

Timeline 7
by
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This book is dedicated to my Aunt Cheryl Harness who has inspired and helped me
in more ways than I could ever fit on this page.

Also, to 12 year old me who came up with this story.

CHAPTER 1

THE WORLD TO BE

TIMELINE SEVEN

ALEX

JUNE 1ST, 334 P.D.

0500

334 YEARS POST-DOWNFALL

MAN IS GOOD.

Not all men and women are commendable and gracious, but as a whole mankind is good. We strive for the best in life, for ourselves and others with the occasional evolutionary defect of impulsive decisions, but in the end we are good. The misguided opinion that humans are so tragically bound to malevolence and deceit originates from the worst of the worst while the credence, tenderness and condolence of the best is neglected or forgotten. While many undertake the disbursement of good will for all, some are keen on focusing and pursuing those who work toward avarice for the few. In days like these when rehabilitation is so important we must stray from ignorant bliss and seek out righteous knowledge for the good of all mankind.

As retired navy captain, Alexander T. Van Hayes promoted by General Wyatt, I was given the position of overseeing the excavation of the catacombs and the rebirth of our eighteenth library located at the bay of New Zion. Excluding the past few years since the new war started, the military's main objectives have been rebirth, rescue and recover of the east's most precious and sought after possessions. The flattening of nearly every major and minor city on the planet hundreds of years ago makes the Triple R Initiative the greatest undertaking set by mankind since the construction of the pyramids.

My wife Anja and three kids, Lucas, Faith and Jokubus were given ideal residence near Zhackmouth by the Krielm military for my services to the force. Invariably working for the Triple R Initiative my presence at home is limited but my family is able to revel in the luxury of living near the water while getting an abundance of supplementary energy from the Advances of Alternate Energy Facility, located about eighty kilometers away in Griever.

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A few centuries ago all the Earth's oil reserves ran dry with the last commercial gallons of gasoline sold at around a thousand dollars each. Biofuel production accelerated with solar panels covering every commercial and residential rooftop with the coastlines lined for hundreds of kilometers with wind mills and tidal stream turbines. Although alternative fuel became the norm for all homes and businesses the search for hidden oil reserves raged on by the governmental powers. It wasn't long before word spread of the discovery of an estimated thirty million barrel oil reserve found under Nepal. World powers hurried in to try to claim the oil for themselves but it seemed as though they wouldn't be able to negotiate proper distribution and, on top of that, a new wave of green energy had caused a change in the mindset of the masses leading to protests for the oil being used at all. This forced world leaders to publically step away from the oil but the pursuit of the black gold continued in secrecy.

Unknown at the time who caused the damage, the attack and destruction of Nepal's drilling rigs caused a global uproar. Through a chain reaction of events that would be impossible to recall today, an unknown country reached its tipping point and the first atomic weapon was detonated leading to total global destruction. New York City, Hong Kong, Paris, Sao Paulo, Moscow, Tokyo, Seoul, Shanghai, Delhi, Mumbai, London, Los Angeles, and countless others - all destroyed. International transportation became nonexistent and nearly every currency became worthless over night inevitably followed by incessant looting and rioting leaving even the unharmed areas nearly unlivable. Government power became nonexistent as most politicians were executed by the enemy forces or by their own people for the destruction they had caused. Laws became meaningless and the old country borders shrank or disappeared to bring rise to the new world powers: the gangs.

With regulation for crime and punishment absent, violent organizations took charge of all left over cities and ruled with an iron fist. Accompanied with their armies of murderers and rapists, which enslaved most of the remaining populations, life became unlivable for those in the lower end of the two remaining social classes. Looting became the main source of income for most with the currency of the town people being bottled water or uncontaminated food, which was scarce to come by.

Little known by the rising adhocracies, religious extremists were in the east working on a weapon to steal the power back from the vicious syndicates. A religion that came about a few years after the first bomb was dropped was growing somewhere in the south in an attempt to bring about peace and order once again. With the world in such chaos the propaganda was easy to fall under for the belief Armageddon was upon us. Hypnotized by fear and misguided beliefs, suicide became a common practice among certain parts of the population. Some decided to use the gullibility of the scared and hopeless to turn them into slaves and warriors. From inside the mission they seemed to be doing good but from the outside looking in it was clear they were no different than the power hungry gangs disguised in a cloak of holy ignorance.

Devised by the supposed profits and constructed by enslaved scientists, The Whisperer was created to return peace and structure to the desolate world, but it did not play out as intended. Detonated in the growing city of Hitshu, also one of the hot spots for gang bureaucracy, an airborne virus spread from The Whisperer bomb that infected all those around ground zero in an attempt to put an end to the syndicates' power. Contagious, agonizing and drawn out, the ironically named 'quiet virus' caused victims turbulent blood loss and lack of limb control in the first few days and after a week the virus spreads through the entire body leaving the victim crawling and gasping for their last breaths of air. The Whisperer was detonated several more times across the globe leading to a full pandemic for what little population was left, even ironically spreading to the religious creators of the virus, who most likely welcomed the passage to their *next life*.

In an underground lab quarantined from the rest of the world a cure was found but by this time the disease had infected hundreds of millions leaving the world a deserted wasteland of corpses. After the drone strikes, nuclear blasts, pandemic, famine, wildfires and riots had stopped the Earth's population was said to be closer to fifty million, but against all odds the human race survived. So introduces the new era, Post-Downfall year one.

Areas, which once homed ninety percent of the world's population, are now toxic with the land unable to grow crops and the air unable to sustain life. All major

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manmade monuments and structures, along with the libraries and server farms, have crumbled to the ground leaving any trace of governmental rule a vague memory. Surrounding the entire planet is a thick cloud of smoke, dust and debris letting in only a portion of the available sunlight making solar power, even that from mile long reconstructed solar farms, nearly worthless only able to power a few small homes a day.

By the year 70 p.d. urban areas began emerging such as Krielmopolis, the largest city we know of located in what used to be central Europe. With a population nearing one million people in Krielm central, the Eitman Power Supply became the momentum for the city's growth by properly feeding power from solar farms and windmills to all nearby homes and growing businesses. In return for the power, consumers need to sign contracts to the power supply company to 'produce' a certain amount of energy for the city. This energy tax involves sitting at the Eitman facility riding a stationary bike for a certain amount of time, which feeds power to other people of Krielmopolis who are receiving it for paying their own energy fees. Instead of paying with dollar bills or coins, energy credits with set durations are exchanged giving people the opportunity to get out of or trade energy tax owed to Krielmopolis by exchanging them for goods and services, hence creating the first currency of the new world. Being the distributor of power and currency for the city, Eitman Power Supply became the ruling government of Krielmopolis.

The creation of the first greenhouses lead to the return of grocery stores and restaurants followed by schools and libraries even leading to new post offices and an entertainment district turning Krielmopolis into a booming city with a self sufficient economy. Unfortunately, as cities and populations grow so does crime. When the town called for a justice system Eitman paid soldiers-for-hire to become paid officers monitoring the town for any gang or religious activities, which are exclusively banned. Anyone caught disobeying the new strict laws would be sentenced to a stay at Storm Cape Correctional Facility located on the outskirts of the town. For this new law enforcement each member of Krielmopolis owed the tax of fifteen days of riding each year, split up however they like. If the days are not paid, they and everyone in the household will be refused enforcements the following

year. When the outside growing colony of Griever tried to take over Krielmopolis in 88 p.d. an Eitman funded military was created raising everyone's dues to twenty-five days per year. The higher taxes caused better power disbursement throughout the city but the growing population and power demand forced rolling blackouts to be standard in the lower income areas.

Power shortages and the enforcement of energy credit dues weren't the only issues with this new society as the consequences of the Great War became unavoidably noticeable throughout the city. The cure for those infected by the quiet virus had unknown side effects to the recipient's DNA, most of which to the reproductive organs. During the war many not infected but worried about being infected by the quiet virus were able to buy the cure and have it themselves, sometimes in abundance for just one person. If a man had been given the cure the most severe side effect is his child would have light blue, nearly pale skin while being hairless with vocal chords that grow incorrectly forcing the child mute. If a woman had been given the cure her eggs would produce a child with hair growth issues and pale green skin, also mute. Regardless of which parent had the infected DNA, this new breed of human maxes out at an adult height of two meters but most never make it over a meter and a half. Many of these children did not survive birth but with the strive to repopulate so high, continued efforts to have children created a small population of this new half-sized, colored race.

Year 90 p.d., at the beginning of the third generation of infected it was clear the altered reproduction would continue leading to people fearing the noncontagious children and acting erratically. Due to the great number of people who were given the cure one out of thirty people now carry the altered melanocytes that cause the altered skin color. Left over from the early days of post downfall, a hate group called God's Light began spreading the word that this new specie of human, or anti-species, is the final straw for the human race and demise was inevitable. 'They are in your neighborhoods! They are in your schools! They walk among us! That's not how God created us! That is not how God intended us to look! *We* were created in His image! *They* are not His image!' With the anti-species silent and the unusual skin color it was easy to fall for the propaganda.

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Although religious practices were banned in Krielmopolis, the owner of the Eitman Power Supply, Ezekiel Eitman, fell for the false words of God's Light and with no one to regulate the company had all anti-species power cut off from the city allowing the *normal humans* to have more for themselves. This hierarchy of rich and poor, anti-species and human strengthened the racism leading to segregated schools and businesses. Anti-species reservations were created on the outskirts of town where the anti-species living in the city were "highly recommended" to move to.

Once proof was sent back to Krielmopolis that there were some military efforts to neutralize found anti-species in wild the anti-species revolution began bringing rise to the Anti-Species Retaliation. Krielmopolis split in half sparking the short ran civil war of the new city. The Eitman town center, where the legislation for business segregation passed, was burnt to the ground as half of the Eitman board of directors were kidnapped and hung up by their necks, climaxing with a failed attempt to bomb the Eitman Power Facility.

The leaders of God's Light and Anti-Species Retaliation met to devise a plan to stop the war in the year 101 p.d. The Krielm Officials, or the Eitman Board of Directors, were there to mediate to which some officials were secret members of God's Light making the negotiations one-sided. The negotiations must have also been fairly awkward as the humans could speak freely while the silent anti-species were forced to convey all thoughts in writing. After weeks of conversing and with the population so low, the Great Departure to send all anti-species to the west and all humans to the east was suggested and agreed upon. The anti-species would have full reign of the western hemisphere and humans would keep the east with travelling back and forth still allowed and free will to live where you want acceptable. Giving the anti-species the smaller of the two hemispheres was debated firmly but population ratio gave humans the win setting the final decampment for 108 p.d. Over this seven-year period giant regimes were sent to traverse the lands of the east to gather all anti-species and prepare them for their journey across the Atlantic as well as group together as many humans as possible to grow the Krielm civilization.

With free will reigning, no anti-specie was made to leave the east but nearly all were “convinced” by their human neighbors to do so. A fleet of ships carried seven hundred thousand or so anti-species across the ocean to their new home and helped them settle in and rejoin the wests smaller, flourishing cities. Once the anti-species left, another seven-year effort was made to gather all humans and bring them to the east by the year 115 p.d.

Over the next few decades imports and exports were rare but did happen occasionally between humans and anti-species. In the year 142 p.d. the Anti-Species Retaliation bombed one of the human ships heading across the Atlantic carrying salts and minerals, killing a few dozen men. This was immediately followed by the banned travel to the west along with making any communication to the anti-species a punishable offense. Any anti-specie found in the east were either banished to the outskirts of human civilization or shot on sight. The humans who chose to stay in the west undoubtedly suffered the same fate. A hundred and ninety-two years of zero communication have lead to rumors of what the anti-species may be doing now or whether or not they are even still alive. Some conspiracy theorists believe that they never existed and that the Krielm had created them to spark fear in the citizens to keep them in check. Others believe that they still living among us and are responsible for the unsolved crime throughout the city. Of course, this is ridiculous.

Now in the year 334 p.d. there are supposed plans to re-open the highly demanded travelling from the east and west. Eitman Power Supply has been opening new power plants across the western part of the east while spreading word that they plan to move their efforts across the ocean and resupply the west with power, but they have been saying this for years and with the current war, the likelihood of it happening in my lifetime is slim.

Today I head out with my team to Atrora, a new city at the bay that we plan to connect with and envelop into Krielmopolis. Currently at a population of only nine thousand, they have reached out for help to create a power plant and proper medical facilities along with a self-sustained economy. We will be bringing with us tidal stream turbines to install and gauge the area for locations to place successful businesses that are looking to expand from Krielm central.

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The sun rises on the horizon illuminating the parched sky turning the reflection of the ocean outside our living room window a bright tangerine. Keys are in my left pocket, wallet in my right, portable EAS attached to my vest, oxygen tank prepped and ready. It's about that time.

Without waking them, I tiptoe into each of my children's rooms to whisper goodbye before heading back to my bedroom to say my adieu to Anja.

"I'm off," I whisper to her.

Barely audible and without opening her eyes she replies, "Ight -oney. Ove you."

"Love you too. I'll see you in a couple weeks."

She puckers her lips, I give her a kiss and she falls back to sleep.

ALEX

CHAPTER 2

THE TIME MACHINE

TIMELINE SIX
ALEX

SAM

SAM

JULY 2ND, 312 P.D.

1826

21 YEARS, 10 MONTHS, 29 DAYS, 10 HOURS AND 34 MINUTES EARLIER

//POWERING ON...

//Connecting to artificial intelligence...

//Connected.

//Connecting to processors...

//Activating luminance sensors...

//Activating chromo sensors...

//Activating audible sensors...

//Connecting to artificial hippocampus...

//Connecting to analytic and figural reasoning...

//Connecting to spatial working memory...

//Checking mathematical approximations...

//Checking anticipation sensors...

//Activating motor preparation...

