of the girl, this forced him to release her; she ran and hid behind the corner staring tentatively at what was happening, locked still by fear and by anger.

Surprisingly Ripper was as tough as he was made out to be, he didn’t attempt to stop the bleeding arm of his, and instead he took a swing with his claw and caught my jacket shoulder tearing it; noticing that he had done this I decided to ditch the jacket. Now they realised who I was, noticeable by the amount of scars and also by the black tally tattoos I had on my forearm representing each teardrop I had removed from a Reaper; so now they had a pretty good guess at who I was and seeing that he had actually managed to cut through even my shirt and cause a light cut to my skin, I decided to rip the shoulders of my shirt off showing the final piece to the puzzle, the famous words which I had on my upper arm “death is nothing but a journey we all take”, Ripper now looked terrified apparently word of my antics had reached even these lowlife scumbags.

Frozen in fear for his life Ripper decided his best option was to bargain with me, “Take the girl, my money, anything! Just let me leave this place” he really thought I’d bargain with someone like him? I looked over my shoulder at the girl still watching, eyes fixed on my skin and blade, and told her to look away and cover her ears this she didn’t want to see. Ripper now screaming for his life backed up against the far end of the alley like a trapped rat looking for a way out, a once so called proud debt collector had just been bought to tears by the mere sight of me, I decided now would be the ideal time to get some information, I walked up to him dragging my blade across the concrete walls to my sides switching now and then making sure to keep the alley blocked off so he couldn’t try to run, the scratching of the blade seemed effective Ripper was dropping slowly to his knees head hanging lower and lower. I now put my blade to his throat and whispered softly in his ear “if you want to live a tiny bit longer you are going to tell me what I want to hear”; Ripper raised his head his eyes now looked blank as if his life had already left him, he nodded as if he had a choice in the matter, “who is in charge of this areas debt collectors?” I questioned trying to worm my way through the trash in order to get rid of as many bandits as possible. “He is known as strife, I believe you know of his brother” he was almost slurring now tears rolling down his face making it difficult for him to talk; “Who is his brother?” interested in this statement I wanted to know which of the many pitiful souls I had ended would cause this bosses rage.

The response I got from Ripper was one I had definitely not expected and it even caused me to stop for a moment, “His brother is none other than the lowlife HeadHunter known as Zeal” now If I was really thinking straight at the time and not pumped from the fight I would have gotten more out of him but as I raised my arm up to deal the final blow that would take this man’s life, he screamed “Yes Zeal is alive and is not who you think he is he had you fooled from the start” and with that I plunged my blade deep into his chest, watching him now cough up blood I pushed him off my blade with my foot, watching him fall to the ground and turning away as he was taking his last breath I said “I don’t care, if he is alive and gets in my way, it will just be another name I give to death himself”.

With that now over but still covered in blood I picked up a jacket one of the thugs had took off earlier, ready for what he wanted to do to the girl, and wiped the blood off my hands and face; I then walked up the alley and placed my hand on the girls shoulder who opened her eyes turned to me and removed her hands from her ears, “You are safe, now lets get you away from here”.