//Evaluating surrounding...

{Room} = 4.5m*7m*3m

{Subjects} = ^7 humans.

//Searching for Anti-Species...

{Anti-Species presence} = ^Negative.

//“I am Lieutenant Thomas.” = ^Male.

//Activating spoken language comprehension...

//“Can you hear me?” = ^Confused. ^Nonthreatening.

//Analyzing speech = ^English. ^Question.

//Analyzing subject...

//Recalling subject...

[I am Lieutenant Thomas] = ^Lieutenant Fredrick Thomas.

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^Age 42.

^Marital status = Single.

^Authority figure.

[Can you hear me?] = ^Voice volume appropriate?

{Possible replies} = ^Yes. ^Yes I can. ^Yes, sir. ^Absolutely. ^Of course. ^Why couldn't I? ^Yes, can you hear me?

//Proper response:

"Yes, sir."

//Bring arm over chest.

//Lower arm.

//Auto response activated.

"My name is Sam. In exactly one year, four months and twenty-nine days from now the anti-species will cross the great divide and attack the human race. They have a superior race of anti-species that have near god-like abilities, which outmatch any type of defense we have here. They nearly wipe out every human and the ones they don't are enslaved. Sergeant Major Greer and a group of other humans take hiding underground where blueprints for a weapon are created. I am that weapon. I am the fusion of a donated brain from a grade A cadet and the best computers available at the time. My mission is to get across the ocean, take down their defenses and clear a way for your troops to take out all anti-species."

//Analyzing facial expressions...

^Fear.

^Confusion.

^Stress.

"The ships docked at St. Srana will ship out in exactly one year on July 2nd, 313 p.d. You will enter at the ruined city of Glairefield in the northeast as well as the Gulf of Old Mexico. In a years time I will go through their troops destroying their defenses by identifying the superior anti-species and neutralizing them."

{Lieutenant Thomas} = ^Confused.

//Recall persuasion.

SAM

“Call in Sergeant Major Greer. He is currently at the technological advancement meeting at Fort Tonio.”

{Lieutenant Thomas} = ^Scared.

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SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

JULY 2ND, 312 P.D.

1959

1 HOUR AND 33 MINUTES LATER

“WHAT’S NEW ABOUT IT?”

I ask.

“You see, the P-LX series has a deeper range for...” the half-wit lab coat nervously replies trying to weasel his way into getting this year’s Krielm grant.

This is my eighth technological advancement meeting, yet every damn time I’m here I see the same shrep. There are the new guidance systems that don’t work, smaller launching devices for atmospheric travel, heat-seeking bullets...hell, heat-seeking everything!

I sit at the long rectangular table with my assistant Brooke sitting to my right and two of Eitman’s pawns watching silently to my left. They act like they have some authority here but at the end of the day I have final say on what Eitman and the Krielm forces buy. Ft. Tonio is one of several forts I have full reign of in the east so everything that goes on inside these walls has to get my thumbs up. This includes the annual technological advancement grant.

“You were in here last year, am I right Mr. Keiser?” I ask him.

“Doctor Kei-”

“And, if I’m not mistaken, I told you I liked your idea but your budget was too high,” I didn’t like it, “now you come in this year with the same exact budget with just a few more bells and whistles? C’mon.”

“Sir,” now comes the begging, “the bells and whistles are what makes this suit so unique and necessary for all the enlisted. This anamorphic suit doesn’t just allow the wearer to move quicker and have a stronger punch. It also increases eye sight, aligns the spine and checks for any abrasions or wounds.”

“What is the difference between your suit and the AD723 suits we already have?”

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

“The P-LX can-”

“AD723 already makes the wearer move quicker. The 723 helps them punch harder.”

“Like I said, the anamorphic suit has new guided...” whatever. ‘AD723 with different paint job’ is how I described this in my notes last year and he’s presenting me the exact same product. Next to it I wrote the price tag – eighteen hundred energy credits. “... and using the cooling fans attached within each individual arm crank motor, we’ve been able to...” eighteen hundred energy credits? That’s damn near a tenth of the budget! Looking around at the others sitting at the table they seem just as uninterested. “... not to mention the heat-seeking mini launchers in the...”

Yep. “I’m going to have to stop you Mr. Keiser. The Krielm military will not be interested in purchasing your technology at this time.”

“But if you look at the-”

“Mr. Keiser, the sight advancements are no different from the Helios Goggles already being worn by our men today, your magnetic hovering capabilities are flawed and not practical unless we were fighting on the moon, and the minute differences between your P-LX and the AD723 are nothing to go over budget for.”

“Please sergeant. If you look at the...”

“Your time is up Mr. Keiser.”

Lab coat reluctantly juggles his blueprints, schematics and miniature prototype in his arms while tripping over his slovenly untied shoes. I force back a smile as his metal suit toy falls to the ground and he stumbles out of the room.

As Sergeant Major Cameron C. Greer in command of the Krielm forces I have been given the duty of vetting new technologies for military advances with everything from long ranged missiles to high tech pissers. Every year we have an open door day where lab coats and engineers from all boroughs can come in and present their ideas to myself and my team where they have the chance to be given a nice fat check to continue to improve their work. If the price is right and the technology practical then we will buy and implement for our men, which isn’t very often. In the past eight years I’ve purchased four products; motorized bikes that

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have a top speed of two hundred and twenty kilometers per hour, EMP deflectors, close range maneuvering training targets and portable nutrition compactors. With all the technological retrieval efforts out there, it's unacceptable that this is all we've been presented with.

"Are you ready for the next one Sergeant?" Brooke asks me.

"I suppose. You know if you're done with all this Brooke we can reschedule the rest for tomorrow and we can all head to Shambles for a drink."

"That's alright, sir. I know we need to get the rest done with."

I find myself rolling my eyes as two well past their prime gentleman enter the room holding themselves with confidence wearing full suits, shined shoes and combed hair.

"My name is Matija Jabaar and this is my colleague Dr. Haru Xaun," confident but a strong accent. This could go either way. "Today we present to you..."

Crash!

I spring to my feet with my fingers wrapped around my holstered pistol as the meeting room door flies open with the urgency of a tornado tearing down the lobby outside. "The hell?" I yell, "This door is supposed to be locked!"

Interrupting my meeting enters Lieutenant Thomas. "Sergeant major, excuse my interruption but we need you at Ft. Bildine immediately."

Without hesitation, I grab my hat and head out the door.

2115

1 HOUR AND 16 MINUTES LATER

Ft. Bildine was one of the first military bases reconstructed by Vuldoor Krielm back at the city's founding before the construction of the Eitman Power Supply. During the war on anti-species it was a hot spot for gang graffiti, which made it a perfect symbol for the human resilience. There are even some rumors that this is where the great Leonard Brakduke founded God's Light so long ago. Back then the walls shined bright with hallway length skylights letting in what little sun we could suck up. Three dozen windmills once sat right outside feeding in enough

power to run the state of the art security surveillance system, two full kitchens, three gyms and the largest indoor training facility this side of Griever.

Now, ugh, this place is a disaster. If Vuldoor saw what it had turned into he would vomit in his urn. Walking through the entrance the skylight glass is cracked and broken and the floor filthy with mud as if the troops aren't even told to wipe their feet before they come in. The walls are apparently the fort's urinals as the pearly white is now piss yellow. What the hell is Thomas doing to this place? "What is this about?" I ask impatiently as we make our way past the foul-smelling janitors closet.

"We're almost there sir." Lieutenant Thomas does not outrank me, which pisses me off that he isn't answering my questions directly.

"Lieutenant, do not hold me in suspense!"

Thomas is a good forty-five centimeters shorter than me and holds himself as if he's been holding in a massive shrep for the past five years. I can smell the phony confidence leaking off of him as he is clearly trying to make a good image for him to get promoted. If I had it my way I would've demoted him to kitchen crew months ago. Thomas has been in charge of Ft. Bildine during my travels and clearly he has let it get away from him.

We stop at the last storage room in the hallway where he uses his badge to unlock the door cracking it open for me. "In here, sir."

Pushing the door open I'm awestruck by what I see. In the middle of the room stands a man in a beautifully crafted, two and a half-meter tall metal suit. No bolts, no weld mark, no laser connectors makes this one of the most flawlessly designed suits I've ever seen! As if it were some divine being, it shimmers bright filling the dim lit room from the reflected overhead light. Surrounding him are a dozen men, half of them are crouching, half standing, each pointing a gun at him.

"Hello, sergeant," the beautiful, metal man says through speakers hidden somewhere on his body. His towering size and ominously blank face gets me shivering with excitement. What great architect has created such a beautiful piece of art?

"Whose in the suit?" I ask.

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"We don't know sir. He asked for you," Thomas tells me.

I walk between the guards to stand directly in front of the silver man to see the metal skin isn't only shimmering but vibrating.

"Take off the suit," I order him.

"I am unable, sir."

What? "I said, take off the suit or we will take it off you!"

"My name is Sam. In exactly one year, four months and twenty-nine days from now the anti-species will cross the great divide and attack the human race. They have a superior race of anti-species that have near god-like abilities, which out match any type of defense we have here. They nearly-"

"I'm going to stop you right there metal man. We out number the anti-species ten to one. The possible resources they have for weapons are minimal compared to what we have here and the coasts are constantly watched and protected by the best military in the world! The anti-species will not attack us."

"They nearly wipe out every human and the ones they don't are enslaved. Yourself and a group of other humans take hiding underground where blueprints for a weapon are created. I am that weapon. I am the fusion of..."

He's not a man in a suit at all. I'm looking at a fracking robot!

I look to Thomas, "Where did this guy come from?"

He is slow to speak.

"Get it out son!"

"He is from the... future, sir."

Like I said, Vuldoor Krielm would vomit.

DR. MUVATO

JULY 2ND, 312 P.D.

1512

6 HOURS AND 3 MINUTES EARLIER

THE LAB

is positioned in the Skits borough on the periphery of Krielmopolis where homes are non existent and aside from the metropolis off in the distance, this is the only structure in sight. The visibility isn't copacetic with the unbroken fog on the horizon, but ordinarily it's fair enough to see anyone coming from a kilometer away. As requested by some of my aggregation, ceramic trees have been placed outside to give a bit of a 'home vibe', although the flat terrain of desert land doesn't allow much wandering of the imagination. The main lab area holds twelve long rectangle tables, six computers and a hologram demonstration station, which is where I spend most of my time. The building is also equipped with a full green house, six offices, two bathrooms, a general prep room, cytometer room, tissue culture room and a molecular biology room. Some of which goes unused but being the most profitable science lab in Krielmopolis can get you the perks of excess assets.

Three interns, seven engineers, a horticulture scientist, a conservation scientist, a nuclear scientist, a doctor in applied mathematics, a doctor in particle physics and myself, Dr. Henny Tenus Muvato with a degree in atomic engineering are employed here in Lab 87 devising new ways to preserve plant life for the Eitman Greenhouse. Eight of the last twelve products we've provided to the Krielm officials have profited nearly twenty-two thousand energy credits, in consequence we have an abundance of energy to play with and we're going to use it all today.

Born fifty-two years ago in the suburbs of Truhlas I worked fourteen hours a day, six days a week with my father on an excavation team until I turned seventeen. I hated every second of it so luckily, when discovered creating blueprints and studying microscopes in my free time I was extracted from the excavation team to exploit my knowledge and to help discover the greater human potential for the

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Krielm officials. I graduated from University of Old Yhore when I was twenty-four and was immediately scouted by the government to work on the Cleansing the East Project. After my father died I had no family or companions, merely coworkers, leaving me to devote all my time into my work creating the most paramount inventions since the Great War. My colleagues and I have made great strides in filtering soil, creating air filtration systems and mass-producing artificial bees, but this is all just children's play compared to what we are testing today.

Ermergence-601.1993 is our biggest undertaking yet and is set to take place in exactly three minutes and thirty-four seconds. We will be forced to go well over our allowed energy intake from Eitman meaning we will have to steal an abundance of excess power from all nearby boroughs. Syphoning power is a punishable offense with a sentence of pedaling to how much power was stolen plus ten years at Storm Cape Correctional Facility. It's risky, but I believe once the Krielm officials see the reason for the thievery none of that will be relevant. With what we plan to present to them, the anti-scum will never again be a threat to humankind.

While in college I was educated about a meta-particle called the tachyon, which is the only particle in existence we know of that can travel faster than the speed of light and turn the laws of nature on its head. Just a few years before the Great War began, scientists in Japan had verified its existence and discovered its ability to move through space-time itself completely counteracting our beliefs on how time worked. In our three-dimensional universe time is linear and is always moving forward, but in the fourth-dimension all time that has happened and will happen are all visible in the same instant. The tachyon is the only particle known to travel in the fourth dimension but also be detected here in our three-dimensions. Unfortunately, seeing that this particle moves faster than light and is nearly undetectable by all current sensors the only way to see it in motion is to use the process of quantum entanglement.

At the quantum level the laws of physics no longer apply and become rather difficult to grasp. As we all know one thing can only be in one place at one time, such as a man on a street corner can either be standing there or can walk to a different location and that is basically the end of it. But at the quantum level that man can be

standing at the street corner while simultaneously inside the coffee shop across the street sipping on an espresso. It is not a twin or a clone of the man at the street corner but is the exact same person with zero discrepancies. Of course this doesn't happen with people but instead particles through the process of quantum entanglement. However, with a very elaborate algorithm and highly advanced equipment it is possible to make multi-cellular objects or organisms fall under this quantum entangle rule so we can in turn push that duplicate particle, the man in the coffee shop, with the tachyons through the fabric of the time in the fourth dimension while leaving the man at the street corner exactly where he's at.

There are a few limitations and demands for this technology: 1.) To power it on, whether to send or receive, demands a massive amount of energy, 2.) We are unable to deliver anything into the future and 3.) Tachyons can only be sent back as far as to the millisecond when Emergence is turned on, as the machine must be on to stop the flow of tachyons coming from the future. Without the power being on the tachyons will travel back in time for eternity. Unfortunately with that said, going back to before the Great War is out of the question as Emergence never existed back then to catch the incoming tachyons.

1513

"We're ready, D. M," my intern Ocean says to me holding my father's old work boot in his hand with a note attached to it.

My other colleagues go about the room shutting down everything that is drawing power from external sources to free all available outputs to the machine. The two other interns are setting up cameras facing Emergence-601.1993 to document our findings.

The room is dark.

Emergence has been connected to all available power and is ready for activation.

I lift the remote attached by a cable to Emergence, which has only two abilities: switch on – switch off.

“Colleagues,” I begin my scripted speech I’ve had prepared for years, “nearly three decades we have worked on Emergence-601.1993. Ever since the first tachyon was discovered, this moment became inevitable. The human race discovered fire. We’ve discovered extraterrestrial life. We’ve teleported a being over three kilometers unscathed. And today, we find out whether time travel is within our bounds. With the Great War halting this technology’s progression so long ago we can now continue our predecessors’ work to travel to another dimension, in another time. Whether Emergence is a success today or not, we have paved a trail for all next explorers, adventures, scientists and every other human who has dared to believe in the impossible. We know of our accomplishments, we know what we’ve been through to arrive at this crucial moment in our races future and that alone is great enough for us to hold our heads high and be proud. I’d like to thank you all for your hard work, dedication and passion for this milestone in our species’ advancement.

“Today we make history.”

Switch.

My team silently and eagerly waits as the tachyons power up connecting themselves to every atom within the confines of the walls of Emergence. The sound of an old jet engine roars from the tachyon generator making all other sound in the room suppressed. We turn our heads away to protect our eyes from the piercing bright light of Emergence as the room begins to shake forcing the ceiling to rain dust all around us. The cracking of tachyons being pushed through the machine’s emitters attack our eardrums attempting to deafen us whilst the light continues to shine through our closed eyelids as if burning our corneas away.

Flash!

Finally, the noise begins to hush and the light dissipates allowing our eyes to readjust to the normal world around us. Uncontrollable, a smile forms on my face and my eyes water for I now witness what we've just achieved for humankind. Before us sits the exact boot my intern holds in his hands with the only difference being this one has been sent to us from a minute into the future. We have just witnessed the first object to ever be sent through the fabric of time.

Rrrrrrrrrr!

The roar of Emergence grows again!

Something else? This means this machine will be used more than once in the future! What a beautiful day!

I turn away in anticipation for the blinding light.

Flash!

With the tachyon generator warmed up the transportation of the next object is much more immediate. The room becomes quiet and dark.

Looking back to Emergence I see an even more unbelievable site than the boot. A metal man, two and half meters tall nearly with his head scraping the top of the machine stands still and expressionless with the boot smashed below his foot.

"Sir," Ocean begins, "what is that?"

The generator's hum is slowly becoming a roar once more. I cannot answer him, half because I don't know what it is and half because I have been rendered speechless.

I turn my head away.

Flash!

Whizz!

A gush of wind nearly blows me backwards.

"What was that?" one of my colleagues yells over the sound of the generator.

Something or someone just flew from my machine, passed my head and is somewhere behind me. With the light still too bright, I'm unable to open my eyes to survey what it is.

Crash!

TIMELINE SIX

Still blinded, I am able to recognize the sound of the wall behind us being destroyed allowing whatever just entered our timeline to escape into the unforgiving desert land that waits for him or her outside.

Boom!

Accompanying the bricks dropping to the ground behind us and the roar of the generators is the metal man falling face first to the ground.

He must weigh at least four or five hundred pounds!

“Doctor!” Ocean yells over the generators that grow louder once again! “We need to turn it o-”

Flash!

Whizz!

Again, something flies from Emergence through the opening of the wall behind me. My vision slowly returning to me allows just enough time to see through the hole in the wall at something speeding away from us at a pace I’ve seen only matched by a motorbike.

“What is that?” one of the interns asks.

Looking back to Emergence there sits something alien. A blue, transparent, paper-thin force field of sorts levitates in the air above the toppled over metal man. Moving purple veins travel about the interior of the blue field as if it’s electrified. The field’s opacity grows and within seconds has dissolved into the air, gone forever.

The hum of Emergence finally quiets to a complete silence.

The cameras! “Check the cameras! I want to know what that was!”

The two interns stay still looking to one another in clear shock of what they had just witnessed.

“Now!” I yell, “This is no time for hesitation. The Krielm military will be here soon.”

The two of them quickly plug in the portable projection unit and connect the image sync cable, which converts video from two cameras into one three dimensional image. Ocean attempts to flip the light switch of the room back on but nothing responds.

“Don’t worry Ocean, they just cut our power.”

“So, is it possible there are still others waiting to come back to our time since the machine was cut off early and all?” he asks.

I hadn’t thought about it. Now that it has been turned off, the presets will skip this unavailable destination point and set it to the next time it is turned on. There could be hundreds or even thousands of other things scattered about in the fourth dimension waiting for this machine to be reactivated.

Looking toward Krielmopolis I see a small fleet of cars heading our way. “Quickly guys! Get this playing!”

The projector is plugged into the battery letting the image appear on the wall ahead of us. *Play*. The first flash of light from emergence shows the boot appear on the platform, as we all knew it would. The second flash of light reveals the metal man appearing in the doorway staying perfectly still and silent. I look back to see him still lying on the ground without moving a bit. The third flash of light is notably hard to see in real time, but appears to be a short, discolored man on some sort of flying machine. As he flies out around the metal man he knocks him over causing the loud crash we had heard. The fourth flash of light is perhaps stranger than the last two as a smaller, discolored man appears crouching on the ground at the metal man’s feet. In a split second the force field we had seen hovering above the platform appears under his feet launching him forward and out of camera view. Everything had taken place in less than a minute.

“Come out with your hands up!” the yell comes from the irate Krielm official standing outside.

I put my hand up to tell my colleagues to stay where they are. “I’ll handle this.”

TIMELINE SIX

OCEAN YANNICK

JULY 2ND, 312 P.D.

1518

SECONDS LATER

NERVOUSLY, I STAND BACK

as Dr. M walks outside to face Eitman and the Krielm. How much trouble could we be in? Energy is the most valued commodity, but can they really put a price on human advancement?

He leaves the door open letting the summer heat pour in turning the lab into a boiling oven.

“Stop!” the lieutenant yells to Dr. M.

Lieutenant Thomas, the shortest of the bunch, marches toward my boss with handcuffs ready. We had been prepared for this to happen but for some reason I still had it in my head that it was just talk and we wouldn’t really get in trouble. We here at Lab 87 are no strangers to Lieutenant Thomas as he would come around here every six months or so and hassle us about the amount of energy we were using, even though we had an agreed upon deal with Eitman. When he would show up we would always hide our work on Emergence and show off the small technologies, such as the home air filtrations and stylish new facemasks, as it is his job to report any non-authorized experiments.

Dr. M is handcuffed and marched to one of the vehicles as a small troop of overly armored men enter the lab as if we were about to open fire on them. “Don’t worry everybody,” I try to calm down my coworkers who seem worried about the situation, “everything is going to be okay. They’ll be paying us once they see what we have done!” I think my skittish, cracking voice really brightened the teams’ moral.

The military man pushing me toward the vehicles isn’t light putting on the restraints. “I wouldn’t be so sure about that,” he says as if he has any authority about what happens to us.

I am placed in the vehicle next to Dr. M who shrugs to remind me ‘it’s no big deal.’ Looking out the window I see all my nervous coworkers being placed in the vehicles as if they were hardened criminals who were caught raiding a jewelry shop. Not surprisingly, Dr. M and I were placed in the lieutenant’s car to which I’m sure was planned. Well, I might’ve just been a coincidence, but the lieutenant will definitely try to interrogate Dr. M as the two of them have always seemed to bump heads.

Hurriedly the lieutenant circles the junker around and heads toward Krielmopolis. “Do you have any idea what your brain scum have done?”

“Create history,” Dr. M replies with a boom in his voice. Sometimes when I’m worried about a situation I just go to my mentor who puts it all in perspective for me. He’s always had a way of making the worse situations in life seem insignificant in the greater scheme of things. Looking out the back window I see several military men struggling to drag the metal man to their car. I’m sure it will just be an hour or so before they have Emergence loaded up and headed wherever they’re taking us too.

“You shrep for brains just shut down the power for two boroughs!” Thomas continues, “It’s gonna cost nine months of extra pedaling to make that up! Are you going to do all that?”

“After you see what we have done, you’ll be the ones paying us,” Dr. M doesn’t have a worry in the world.

“Don’t matter,” Thomas arrogantly says, “we’ll see what the Eitman board has to say about it. They take energy theft very seriously and hacking directly into the emergency supply? You’re looking at some hard time.” The lieutenant drives in silence for a moment while trying to think of something more threatening or condescending to say to us. “Who was the dead guy in the metal suit? Some sort of botched experiment?”

Where I would be honest and tell him ‘we have no idea what that thing was’, I just let Dr. M do the talking.

“I’ll only speak to General Jim.”

TIMELINE SIX

Okay, I wasn't expecting that. I've never heard the doctor say anything about a 'General Jim' before but I'm glad to see he has a plan to get us out of this.

"Looks like you'll be staying quiet for a while then. General Jim is out at St. Ustring for the next few weeks. Can't imagine he'll make a trip back for some piss poor lab coats wanting to strike a deal."

The lieutenant and doctor play a game of 'whose the biggest badass' and by the looks of it, Dr. M is winning. They both stay silent for a majority of the drive back.

"Lieutenant," my annoying, subconscious urge to break the awkward silence kicks in, "where are you taking us?"

Dr. M looks to me with a scowl for opening my mouth as if I'm not allowed to speak at all. He's never looked at me like that, even when I've royally screwed up like when I replaced the 8212 cable with the R212 causing the soil spinner to go up in smoke. I suppose this is a more unique situation but it still doesn't sit well with me.

"You want to start giving me some answers, I'll give some to you," the lieutenant replies.

Normally I would speak up, but the doctor has yet to break eye contact with me. My guess is he doesn't want me to say anything for fear of letting out some information that will get us in hotter water. He should know me better than to think I would say something stupid.

"That's fine," the lieutenant continues, "we have people at the base who specialize in getting people to talk. You'll be singing like a canary before morning."

I want to trust Dr. M, but I've never been so nervous in my life. I had potential, I had promise, but what could I do after this? Even if they do prove Emergence works, would the set us free? Possibly turning it on at all was a mistake; who knows what my future holds now. I'll probably never step foot off an Eitman bike again.

1647

1 HOUR AND 29 MINUTES LATER

My legs are ice-cold from the cell's concrete floor despite the boiling heat outside. There were only a few bench areas available in the storage room, converted to holding cell, but my coworkers quickly claimed them for themselves. The other interns and I sit on the floor with our backs against the wall while Dr. M stands at the cell door staring through a small window into the hall.

"They are wheeling in Emergence now," he says as the sound of a squeaky axel goes pass the door down the hallway.

The rest of us stay mostly silent besides Shaelyn, the conservation scientist, who quietly whimpers into her hands.

"What are they going to do with us?" the intern sitting to my right whispers to me. He hadn't been around for more than a couple months but I still feel bad I had never learned his name, or the other intern for that matter. I spent too much time with the higher ups trying to casually inject myself into their social group hoping to be a part of their hierarchy class. It's odd that I am even sitting with the two interns; it's not doing much for my image.

"They want this technology," I reply, "that has to mean something good."

"But do we want them to have it?" the other no name sitting to my left grabs my attention, "I mean, imagine what this could do in the wrong hands." He had been on the team for almost a year and I hadn't said more than a few words to him until now.

"We won't let that happen." I have no idea what we're going to *let happen*.

I'm forced to turn my head side to side as they take turns asking questions. "You don't think that one of those things was something the Krielm sent back, do you?"

"What if they use Emergence to send back a human?"

"Do you think that this is Storm Cape bad?"

"How do we get out of this? I'm not willing to pedal the rest of my life for this!"

Apparently not speaking as quietly as we thought, Dr. M turns to yell at us, "You knew the risks when we started!" The three of us straighten our backs and look

TIMELINE SIX

as if we weren't speaking at all. "You could've gotten out whenever you wanted but you stayed. You stayed because you knew this would be the greatest thing that would happen in your life, hell, greatest thing to happen in anyone's life! You have done what was deemed impossible for millennia and now you're worried about your own future? We have changed the course of the human race! We have changed everything! That... that is worth any punishment we have before us." He turns to look back out the door window.

He's right. We have done the impossible so it doesn't matter what happens next.

A voice roars from behind the cell door, "*Step away! Doors comin' open!*"

Dr. M casually walks toward us allowing the door to open up behind him.

The short and stocky Lieutenant Thomas enters the room along with two armed guards. "Now," the lieutenant scans the room, making eye contact with each one of us, "which one of you are going to tell me what the hell we just wheeled in?"

Dr. M speaks before anyone else can, "Like I said, we only speak to General Sebastian Jim."

"Whichever one of you wants to inform me of what is out there and why you found it necessary to use up the Krielm's excess power supply will be promised minimum work detail."

Shaelyn's whimpers have quieted. Wiping the tears from her eyes she speaks up, "Will we still be able to have a career in our field?"

Dr. M's dagger eyes hit her hard but it was a reasonable question; most of us have spent our entire lives working toward a single career goal.

"That is definitely possible *if* you tell me what I need to know."

Shaelyn notices Dr. M but isn't persuaded by his stare. "It's called Emergence-601.1993."

"Shaelyn!" Dr. M barks at her.

She keeps her eyes faced away from him as to not feel his heat. "It's like a time machine."

The lieutenant puts his hand to his forehead and sighs in disbelief. Who could blame him?

"I'm not lying!" she attempts to back up her claim, "There are an infinite number of timelines, each one with its present time in either our past or future. There are so many that for every second, every millisecond and every possible time increment in between there is a timeline. By the use of Emergence we are able to send matter to these timelines, which present time is in our past. In other words, going back in time."

The lieutenant hesitantly asks, "and the metal man?"

"Something that came out when we turned it on. At some point in the future someone had sent him back in time. We have no idea what he is."

The lieutenant, not convinced, gives another look around the room before leaving and locking the door behind him.

No one says a word for a moment. My skin burns from the reflection of Dr. M's eyes locked on Shaelyn's face. She feels it too, but keeps her eyes focused on her twiddling fingers between her knees.

Without looking up she pleads for forgiveness, "I'm sorry Doctor. I had to..."

SLAP!

Dr. M cuts her off with his palm swiping forcibly across her cheek. Shocked and afraid of our own punishment, everyone in the room looks away as if our real focus is needed at the stains on the wall.

"If you've ruined this for us, so help me God, I will see the end of you!"

I've never seen Dr. M so mad. Ruin this for us? What is he talking about? This is a unique perspective of him and I don't like it.

He steps away from her and stares out the door window again as Shaelyn's quiet whimpers return.

I've been Dr. M's right hand for years now and I don't want to believe this is all for nothing. Although he is acting a little out of himself right now, he has never steered us wrong before and there is no reason for him to now. If anyone could speak to him without punishment it would be me, but I don't dare risk it with the tension so high. I'll wait for things to die down.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 3
THE MASSACRE

SAM

SAM

JULY 2ND, 312 P.D.

2120

4 HOURS AND 33 MINUTES LATER

“WHAT IS GOING ON?”

{Tone} = ^Angry. ^Confused.

{Greer} = ^“Get it out son!”

{Thomas} = ^“He is from the future, sir.”

{Deadline to leave} = ^22:21.

{Greer} = ^“Are you trying to screw with me lieutenant?”

{Possible exit phrases} = ^I must go. ^It is time for me to leave. ^I have a deadline. ^My duties wait for me. *No phrase – just action.

“I must go.”

//Walk.

!! WARNING !! GUNS ARMED !!

//Forearm blade activated.

“Lower your weapons humans. You are not my enemy.”

{Thomas} = ^“Drop your weapons now or we will fire on you!”

“I must go.”

{Thomas} = ^ “He’s not dropping them! Take him down!”

!! WARNING !! BULLETS INCOMING !!

!! OFFENSIVE ACTIONS !!

//Action = ^Torso 72 degree – ^18 degree.

{Targets} = ^Neutralized.

{Damage} = 0%

{Threat} = 0%

//Walk.

{Thomas} = ^“Metal target leaving base! He’s decapitated twelve Krielm soldiers! Capture and destroy!”

TIMELINE SIX

{Self-Identify} = ^Sam, ^Him, - ADDING - ^Metal Target

{Possible danger} = .25%

//Sprint.

//Exit building.

//Examining exterior.

{Location} = ^Ft. Bildine.

{Temperature} = ^42 degree Celsius.

//Krielm soldiers = ^Stationed on roof ^Heavily armed.

!! WARNING !! BULLETS INCOMING !!

“Lower your weapons humans. You are not my enemy.”

!! BULLETS INCOMING !!

//Critical decision making activated = ^Spare humans.

//Sprint.

{Destination} = ^Tepus Dock.

{Deadline} = ^04:11

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

JULY 2ND, 312 P.D.

2120

1 MINUTE EARLIER

“I MUST GO”

the shimmering robot says as if he’s going to be able to just walk out of here.

He starts moving forward forcing the twelve men to cock and ready their rifles to take him down at my command. Two blades emerge from the robot’s arms and sit atop the back of his fists like a couple of swords. Serrated on the inside, smooth on the outside and made of what appears to be pure titanium, they are possibly the finest looking blades I have ever seen. They appear to have come straight out of the metal on his arms as the metal forms around the base of the blade perfectly like putty.

“Lower your weapons humans,” the robot calmly says, “you are not my enemy.”

While taking a step back out of the room in fear, Thomas yells, “Drop your weapons now or we will fire on you!”

The robot stays perfectly still. “I must go.”

“He’s not dropping them!” Thomas still trying to be the big man, “Take him down!”

Bang! Bang! Bang!

I drop to the ground as dozens of bullets ricochet off the robot’s body and scatter about the room. I push my face into the ground as shattered glass and shards of metal rain down on my back from the broken light fixtures and destroyed skylight. Almost as quickly as the firing begins it is silenced followed immediately by the back of my head and shoulders being drenched in a thick liquid. The red ooze drips from my hair to the ground as I slowly push myself up to see each and every guard has been brutally decapitated by the robot’s long blades. The headless torsos tumble to the ground one by one as the heads come to a rest on the floor. As if

TIMELINE SIX

nothing had happened, the blades are sucked back into the arms of the robot with the metal closing over it to become one, smooth, solid piece again.

In attempt to not be decapitated myself, I hold my breath and stay perfectly still as the robot steps over my body and out of the room. My heart nearly beats out of my chest while the murderous, robotic man makes his way down the hallway toward the exit.

“Metal target leaving base!” Thomas cries into the communicator while cowering on the floor, “He’s decapitated twelve Krielm soldiers! Capture and neutralize!”

I push myself to my feet as a group of Krielm soldiers run pass the storage room, down the hallway, to the armory where they each grab themselves a gun.

Thomas keeps barking orders as if he is going to be the savior of the base, “Get to the roof! Don’t let him leave!”

Wiping the rest of the blood from my hair I turn to the half-wit, “Are you kidding me Thomas? He’s getting away! What kind of facility are you running here?”

“Top notch sergeant!” Thomas whines as he stands, “You have to understand, this is a special circumstance.”

“I’ll see to it that you never take charge over a base again! Now lead me to these damn lab coats who brought that thing here!”

Thomas hurries ahead of me down the hallway where we arrive at a small rusted door. What is he doing fiddling with these keys? Doesn’t he know which one?

“Today Thomas!” With the key barely finished turning I open the door the rest of the way with my foot to see a pack of brain heads all staring up at me. I grab the first person I see and lift him to his feet. “What the hell did you bring here?”

“I don’t know! I swear!” he cries.

I about punch the little twit when ballzy lab coat speaks up. “We only speak to General Jim,” he doesn’t even look to me or stand when he says it. Killing my men with a metal soldier is one thing, but disrespecting me at my own base?

I drop the kid to the ground while stepping up to the disrespectful lab-smut. “Your bionic warrior just did permanent damage out there by killing a dozen Krielm soldiers! You and your entire team are going to be pedaling until the day you die!”

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

"If you're interested, let me speak to General Jim."

I could shoot him and be completely in my rights. "Interested?" I grab him by his collar and pull him to his feet. "I'm interested in kicking your ass!"

He finally looks me in the eyes. "I'm willing to cut a deal."

Is this son of a bitch trying to make a sale? "My name is Sergeant Major Greer, I report directly to General Sebastian Jim. Whatever you have to say to him, you say to me."

"Get me a lot of energy and I can show you."

"Show me what?"

"What you're about to buy."

By the looks around the room, the other brain heads weren't in on the plan. "Follow me," I tell him. If he can give me one of these soldiers, he may just get out of this alive.

I follow Thomas through the mess hall to the corridor leading to the far end of the building followed by ballzy lab coat escorted by two armed guards. "Are we almost there or what Thomas?"

"Here it is." We arrive at yet another rusted over door leading to a storage room that holds several sets of shelves filled with old machines and computers that are no longer in use accompanied with knotted, twisted balls of wire. In the center of the room sitting on scattered, unorganized papers is a large doorway that leads nowhere with some strange generator sitting next to it, neither of which I'm interested in buying. "What the hell is this thing? I thought you were trying to sell me an indestructible man."

Lab coat enters the room. "No. Where's our power supply?"

Two of Thomas's men run in pulling a long cable connected straight to the Eitman output a few blocks away. Lab coat points to the machine where to plug it in and the men quickly follow the orders as if they are working for him now.

"Now get back. Get back!" lab coat yells, "Sergeant, I present Emergence-601.1993."

No guns. No blades. Not even maneuverable. How could he think the military would care about this machine? "Explain yourself."

TIMELINE SIX

"If you don't mind..." lab coat points to the guards in the room.

I shoo them away.

"And..." he points behind me to Thomas.

"Go on." I say

"But sir. I-"

"Go!"

Thomas reluctantly leaves the room and shuts the door behind him.

Now it's just the lab coat and myself in the room. I keep my hand on the pistol at my side as he fiddles with the computer screen attached to the machine. He lifts a box with a switch on it that leads to a platform on the machine while he takes a few steps toward the wall away from the platform. "Just in case, have your gun ready."

This brain head better not get me killed.

Switch.

The generator leading to the machine begins to hum, and then grow to a roar. The small flashes of light shooting from the empty doorway become bright strobes, forcing me to squint then turn away.

"I've seen enough! Turn it off!" I scream to him.

Unable to hear him and barely able to open my eyes, I read his lips 'just one more second'.

"No! Turn it off now!"

He ignores my orders as the entire room begins to shake from the strange machine. I go to grab the switch box from his hand but get quickly distracted by the room filling with an unbearably, bright light streaming from the doorway.

Flash

I'm blind! I'm blind! "What have you done?" This was his plan all along! "He's escaping! Get him!"

Wait... no, thank god! My vision begins to return as the generator's loud roar quiets to a hum and then becomes silent once again. Looking through the swirling stars in my vision I see the lab coat hasn't moved from his spot.

"What the hell was that? I told you to turn it off!"

"Look," he says pointing to the machine.

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

I face the complex doorway to see the silhouette of man standing on the platform that was empty just moments ago. He's not as tall as the robot or as bulky, but stands with confidence and authority.

"Hello," he steps from the machine revealing his eerily familiar face. "I am General Cameron C. Greer."

It's me. Well, me with a few extras years. He's unshaven, dirty and looks like he hasn't showered in weeks but I recognize him. Scars and dried blood cover his face while his hands appear rough and cracked from years of fighting by the looks of it. Even the pistol in his hand is identical to the one I hold in mine.

"You see sergeant?" lab coat says, "Do you see now what I've crea-"

Bang!

A bullet flies through lab coat's neck shooting blood against the wall and in my face. Lab coat falls to the ground holding his blood gushing wound. He squirms on the ground gasping for air. The duplicate, older me returns the smoking pistol to his holster. "You need my help and there isn't much time."

I don't know what is going on but I like this guy already.

TIMELINE SIX

JON HOLSTURN

JULY 3RD, 312 P.D.

0422

7 HOURS AND 2 MINUTES LATER

THE CURRENTS ARE STRONG TONIGHT

forcin' my boats to smack about in the water, nearly rippin' them from their restraints. I've lost two boats to a storm and I don't plan to lose another.

I am Jon Holsturn, owner of the best-kept and designed ships in the entire east. If you're fixin' to ship out for some deep sea fishin' you ain't gonna find a better place than Tepus Dock. Owned by the Holsturn family for nearly two centuries, we've had plenty of time to perfect our boats for the harsh waves of the Atlantic. Besides St. Srana owned by the military, this was the number one shippin' export to the west before the ties was cut. That was our hay day, shippin' tools and food to the anti-species until one day our biggest boat headin' over was sunk by them freaks leadin' to the great divide.

Now it's mostly just amateur fisherman and curious sailors using our inventory to never makin' it pass the divide thanks to a Krielm order to put tracking devices on the boats to make sure they ain't headed to the west. It costed my granddad nearly two hundred energy credits to get that done, which I got paid off a couple years ago, but we got 'em all in and installed like we was s'pose to. It's just me and my thirteen years son working here now and really that's all I could afford anyways. Just me and him waiting inside our little shack for the storm to pass so we can head out and check our holds.

"Dad! Dad!" he hollers to me looking out the window toward the storm, "There is someone by the boats!"

"What?" I push myself up to look where he's looking. Sure enough there's a shadowy figure makin' his way onto Cassandra. "Grab your bat!" I holler while cockin' my rifle and runnin' out in the rain.

The downpour of water from the dark skies makes it hard to see the man but the flashes of lightning every few seconds keeps me posted where he's going. "That's far enough!" I yell to the trespasser standing on my ship. Not knowin' the gun I hold, he continues to get Cassandra ready to sail. I fire a shot into the air. "Now I said that's enough! Get on off my boat before I shoot ya down!"

Apparently this dirt bag has no brains, otherwise he woulda thrown his hands up at the first shot.

"I have full right to shoot you down where you stand!" I yell at him but he still don't get off. This guy about tryin' and take off! My family didn't work this hard to be where we at by not pullin' the trigger.

Bang!

I fire a shot but I miss. I'm gettin' closer to him as he's already raisin' the sails. "I don't miss twice!"

Gotta clear shot now.

Bang!

Tink!

Whizz!

I duck recognizin' the sound of a ricocheting bullet when I hear it. I know I got em', but he must be wearing some bulletproof shirt or something.

"Dad, I got the bat!" my son is runnin' up to me ready to fight, but this guy is ready for a battle too.

"Get back junior! I'll handle this!" Getting' closer and with another flash of lightning I see some of his details. Not just a metal shirt, but metal everything. I don't think I'll get a shot off one in him. "What do you want here metal man? I can't let you take my ship!"

He doesn't answer as he gets the final sail up and ready.

"I say you can't take my ship!" I rush over and jump aboard before he can get the holds off.

Gettin' a good look at him I see his tall, bulky figure. This suit ain't nothin' someone threw together in their back yard. No, this is some military grade that I ain't never seen before.

TIMELINE SIX

"Dad, be careful!" my son worried about me stands by the ship.

This masked man stares me down, or at least that's what I think he's doin'. Can't see his eyes to be sure. "Now I say, stay back junior!" I yell to my son, "Head on back inside and call the Krielm."

"But I can help..."

"Get your ass inside and get them Krielm officials on the communicator!" I hear his little feet pitter off through the rain while the metal man walks toward me. Knowin' my rifle ain't doin' anyone no good I drop it. "Now metal man, my family has worked long and hard to keep this dock profitable. If we let every hoot and hanny come in here and take our ships, we'll be ruined."

"An escape boat. I need one." The first words I hear him say and I don't know what the hell he's talkin' bout. He speaks like he's gabbin' from a speaker but his tone is stern like a solider.

"A 'scape boat?"

"A small boat to bring aboard if this one fails."

"These boats are meant for fishin' and cruisin', soldier. They don't fail that easy if that's all you're planning."

"I'm going across the great divide and need to get to shore unnoticed."

I don't know who I'm talkin' to but he obviously ain't straight in the head if he thinks he's makin' it 'cross the Atlantic 'fore the Krielm stops him. "You know that's illegal? There's a trackin' device hidden in here that will let the Krielm know when you done get passed our borders. When that happens, they'll stop-"

"It's already been disconnected. Where is an escape boat?"

I'm not real sure what to do. I can't fight em' and I won't be able to stop him from takin' my boat, but I gotta try. Cassandra is damn near the fastest boat in my fleet. "Listen, if you wanna take it I can sell it to you for two thousand energy credits. That's the best you're gonna get outta me. Gotta deal?"

"I do not deal with your currency. This is a matter of national defense so if you do not tell me where the escape boat is I will find it myself, but be assured your use to me would become nonexistent."

I'm not gonna be able to stop or reason with this guy. "We have no escape boats," but lyin' to him I can still do.

"I know your inventory. You are required to have at least one, if not more here." Dammit. "I am on a tight schedule and must be leaving in no more than eight minutes and twenty-three seconds. It will take me two minutes and four to eighteen seconds to get the escape boat aboard if it's within sixty meters, which leaves six minutes and three seconds left to find where it is. You can speed this process along and do your race a great service by pointing me in the right direction."

Not willing to lose more inventory, I stay silent.

He grabs me by the waste, "Hey!" I yell out feeling my voice get a lot higher than I thought it could go. "What the hell do you think you're doing?" As if I was made of paper, I'm lifted off the deck and thrown into the air. The lightning flash lets me know how close I am to the surface as I splash down into the cold Atlantic nearly breaking my arm with the impact.

Deep below the surface I'm panickin'.

Where's up? I can't see nothin'!

I try swimmin' but don't know which way I'm goin'. I din't get enough air before hittin' so even floatin' won't tell me which way to go.

Lighting flash. There's up!

I swim toward the source of the light poppin' out just in time to see the metal man pulling one of the small boats off one of the bigger ones. I'm too far out in the current to stop him. Waves hit me one after another pushin' me back down then pullin' me back up.

Gaspin' for air and runnin' out of energy I hurry toward the shoreline but it's too late. The metal man has his 'scape boat' and is takin' off.

"Hey! Sto-" a wave interrupts my sentence.

"Dad! Dad! Are you alright?" Getting' to shore my son helps me out of the water in time for me to see my stolen ship disappear in the darkness.

I cough and shiver from the freezin' water drenchin' me from head to toe. "That son of a bitch said he was from the military. You got them on the communicator?" I ask him.

TIMELINE SIX

“They headin’ this way right now.”

“Good. I’ve got a few words for them.”

JON HOLSTURN

CHAPTER 4

THE WEST

TIMELINE SIX

GLIDER

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

0625

5 DAYS, 1 HOUR AND 52 MINUTES LATER

I WAIT.

He will be here soon and I'll be ready. I sit in front of the thick forest lining the coastline of Old Mexico where the sun rising will shine past him making him easy to see on the horizon of the Atlantic.

My name is Brady Eztuella or by most, Glider. I am an anti-specie with light blue skin, no hair and also a recruit in the anti-species ranks as an inventor. My best invention, obviously enough, is my glider which maxes out at three hundred and five kilometers per hour depending on the rider. It's exactly one point two five meters long, one point one meter wide and extremely light weight at only fifteen point eight kilograms when fully loaded and fueled up. Its defensive capabilities are missile deflectors, carbon fueled left and right boosters and an expanding front metal shield. Offense includes retracting two-meter titanium blades, forty round side turrets and four low range missiles among others. With the ability to fly at great heights and the added benefit of being manually portable, this piece of technology is highly sought after by the anti-species ranks. At this exact moment this high tech piece of equipment is merely a blue print in my basement, but the rise of humans in a year from now will cause the need for its creation.

Back in my old life I had a beautiful wife, Rebecca, who took care of the house and worked two jobs while our genius son, Elijah, was working hard to follow in his father's footsteps. He had even helped me design the glider I use now by adding the sensory lights in the back. They are alive today but in a few months the forceful hand of the humans will slaughter them down, which is why I am here. I came back through the doorway to find the destroyer and bring him down before he can succeed in his mission to destroy the anti-species ranks.

GLIDER

We as anti-species embrace the fact that we are no longer humans. We don't look the same, we don't think the same and if it wasn't for the speakers around our necks we wouldn't be able to talk the same. We don't care. Who would want to be human? Humans are destructive, humans are selfish, humans destroyed the Earth.

It's been two hundred and twenty-six years since the great departure from the east and a hundred and seventy years since communication between humans and anti-species were cut. The first attack was when our coastlines were bombed, destroying the growing city of Rykter for no more reason than the humans trying to keep us under their boot. Anticipating an invasion, we proved our strength by using one of our greatest advancements at the time, our long distance, curving light bombs. From four thousand, eight hundred kilometers away we were able to destroy a Krielm military ship that was bringing over the first wave of humans. Ties were cut and the humans didn't return, not until today.

I've never seen the destroyer before, but rumors spread this is where he first lands. After we found out he destroyed our thriving northeastern cities, my colleagues and I went into hiding and avoided all human contact. On our journey north to our underground bunker, where we stayed for nearly a decade, we came across the mangled leftovers of the destroyer. While working and experimenting in the bunker with the graphene off his body we found his weakness, a hertz rate that will unbind the bonds between the electric and magnetic fields turning the skin as pliable as paper. We were only able to recover a few bits after the explosion so the full effects on the hardware inside him are still unknown. I was able to create gloves that feed off the glider's power allowing me to have this hertz rate pulsing through my hands, meaning all I need to do is grab him and he will fail. These gloves also hide my mangled and hideous hands, which were badly wounded when trying to save my family so long ago. I've never tested them before on his actual body so who knows if they really work or not. If they are unsuccessful in entirely shutting down his computing then my electric spider will definitely finish the job.

It took me eight years to get to the doorway; eight years of running and planning to lead me to where I am. There is no chance the destroyer will get pass me

TIMELINE SIX

to the gulf today. Gayle, Bishop, Rebecca, Elijah and so many others are counting on me today so I cannot fail.

A black speck on the horizon. This must be him.

I step on my glider to begin ascension above the thick forest behind me and to get a clear shot at him. I put on my goggles to see that he drives a small motorboat that moves quickly through the crashing waves; one that I'm surprised was able to traverse the harsh conditions of the open ocean. Approaching quickly, I ready my side turret.

Fire!

The recoil pushes my glider back in the air but doesn't lose its target. Bullets pierce the boat's starboard side, forcing it to lean.

Warning! Missile incoming!

My glider sees it before I do, giving me just a half second to respond.

Left booster!

I dodge, feeling the missile fly pass my face headed toward the tree line behind me.

Time to go in for the kill. Taking a deep breath I push my foot forward engaging the rear thrusters sending me zooming toward him. My gloves vibrate from the energy coursing through them in addition to the adrenaline coursing through me. Being just an inventor, I've never actually fought in battle before so this is all new to me. Just a few meters away from him I realize his monstrous size, as he is nearly twice as tall as I am with the build of a superhero. Pushing aside my state of awe I continue at him giving him the chance to show off his quick reflexes as he jumps in the air forcing me to fly underneath him.

Warning! Anticipating rear attack!

I am able to flip 180 degrees and activate my front shield to block the barrage of bullets headed toward me from the turret of his own. His aim doesn't miss as he descends from his jump landing back on his sinking boat. Luckily my shield is able to withstand the harsh blasts of his bullets. I react quickly by arming missile one with my foot controls.

Fire!

GLIDER

The destroyer jumps to the side letting the boat take the full impact of the missile blowing it to pieces.

He's in the water now. Does he work in water?

I question no more as he emerges from the ocean like a projectile headed toward me. From his arms are two large blades pointed at me, ready to strike.

"Warning! Blade incoming!"

Hovering in the air I activate the front blades of my own and tilt the glider backwards. The sharp points of my glider's blades can't penetrate his metal skin without the gloves help, but he does get stuck in between them allowing me to halt his attack. Although no damage is done to him yet, I am able to pull him around as I flip and launch him back into the water below.

Not giving a beat, he flips around under the surface and launches himself at me again.

Warning! Blade incoming!

I try to dodge but he is too quick. His right arm blade penetrates under my ribs as his feet plant firmly on my glider. Being face-to-face with the destroyer proves all the rumors I had heard about him are true. At first I could never imagine one being doing as much damage as they said he did, but now that I see him, now that I feel his blade stuck deep into my body, I can't imagine any anti-specie force ever being able to bring him down. Feeling the blade push through my skin and intestines sends an unbearable amount of pain throughout my entire body. Looking through the thick group of twirling stars covering my vision I see his other blade headed toward my face.

I grab his arm with my gloved hand just in time forcing him still. The hertz rate flows through my gloves, into his body, through his blade and back into me. With myself convulsing and losing consciousness from both the power of my gloves and the half-meter blade stuck in my side, I force myself toward the front of the glider away from him freeing myself. Using my secondary controls at the nose of the glider I head back toward land still holding onto his frozen body to keep him from moving.

TIMELINE SIX

I bring him high above the forest floor and prepare for the finishing move. Finally, it's all about to pay off! I engage the electric spider I have implanted in the glider between my feet. With his graphene bonds weakened it should be able to crawl into his mainframe and shut him down from the inside.

Bang!

The device is about to enter through his foot when I'm hit! Not by the destroyer but from down below. My glider tilts in the air forcing the spider to fall and tumble into the thick trees below.

Why didn't I magnetize that?

Bang!

I'm hit again!

What is going on?

I lose grip of the metal man letting his unconscious body tumble off the glider and slam to the ground in the thicket of trees below.

I would stay and fight but I'm dripping with blood and I won't make it much longer, especially if he has back up. I must get north and warn the ranks in case he wakes up. I must go back and save my family.

CHAPTER 5

THE STORY OF TYRAN PART 1

TIMELINE FOUR

TYRAN

TYRAN

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

0625

MINUTES EARLIER

I GATHER LEÑA

at this time of day to get away from heat. Too caliente in middle of day. Also, the familia is back in village still sleeping so I get time with Carleena, mi amor.

I am Tyran of fifteen years. My skin is like that of the faded grass with long hair growing from top of head far and spread out leaving mostly bald. I have two hermanos, one hermana, a madre and a padre back en la casa in the village called La Palomar. Helping me gather leña is Carleena, my one for two years. We are madly in love and plan to be married when she is sixteen and I seventeen. We are not allowed this time alone together because our age, but we sneak away while everyone sleeps.

There are only a few hundred in village but that is all we need. No city lights, no crime, no pain. Just familia. We do not hablar with our mouths instead with our hands. Our language is simple and easy as only so much can be done with fingers. We've heard of those who can speak with mouths, but we are not able. Padre says it's a blessing from Olena, the high one who protects us from the pain of the rest of the world.

When the unloading of anti-species came hundreds of years ago we were surprised. Humans brought and left them all here. We do not know why and did not ask. We kept to ourselves. When my greats used the land a group called Anti-Species Retaliation made campamaneto with us. They brought with them light tools and weapons that hurt our peoples' way. They use La Palomar for tests to try and create new warrior for their battles. We didn't want to help. They forced us.

One of my greats, Alejandro, had liquid put in his body through a needle. They keep the liquid in pequeño containment that not even they touch with bare hands but they thought it okay to put in my great's body. This made him very ill. The results they wanted did not come and when the testing continued, the familias

TIMELINE FOUR

became angry. The village drove the retaliation away with what little weapons they had and were able to stop them from continuing the tests and experimentos. This was centuries ago and they never returned.

My great got better and ended up producing the superpowers the retaliation look for. The powers did not only come to him but was passed down through the generations to me by way of Olena. My other hermanos and hermanas have it too but they can't control it like I can. My madre and padre say 'do not use it so it can leave our blood' but we sometimes do. It is fun and doesn't hurt. I see no harm in keeping it around, plus Carleena is impressed by it. If it was really given to us from Olena it could not be bad.

"Do it again," she'll word with her hands as I use the power to jump high into the air. Much higher than anyone else outside the familia.

I call them paredes de la electricidad or electricity walls. Nothing can penetrate when full charged and only charged when touching my skin. By thinking hard they appear from palms or feet and once away from skin they fade away. La paredes do not like other parades. When one touches other they push away from each other with great force. This gives me ability to, on palms, push them far distances for defensa and ataque or, on feet, jump high into the air, move fast and sometimes even fly. My hermanos would shoot them at me and I would defend with my own when our madre and padre not around. We used them to have fun but it seems to scare some of the village. When madre was in el jardin my padre say he was able to change their shapes from a flat wall to balls and other designs. I never see it but he say I could do it too if mind strong enough.

My familia does not believe I have a strong mind but they are wrong. They like to make fun when I in village because I am the youngest one. I love them all but I wish they show me more respect like I deserve. I do a lot for the familia they don't see yet. They still think I'm just a little kid.

None of that matters now as I far away from village with Carleena. We kiss too much and not gather enough wood. "We need to get back to work," I sign to her.

"Just a few more minutes." She knows I can't say no.

TYRAN

I push her against the tree and kiss her hard. My madre says I am too young to be in love but I'm the same age as when her and padre met so I don't believe her. I'm destined to be with this one.

Boom!

The ground shakes. "What was that?" she holds me in fear from the sound of a great explosion.

Only a few meters away heat is felt as if the ground had opened up to reveal the fires of the volcanoes. We walk over to see the trees all knocked down with the ground negro in the middle.

"What happened here?" she asks me.

"I don't know," I sign back, "it looks like some kind of explosion."

"It's Olena! She's angry with our actions!" She has always been afraid of Olena's rage with our disobedience to our parents. I do not believe Olena is as harsh as they say and if she was, definitely not this harsh.

"We don't know that. It may just be-"

Whizz!

Something flies high above our heads toward the village. It looks like a man on some sort of flying machine. He holds something. Another man perhaps? A man much bigger than I thought existed. He drops him to the ground. It falling, I am sure it is man. He is in a silver suit and the one who drops him is an anti-specie like me, but with blue skin instead of green.

Boom!

The ground shakes even more than last time and the heat is nearly unbearable.

Carleena silently screams as she rushes back to the village. Why did we travel so far away? Olena por favor, let my familia be okay. I hold Carleena's hand as we rush through the thick trees. We are almost there.

I see it before she does, our village of La Palomar, or what used to be. It's all gone. Negro with fuego and smoke. Everything in all directions flattened. What could have done this?

TIMELINE FOUR

The flying man leaves but I've gotten a good look at him. If I could have reacted faster I would have shot him down with my paredes of electricidad. Why has he done this?

I use la paredes to protect my bare feet from the burning ground but Carleena has handmade shoes so she can walk freely. I must travel far to get to the middle of blast but I see what has caused it. It's the silver man blown apart in several pieces. I find the faceless mask of the man where my home used to sit.

Por qué? We never hurt anyone.

Carleena stares down where her home was to see nothing there now. Nothing but ash.

I need to be strong for her. Olena, please give me the power to be strong.

I walk to her and try holding her but she swipes me away. She doesn't cry or shed a single tear. She stares with blank eyes.

"We need to go," I try and sign to her, "we need to get the one who did this!"

But she does not look to me to see what I say. She does not notice me at all as if I not even here.

"Por favor," I place my hand on her shoulder.

Now come the tears but not only from her.

"We will find the one who did this to our familias," I sign, "Olena will guide us."

She falls to her knees on the burning ground and weeps.

JULY 18TH, 312 P.D.

1312

10 DAYS, 6 HOURS AND 42 MINUTES LATER

With no tracks to follow and no one to tell us if we're going the right way, Carleena and I travel north hopelessly in search for the flying man. This is the furthest either of us have been from home and by far the longest either of us have been away from familia. The land out here is empty in all directions with no homes, no trees or any signs of life at all besides small plants here and there. The ground is mush from the

nearby lake filling the ground below us while the horizon is filled with a thick fog of dust, not letting us see more than a few hundred meters ahead. Food and clean aqua are hard to come by so we've had to resort to eating sticks and brush we find on the way, which has made our mouths bleed and our stomachs turn. The rain is slightly toxic making us sick, but it keeps us alive for now.

"I can't do it!" Carleena signs to me falling to her knees while I try to chew up some green from a nearby plant.

She sits holding a small, half eaten stick with still a little green on it. "Carleena, we have to keep moving," I sign back.

"I can't! I'm done!"

"Please, I can't do this without you." I crouch down by her holding her rough, cracking hands.

Looking around at the empty landscape I am not sure if she has lost hope or I hope for the impossible. We've never heard of another village out here or if there even is one anywhere. The flying man moved so fast. We could never catch him. Olena must be punishing us, so why even try?

I sit with Carleena, still holding her hand staring off into the nothingness.

Dehydrated, starving and barely able to breath, it does seem meaningless to try to continue. If mi madre were here she would be telling me everything was all right. Mi padre would force me to my feet and tell me to man up and keep moving. Mi hermana would hug me and keep me positive while mi hermanos would challenge me, giving me the motivation to keep moving.

I miss them so much.

Placing my head on Carleena's shoulder I cry dry tears. I try to imagine her as mi madre, but reality won't leave my mind.

Carleena frantically taps my shoulder for my attention. She points into the thick fog ahead being cleared by the wind. A large, square shadow grows from the ground far away. An odd shaped mountain or cliff side, maybe? With the fog clearing more of the tall shadows are seen. These aren't made from Olena.

Carleena signs to me, "It's people! Come on!"

TIMELINE FOUR

Olena has not forgotten us! We stand and run through the mush as fast as can without tripping.

Nearing the gigante village we see fans towering into the clouds. They not spinning enough to cool anything down or clear the fog, but the village still has them spinning for some reason. Grande stone homes tower as large as the pointless fans lining the border of the village. Entering the large village I hold Carleena's hand tight to make her feel safe. This is all new to us and I not sure if they will be kind.

"You lost?"

A voice? I've never heard a voice before.

"I say, you lost?"

I turn to see un hombre behind us. He is a green color and is lucky to grow a few more hairs on the head than I. I sign back to the man but he doesn't understand.

"Don't you got a voice box, son?"

I'm not sure what he says. I do not know his language.

"How bout you little lady? Can you speak?"

Carleena looks to me for a translation but I'm not sure what to tell her. I sign back to him that I don't understand but he can't understand me either.

"You're obviously not from around here," he walks up to us. "You two have been through some troubles, huh? Let's get you to the hospital and get ya looked at." He walks passed us and motions for us to follow, "Well come on."

I sign to him that we need aqua, but he still doesn't understand.

"Come with me to get your voice box then we can talk. They're free around here."

He continues to walk and with him being the only one helping us, I pull Carleena along to follow. We make our way through the foggy streets where a few other people walk as well. Some of them green colored and some blue and most without hair.

The kind stranger leads us to a gran building in the centro of the village that disappears in the cloud of fog above our head. Entering the door we are blinded by the bright, white lights inside. Ten or twelve people sit around on metal chairs

looking ill. Some read from thin paper books while others hold their head and stomachs in pain.

Carleena rips from my hand and runs over to the wall where there stands a containment of aqua. She tries to get the aqua but can't figure out how to pour it. I run over to help her but can't figure it out either without just destroying it and drinking out of it like a bowl.

"You've never been in a hospital before?" the hombre says pulling a lever for the aqua to come out into a little cup below.

Carleena throws the cup out of the way and puts her mouth under the running aqua bringing all the attention in the room to us. She pulls away to catch her breath letting me fill up on the delicious liquid. So clean and so delicious!

"Uhm, excuse me?" a mujer sitting behind a wooden box hollers to us. We don't listen.

The aqua runs down my face and drips onto the floor while my stomach painfully stretches after so long with nearly nothing in it. Carleena pushes me out of the way and returns to filling up her own stomach.

"Hey you two! There are cups for that!" the mujer yells to us again.

"They been through a lot ma'am," the hombre speaks for us as I get back to the aqua. "Looks like they ain't had water in days."

"But they are just children! What have they been up to?" I don't understand a word they say. I only focus on drinking.

"I'm not sure. Can we get them a doctor or a nurse or somethin'? They both had some blood in their mouths and burnt clothes. The boy don't even have shoes on."

"Of course." The mujer puts a small box to her mouth and speaks into it, "Do we have a room open for a couple wanderers? They don't have voice boxes and seem to be in pretty rough shape."

"Send them to room 305," the box replies.

"Okay, sir? Bring them down the hallway and take a right to the stairs. Go up two floors and you'll see on the right a room number 305. They will get the assistance they need there."

TIMELINE FOUR

“Thank ya,” the hombre replies, “Okay you guys, come with me.” He grabs my shoulder and points me down a hallway while trying to do the same with Carleena. She throws his hand away and continues to chug the aqua. “Come on now. They’ll have some water for you up there I’m bettin’.”

I can see everyone here means well to us so I pull her arm to come with.

Entering room ‘305’ there are two chairs and a bed. All around the room are strange looking light tool and machines that I’ve never seen before. Carleena nervously stays outside.

“It’s okay,” I sign to her, “they are here to help us.” I hope.

She enters and we have a seat in the room with the strange hombre who brought us here.

“I’m Flint by the way,” he says to us. We still unsure what he is trying to tell us so neither of us try to communicate back. “So sign language? That’s how your people learned to communicate without voice boxes?”

I hold Carleena’s hand.

“I’m not trying to scare you guys. I guess if you don’t know what I’m saying this could be a little weird. Hell, for all you know I’m talking about cutting you up and eating you guys.”

“Uhm, what did I just walk in on?” a mujer enters the room. She is slightly bluer and holds a yellow rope in her hands.

“Oh nothing. These two can’t understand a word we say.”

“Hello,” the mujer bends down to speak to us, “I’m nurse Thahni. I hear you’re looking for a voice box?”

“Yep,” the hombre continues his gibberish, “I think they’ve never talked before. They at least don’t understand us.”

“Let me just get a measurement.” The mujer comes toward my throat with a yellow rope. What is she doing? Is she trying to choke me?

I jolt back with Carleena putting her body in front of me to protect my neck. How emasculating.

“Whoa, whoa,” the mujer tries to calm me, “it’s okay. I’m just getting a measurement for your voice box.”

The hombre places his hand on my shoulder telling me 'it's okay'. They both seem nice, so I stop moving. Carleena slowly inches away allowing the rope to be wrapped around my neck.

The mujer writes something down on some paper then wraps the same yellow rope thing around Carleena's neck. Nervous, Carleena doesn't break eye contact with me. The mujer walks away and opens a small door with hundreds of little boxes like the ones they have wrapped around all their own necks. Walking back she wraps the orange straps of one of the boxes around my throat. "Now you're going to feel a little sting," she says.

The hombre puts his hand on my shoulder again. What did she say?

I don't know what she does, but a sharp pain is sent through the back of my head. I try to jump up but the hombre holds me down. "It's okay man. That's just the neuro whatever that reads what you're trying to say outta your head." His words sound like babbling nonsense.

Carleena pushes the mujer back and holds onto me. I grab Carleena's hand letting her know everything is okay.

"Can you speak? 'Ahhhh'. Speak?" the mujer asks.

Ahhhh? Make that sound? How? I open my mouth.

Nothing.

"You got it man. 'Ahhhh'. Try it again."

"Ah." I hear it! I heard my voice! It wasn't much but it was a voice.

Carleena smiles, having heard my voice for the first time.

"Great!" the mujer is excited for me, "Now you."

Understanding everything that is going on, Carleena sits back and willingly lets the mujer hook the box up to her neck. She jolts with the stinging in the back of her head as well, but immediately tries to make noise of her own.

"Ah," she does it too!

She spoke! I'm not sure if it meant anything but something came out of her that I could hear for the first time! I hug her unable to contain my excitement.

I only wish mi madre could hear it too.

"What are your plans now?" the hombre asks something.

TIMELINE FOUR

I look to Carleena then back to him, letting him know I don't understand.

"Right, right. How about you two come to my house for a meal. I'm sure you could use it." He stands, "Well come on."

AUGUST 24TH, 3 12 P.D.

1225

1 MONTH, 5 DAYS, 22 HOURS AND 48 MINUTES LATER

Flint, the man who helped us, has been nice enough to let us live with him for past few weeks while we figure out what to do next. Thanks to the language barrier, we have not been able to explain to him exactly what happened to our families, but about the twentieth time he asked I try and draw him a picture. I think the flying man and the metal suit confuse him, but he understood our families being killed by an explosion.

His house, connected to several other houses, is small and is at the end of a long street that is a few kilometers away from city. He has let Carleena and I take the living room, but because we are young he still has us sleeping in different areas. Flint's favorite thing to do is drink and talk to us. Sometime it seems like he has forgotten that we can't understand him because he will keep talking at us so long as he still has the alcohol to drink. We had alcohol in village but my parents made sure we never touched it as it makes people stupid and disoriented, which is very clear to see with Flint. He also has made it a normal routine to bring mujeres home and take them to his bedroom. Some nights he will bring two back with him, but when that happens they always appear to have been in some sort of accident or have horrible health issues. There have been a few mornings when I will see a mujer leave his bedroom followed by un hombre or two. He likes to pretend that he was doing nothing sinful to those mujeres, but Carleena and I are smarter than that.

"Hello, I am Tyran," I say.

When he's not at job or with his sin partners, he is helping us work on speaking with our voice boxes.

"And..."

"I am from the south."

"Good," he pats me on the back. "Now Carleena?"

Carleena steps up, "hello, I am Carleena."

"Where are you from?" he asks her.

"I am from La Palomar."

"Great job!"

I'm sure this guy isn't a real teacher for language, but he seems to be helping a lot.

"Oh, man. I gotta go," he starts, "be sure to keep practicing your speaking. I'll be back from work in a few hours so when I get home we'll try some new words."

Everyday when he leaves Carleena and I leave too. Not used to being under roof all day we wander the city to see what we are missing. In our adventuring in the city we have found that we are in Roria, which was founded two hundred years ago by first anti-species brought to the west. People here mostly keep to themselves except for people like Flint, but he seems a little special and not so much in good way. I like him and am thankful for everything he does but he doesn't act like everyone else here. Most people walk with their heads down and mouths shut, but he has no problem making conversation with anyone and everyone he meets, which I'm finding most people don't like.

Carleena and I try to talk to each other with our voice boxes but we speak so much faster with our native language while we walk down the street.

"Ooh, want to go in the antique store?" she signs to me.

"We've already been in there and still have no moneys. I don't think they like that," I say, not wanting to cause any issues.

"Just to look around?"

"What's that?" Looking down the street there are two men in uniforms setting up a table. The uniforms look oddly similar to the same one the flying man had been wearing. "Do you think he could be one of them?"

"What are you talking about?" she asks.

"The flying man! That could be him right there!"

"I don't think-

TIMELINE FOUR

I don't wait for her to finish as all the pain and frustration boils back inside me. I must find out! The electricity power, which I haven't used in long time, circles around the tips of my fingers.

Sprinting down the sidewalk I arrive at the table where they have just set up.

"Hello son, looking to sign up for the ranks?" It's not him.

"Ranks?" I don't understand much of what he said, but I've heard of the ranks. It's some sort of anti-species force.

"Admiral Glider is pulling together forces from all the west to prepare for the human invasion in a few months. Your service will help out your fellow anti-species and the continuation of our race. Can we count on you?"

I'm getting better with the language but still not sure what he means.

"What's your name son?" the other man speaks up.

Name. "Tyran."

"Well, Tyran, can we count on you?"

He hands me a pen for safekeeping. I place it in my pocket.

"Whoa, we're gonna need that back," he says. I do not know these words.

Carleena catches up to me. "Tyran!" with my name being one of the only things she can say with her voice, she finishes her thought with her fingers, "What are you doing? We don't need to keep looking for the flying man. We have a home here. We are learning a new language and a new way of life. I think it's time to let it go."

"Yo kid," the uniformed man tries to speak to me again, "that's our only pen."

I ignore his gibberish. I sign back to her, "We can't just give up! That was our familia! That was everything we've ever known! Don't you miss your friends? Your mom, your dad? Have you just forgotten what happened?"

"Of course I didn't! They meant everything to me, but getting revenge isn't going to bring them back. I think the only way to get pass this is by moving on. What would your mom want?"

She's right. My mom wouldn't be asking me to find her killer; she would just want me to be happy. It's just hard for me to let go of all the anger I feel. Looking in

TYRAN

her eyes I see that staying here rather than finding the flying man means a lot to her. "Okay." I hold her hand as we walk away.

"Kid! Kid, our pen!" the uniformed man wishes us luck.

SEPTEMBER 12TH, 312 P.D.

2330

19 DAYS, 10 HOURS AND 58 MINUTES LATER

It's been a few months since Carleena and I have moved to Roria where we live with our friend Flint and he has been very accommodating by giving us a place to sleep and continuing to teach us more of the language.

"My name is Tyran. I am fifteen years and live in Roria with my girlfriend Carleena and my friend Flint. I work at the H2O treatment plant where I am paid less than I deserve but enough to keep me coming back for more."

"Good job, Tyran!"

My job, that I've had for the past few weeks, is time demanding but fairly easy. I am responsible for making sure the water vats are cleaned during their rotation cycles and the pipes are completely rinsed after their washing. My schedule is from midnight to ten in the morning, five days a week. Flint says that's a lot of hours but it helps since Carleena doesn't have a job. Flint only asked me to try and get one but didn't ask Carleena for some reason. I guess because she is a girl or something.

"Now Carleena..." he leads her on to speak.

"My name is Carleena. I am fifteen as of a week ago and am unemployed. I live here in Roria with Tyran and Flint where I am taken care of. I miss my mom and dad but life is going well. Thank you Flint for taking us in."

"That was amazing Carleena!" Flint always seems to cheer on Carleena more than me. I guess he's taking this 'father figure' position very seriously as my padre would do the same thing by talking down my brothers and I to make us work harder but speak very well about my sister to help her self-esteem.

I miss them so much but try not to think about it. I know this is Olena's plan.

TIMELINE FOUR

I look at the clock, "Oh, I must go now or work will be late for me."

"Or I will be late for work," Flint corrects me.

"Or I will be late for work." I grab my bag of tools given to me by my job and head out the door.

SEPTEMBER 13TH, 312 P.D.

0735

8 HOURS AND 10 MINUTES LATER

I luckily was able to get off early this morning as the Roria health officials inspected the treatment plant and none of the workers can be near the equipment when that is happening. Since I would only have a few more hours and my work was mostly done for the day they told me to head home. It's challenging at work some days, as I don't know everything they say to me and that makes both them and me frustrated. I think that's the real reason I'm being sent home, I would just make the inspection people annoyed when they tried to ask me questions.

Walking inside Flint's home where I would usually find Carleena sleeping is just her pillow and blanket on the floor. I'm used to lying down with her when I get home before Flint wakes up. I check to see if she is in the restroom but the light is off. I can't imagine her doing her business in the dark.

"Mmm, oh, mmm" Carleena? What is she doing in Flint's room?

I crack the door open and lose my grasp on my tool bag. It smashes to the floor forcing Flint and Carleena's lips apart from each other.

They couldn't have been kissing each other.

She quickly covers up her exposed chest with the blanket.

They couldn't have been kissing.

"What... what is going on?" I see what is going on, but I don't believe it. There must be a reasonable explanation.

"Ah damn, Tyran!" Flint reaches under the covers, maybe scratching his calf? I can't believe he is pulling his pants back up under there. Why would they be off? "You're not supposed to be home for another few hours."

"I, uhm, got off early. What's going on?"

"It's nothing babe," Carleena says nervously, "he teaching me some new stuff."

"Yeah," Flint tries to support her lie, "this is what we Rorians do to, uhm, congratulate people on a job well done. Good job Carleena!"

"Why naked?"

No quick answer from either of them.

She was mi amor. We were supposed to be married. And she is cheating on me? She has sex with another man? This wasn't supposed to happen! None of this was supposed to happen!

"What is going on?" I scream with my voice for the first time.

I feel the electricidad coursing down my arm. I haven't used this in months, but now I can't seem to stop it. "Tyran..." Carleena tries to calm me down. There is no calming me down now.

"What the hell is that?" The electricidad circles around my palms and grows larger, scaring Flint, as it should.

"Tyran! Don't!" Carleena knows what I can do and is fearful of it, as she should be.

"Don't tell me what to do!" I thought most of my emotion died along with the death of my family but I was wrong. I feel as upset and angry as the day they all died.

"Please, sit and we talk about this," Carleena says.

"Yeah man," he's trying to speak to me. Why is he trying to speak to me! "Just chill."

It's too late. It's out of my control now!

I lift my hand shooting a wall of electricidad at Flint's face.

I wish this was strong enough to break bones.

One after another, I fire at him! It doesn't kill him but it's bruising him up and forcing his head to slam against the wall behind him over and over again. He tries getting out of the way but I'm too quick for him.

TIMELINE FOUR

“Tyran, stop!” Carleena yells to me but all I can hear is my heartbeat pounding in my head. She jumps out of bed with only her underwear on. Underwear I hadn’t even seen yet. She grabs my hand to stop me but it was a mistake.

With my other hand I shoot her against the wall.

The electricidad stops as she drops to her knees. They both bleed and moan in pain.

What was I thinking? I didn’t come here to make a life in Roria. I came here to find the flying man. I do not belong here.

“Tyran,” Carleena tries to get my attention while I walk out of the door to leave, “I’m sorry. This wasn’t supposed to happen like this”

How dare she try to speak to me!

I leave to join the ranks and to find the flying man.

TYRAN

CHAPTER 6

THE FIRST ENCOUNTERS

TIMELINE SIX
ALEX

SAM

SAM

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

0819

2 MONTHS, 4 DAYS, 23 HOURS AND 7 MINUTES EARLIER

//POWERING ON...

//Connecting to artificial intelligence...

//Connection failed.

//Activating BU consciousness...

//Metacognition filter failure.

Where am I?

//Reconnecting to nerves...

//Connection failed.

I can't move.

//Reconnecting to nerves...

//Connection failed.

//Reconnecting to nerves...

//Connection failed.

Hello? What is going on?

//Connecting to hippocampus...

//Connection failed.

//Activating luminance censor...

//Activating chromo sensors...

!! WARNING !! ANTI-SPECIE PRESENT !!

What the hell is that?

Is that an anti-specie? An anti-specie child no more than thirteen years. The anti-species are much smaller than humans so it's hard to tell his exact age. He wears the uniform of an anti-specie's military person. Why is he sitting next to me?

Hey!

Nothing. I can't speak.

TIMELINE SIX

Hey! Hey! Hey!

{Anti-specie} = "Are you alive?"

He's talking to me.

!! WARNING !! ANTI-SPECIE PRESENT !!

Yes! Help me!

"What?"

He heard me say something. Noise is coming out. "Can you hear me?"

"Yes," he replied.

Yes! "Where am I?" I ask.

"Who are you?"

He didn't hear my question. "I don't know. I don't know where I am."

"Can you get out of that suit?"

!! WARNING !! ANTI-SPECIE PRESENT !!

I struggle but can't feel any part of me. "I don't know. I can't move."

"I tried to get it off you to check on you, but I couldn't."

"You couldn't?"

"I can't find anywhere to try and get it off you. It looks like one big piece."

//Manually connecting to nerves...

What the hell is that? Why are words going in front of my eyes? "Can you at least get these goggles off me?"

"You're not wearing goggles. It's all a part of this helmet thing you have on."

!! WARNING !! ANTI-SPECIE PRESENT !!

I wish that would turn off.

//Disconnecting from Anti-Species Detection Warning.

Is that all it took? It must be neurologically connected or something. "You're an anti-species?"

"Yes."

"Do you know how I got here?"

"You were dropped by the flying man."

"The flying man?" I ask.

"The man on the glider. You don't remember?"

"No. I don't really remember anything. I think there was something with a boat? I don't know." Strange memories of death and war float around my memory but nothing is clear.

"I saved you. He had connected a bomb to you or something and you landed on my village with it. You, along with all my family and friends died."

I'm right here. I obviously didn't die. "So how are we talking right now?"

"Like I said, I saved you."

"But you said 'I died along with your village.'"

//All nerves connected.

//Allowing access.

My hands, I can feel them! My feet, they're there too! I push myself up to stand.

"You did blow up," he continues to explain as he stands with me.

It's taking me a second to get my equilibrium and find my balance. I need to get this heavy suit off me.

The kid continues, "I had come back in time to stop it from happening and to kill the flying man with my bare hands."

I'm getting claustrophobic. "I can't breath! You gotta help me get this suit off."

"I tried. I can't."

I struggle to find a button or a seal or something to remove this thing. I'm getting hot. "Please, get it off of me!"

{Stress} = ^64%.

//Releasing endorphins.

Why the hell are there words in front of my eyes? Simultaneously with the words scrolling up and out of sight I feel a strange sense of relaxation. The claustrophobia is relieved.

"Are you okay?" he asks.

"Yeah. I'm okay now." This suit has some insane abilities if it can just relieve stress like that. Wait... "Did you say you came back in time?"

"About a year from now I find the time machine and come back. Yes."

Okay? This guy is obviously crazy. Then again, I'm pretty confused myself.

TIMELINE SIX

"Do you want to help me?" he asks.

"What?"

"Get the flying man. He was trying to kill you and I won't be able to take him on myself."

"I can't. I need to get home. I need to find out what's going on."

"Where's home?"

"I..." my memory is completely shot. I don't know where I am or where I'm supposed to be, "I don't know."

"What about if you help me get the flying man, then I'll help you find your way home after your memory returns. Sound good?"

"I... uhm..." I have a strong feeling that I should not trust this kid. He is an anti-specie after all but he doesn't seem to know that I am human. I don't want to travel with an anti-specie child, but it will be good to have a guide in this unfamiliar land. On top of that, I feel an unrelenting sensation that this is where I'm supposed to be. "Okay, sure. I can help you."

{Additional objective uploaded} = ^Get the flying man.

There's those damn words again. "What do you call yourself?" I ask.

"You can call me Tyran. How about you?"

{Possible names} = ^Sam. ^Him. ^Metal Target.

Hmm. "I guess you can call me Sam."

"Okay, Sam. Follow me."

//Heading north...

What can I possibly be doing here? I need to get home and not be on this make believe mission with a child. Flying man? This kid is too old to believe in superheroes.

GLIDER

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

1244

4 HOURS AND 25 MINUTES LATER

THE BLOOD POOLS AROUND MY FEET

by the time I fly toward the gates of Dyrith; this is the first place the destroyer will attack. If I can get word to the troops in time we may be able to bring him down right here, that is if he ever wakes up from that fall in the jungle.

I hold tight to my side to keep as much blood inside me as I can, but I find the effort less than effective. The pain has not gotten any more tolerable as the fierce wind against my body keeps the wound open for debris and insects in the air, to which there is plenty. I had to stop my travel to pull a mosquito from the wound that could have been confused for a bowling ball given the intense pain it caused me. I find myself losing energy and the ability to think straight as I cross the city limits.

Dyrith isn't a large town but it is known for its entertainment and not the family friendly type. Laws here are enforced but seem lax as clothes are optional and drug use is rampant. Not many people here pursue a life of science, instead live for fun and thrills, as noticeable by the countless bars, strip clubs and hookah lounges lining the streets. In the center of town sits the Dyrith Community Center where the provost lives. That is where I'm headed.

The streets are curved and covered in holes and cracks as if never worked on since their construction. Main Street is narrow with the buildings protruding far past or further back than the one next to it causing the sidewalks to be built in a zigzag formation.

"Shrakin' ride bro-han! How 'bouts a lift?" a drunk man yells to me reaching up trying to touch my glider as I fly past. My blood flies off the glider and onto his face forcing him away from me. *"Hey you jack-wad!"*

My vision is fading, head is swimming, and on top of that I'm losing control of my glider. I won't be any good to my people if I die before I get to the center of town.

TIMELINE SIX

I need to stop by the hospital to have this blade wound looked at before I lose too much blood and pass out. My glider lands roughly to the ground nearly throwing me off while bringing all attention toward me. I stumble off my footholds and bump into several citizens before coming to a stop against the wall of a nearby building.

"Aye! Someone get the doc out here!" I hear a voice yell from somewhere around me.

I reach for my glider but I can't tell which of the two I'm seeing is mine. I've lost too much blood and don't know if I'm going to make it. I can barely make out the town folk running up to help me. I see the hand of a teenager reaching toward me and then

black.

2231

9 HOURS AND 47 MINUTES LATER

Where am I?

Some sort of hospital by the looks of it.

I lift the blanket covering my body to see my wound has been healed. Barely even a scratch there now.

What time is it? How much time have I wasted?

I get out of bed only to be pulled back down by magnetic bands wrapped around my wrists. My hands are bare without my gloves on revealing my disfigured and discolored fingers to the world.

Beeeeep!

The door opens and the doctor rushes in, "Well hold on there big fella! You had a lot of blood loss and were really dehydrated. You can't be up gettin' outta bed quite yet. Now we got all your fluids right where they're s'pose to be, but we wanna check them brain waves make sure you're good. Can you try and use your voice box?"

"I need to get out of here!"

"Good, good. Now try moving your toes."

GLIDER

I lean up out of bed just far enough before the magnets can be activated. "There is an attack coming! We're all in great danger! You must let me out of here so I can speak to the provost immediately!"

"You're not goin' anywhere buddy. You've obviously had a pretty bad bump on the head so I'll go and prep the brain scanner to get you out of here as soon as we can. We'll also see if we can't do something 'bout those hands of yours because those are something out of a monster story." The doctor turns to walk out of the room.

"You don't understand! He'll be here any minute! We're all going to die!" This can't be happening!

The doctor exits and shuts the door behind him.

What kind of things do they do in this backwards ass hospital that they would need these kinds of restraints? If I had my gloves I would be able to tare these wristbands right off.

My gloves! My glider! Where are they?

"Doctor! Doctor!"

No response.

I step out of bed onto the floor to feel myself get sucked back down.

Beeeeep!

This time I'm unable to move my arms away from the metal arm bars.

The doctor walks back in, "Now sir, you're going to have to stay in bed." He holds a syringe in his hand. "I'm going to give you some nice beddy-time juice to knock you out. Alright? When you wake up, you'll have your brain pictures and be A-Okay."

He leans in to inject me but he is stopped with my legs wrapping around his neck and pulling his face into the metal arm bar next to me. He drops the needle on the bed and tries to push himself back up. With my legs grasped tightly around his neck I slam him back into the arm bar, this time leaving a trail of blood from his nose.

"Nurse!" his high pitch scream pierces my ears.

One more face plant to the bar renders him unconscious forcing him to fall asleep on top me.

TIMELINE SIX

Without delay a troop of nurses and doctors run in to see what is going on. With my hands still attached to the arm bars I grab the syringe the doctor dropped next to me, and with just enough slack, I'm able to inject the first person that tries to touch me. The nurse falls fast asleep and drops to the ground like a crumbled statue. A woman reaches for something out of the medicine cabinet by the door, which I can only guess is another syringe. Not willing to wait and see, I use the unconscious doctor that still lies on top of me as a blunt object and with my strong legs toss him across the room at her. They both tumble to the ground with the doctor pinning her down. Two grown men try to grab me, but fail when my knees slam into each of their chins. The female nurse with a syringe comes at me, but I'm able to kick one of the unconscious men that lay over me at her knocking her to the ground as well.

The last woman in the room tries to run away but with my foot I am able to flip the bedpan that sits near my bed toward the door, forcing it closed. The woman turns around terrified.

"Listen," I begin an attempt to reason with her as several of her coworkers lie bloody and unconscious around the room, along with the one who doesn't have the strength to push the unconscious doctor off her weak body, "there is a good chance there is going to be an attack and you need to get me out of here so I can stop it! If you don't everyone here will die!"

She looks to me with compassionate eyes, "Okay. I will get you out. But the release is outside this door. I'm going to walk out there, okay?"

She was convinced way too easily. "Please! You have to believe me! I'm just trying to save my family!"

The woman hurries out into the hallway.

I pull and shake back and forth trying to get either the wristbands or the arm bars to break free but there is no luck. These were obviously constructed to hold someone overdosing.

Boom!

The lights flicker and room shakes from an explosion outside.

I'm too late. He's here.

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

JULY 2ND, 312 P.D.

2128

6 DAYS, 1 HOUR AND 3 MINUTES EARLIER

I WIPE LAB COAT'S BLOOD OFF MY SHIRT

as I find it impossible to look away from what appears to be an older version of myself.

This is impossible! Time travel can't be done!

"It is possible, Sergeant," the man says stepping out of the doorway. The lab coat on the ground continues to hold his neck gasping for air in an attempt to not bleed out.

"Time isn't just some field that we can jump around on," I say trying to wrap my head around what is happening. "It's a continuous line that can't be changed. How do you expect me to believe that this is at all possible?"

"I don't care if you believe it or not," he definitely sounds like me, "I've spent many years trying to wrap my own mind around it as well. I don't have time to try and explain it to you here, but you need to just understand that this is happening right here, right now."

'General Cameron C. Greer' sounds much better than sergeant major. I can't believe this! It's something out of science fiction! 'General'. I knew I could do it! That'll show that dumbass Sebastian Jim. He obviously loses his general thrown to me. "What do we do with the brain head bleeding on the floor?" I ask.

"We'll patch him up then send him and all his coworkers to Storm Cape Correctional Facility where they will be forced to keep their mouths shut about all this. No one can know what this machine is."

"But there are too many people who saw it come in. How can we-"

"Listen," he interrupts me, "there is a war coming and you're going to need me to stop it."

TIMELINE SIX

"Were you the one who sent the metal man back? The one that just killed a dozen of our soldiers?"

"Yes. We sent him back. He is designed to stop the coming anti-species invasion in a few months." General Greer exits the room and I follow walking past Thomas and the guards who are still waiting outside the door. My future self yells back to Thomas, "Get that lab coat sewed up and sent to Storm Cape with the rest of the people in the storage hold!"

"Who the hell are you?" Thomas whines. Following my future self's lead, we both ignore him.

"Why did you shoot the lab coat?" I ask.

"If it wasn't for him, none of this would have happened!"

"The time machine being invented?" I ask as we continue down the hallway through the empty mess hall.

"I can explain all this later but for now we need to gather all available troops to move to the furthest west shore to increase our defenses. And when I say all available troops I mean every single one from every city."

"Cameron how much..."

"It's General!"

Really? What an a-hole. "How much time do we have?"

"We need to be ready by April. Can we achieve this?"

"Yes, absolutely."

General Greer walks through the base; un-phased by the dead bodies being carried away left over by the robot's rampage.

"How are we going to explain the dead soldiers to the Eitman officials?" I ask.

"We'll tell them exactly what happened. The lab coats who were trusted to create advancements for the human race instead made a monster robot that went on a rampage. We did what we could but in the end had to lock them all up for their crimes." We enter the next corridor leading to the reception area of the base. "Lieutenant!" my future self hollers back.

Thomas from behind me runs to stand next to him. Has he been following us the whole time? What did he hear?

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

The new general continues to bark orders. "I need you to prepare the squads to go to all nearby cities and towns. We need all available troops to meet at St. Srana in two months for training."

"I'm sorry, who are you?" Thomas shakingly asks.

With a deep boom my future self replies, "I am General Greer and your direct superior. You will do as I say!"

Thomas, in a state of disbelief, looks to me then back to the General then back to me then back to the General then back to me then back to the General. "But," Thomas stutters, "my general is Sebastian Jim. He is..."

"Now!" General Greer barks.

Thomas runs down the hallway with his tail between his legs.

"What about me, sir? What do I do?" I can't explain how ridiculous it is to be speaking to my future self, much less as if he is my superior, but he is a general and I am just a sergeant major.

"You are my right hand who will carry out all necessary commands that I may be too busy for."

"Yes, sir!"

"You were about to meet with some scientists earlier today right before you were called here. The two older gentlemen in suits. Do you remember them?"

If you remember them then obviously I would remember them. "Yes."

"We need them here ASAP."

"I'm on it!" I run down the hallway to find the men.

How great is this? With my future self as general I'll make it to high command in no time.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 7

THE STORY OF SAM PART 1

TIMELINE TWO

SAM

TIMELINE TWO

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

JULY 2ND, 312 P.D.

2010

1 HOUR AND 18 MINUTES EARLIER

“ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEXT ONE SERGEANT?”

Brooke asks me.

“I suppose. You know if you’re done with all this Brooke, we can reschedule the rest for tomorrow and we can all head to Shambles for a drink.”

“That’s alright, sir. I know we need to get the rest done with.”

I find myself rolling my eyes as two well past their prime gentleman enter the room holding themselves with confidence wearing full suits, shined shoes and combed hair.

“My name is Matija Jabaar and this is my colleague Dr. Haru Xaun,” confident but a strong accent. This could go either way. “Today we present to you graphene skin,” lab coat number one holds up a small square of what looks like a sheet of simple metal. “Everyone understands the great benefits of graphene. ‘Material that is near indestructible evoked by the tightly packed atomic bonds, exposure to hydrocarbons repair any damages, so on and so on.’ A downfall to this has always been its pliability forging its limited applicability. But with our contemporary graphene skin we’ve been able to make downsized microscopic sheets of graphene each connected to one another by electric and magnetic bonds. Through the use of computing properties we are able to turn this fibrous metal into pliant, shapeable skin.” Silent lab coat connects a small wire from a box that the other holds causing the graphene to limp over as if it were a sheet of paper. “By controlling these electrodes we are able push a finger through with ease while the edges stay together,” he then slides his finger directly through the middle as if it were made of putty, “or increase the electrodes and transmogrify it to be impenetrable by the strongest bullet.” Quiet brain head turns a knob on the box turning the graphene to a perfectly straight sheet of metal again. Graphene is something we have been

messing with at Krielm for a long time but haven't been able to do much with as it costs too much to make and as the lab coat says, it is very difficult to work with.

As a buyer I can't show my true interest. "What do you plan to do with it?"

"We can provide you one hundred square meters of it in the next month for nine hundred energy credits."

It's not completely unreasonable. "You're basically offering us wallpaper without the walls. Sure we could use it but we'll also need to hire people to learn how to cut it, activate it, figure out how to mold it and, on top of that, program a computer to be able to control the electrodes at the perfect quantities that you've described."

"I was hoping you'd say that." Talkative lab coat pulls out a small holograph box and places it on the table. My assistant and the two Eitman pawns sitting around me lean in to see the display of the holographic man that appears. "Meet the Superlative Abluent Machination, or in a shorter term, Sam. His outer shell is made entirely of graphene while his interior is pure titanium and firepower. Connected to a computer chip in the pate, it is able to control the electrode output and soften properly for joint movement while becoming inflexible when assailed. Blades, grenade launchers, missiles, grappling hooks, you name it can be hidden under the skin and emerge with ease. With the light-weight skin we can program air pockets for flotation and even swimming. The leg joints with their own motors will give him speed matched only by a Krielm vehicle and the arm motors will give him the strength of a dozen walkers. Not just that, but the energy source controlling him is completely perpetual by the continuous movement of the electrodes in the skin. The first perfect soldier."

"How much?" I attempt to keep the drool from dripping out of my mouth as I crave this technology to be in my grasp.

"Now before I say, I want you to remember you don't need an army of Sams to get any job done." He's stalling.

"How much?" I repeat.

"Thirteen thousand."

TIMELINE TWO

“Impossible! That is too far out of my budget!” Damn, cause I really wanted that. “However, the sheets of graphene I believe we could make a deal on.” Maybe some day.

2244

2 HOURS AND 28 MINUTES LATER

Walking back to my motor bike one grant check lighter and with an order form for seventy-five square meters of graphene I’m stopped by Thomas along with a couple of his henchmen. “Sergeant Major Greer, do you have a moment?”

“I just got out of a full day of piss presentations and would really like to go home and be by myself. Can this wait for tomorrow?”

“I’m sorry sir, but time may be of the essence. We have a dozen brain heads sitting in a cell right now claiming they have something that you and General Jim may find interesting.”

“Why are they in a cell?”

“Well, it’s a storage room converted to a cell.”

“Okay? Why are they in a storage room?”

“Because of energy theft, sir.”

“What is it they have?”

“From what we can see, they’ve created some sort of transport through dimensions that, um, I guess go to different present times that may or may not be in our past or future.”

“What the hell are you trying to say to me?”

“Sir, it would be better if you just came to Ft. Bildine with us and have one of them explain it to you.”

Ugh.

2355

1 HOUR AND 11 MINUTES LATER

“A boot?” Getting here and Thomas hands me a boot. What a waste of time?

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

“Not just the boot Sergeant, but where the boot came from. Read the note on it.”

I rip off the sheet of paper and read:

- *To whomever hold this note,*

Let it be known that the greatest achievement of human kind has been achieved on this day of July 2nd, 312 p.d. Greater than traversing the mass expanse of space and greater than recreating life itself, we on this day have travelled through time to speak to those who have yet to see what we have seen. Since the beginning of time we have reached to go back; to take away pain, regret and death caused in places not meant to have been caused. We can now achieve this great and inconceivable feat through the use of Emergence 601.1993. Reversing all dreadful and despicable moments made by man or any other specie is no longer an out of reach desire, but instead a practical decision of which to be made. On this day, we have become God, masters of time itself. On this day, we become truly invincible.

Dr. Henny Tenus Muvato -

“Lieutenant,” I do my best to hold my hand from slapping him in the face for his stupid gullibility, “are you trying to convince me that these lab coats invented a time machine?”

“They did have two of the exact boots, sir. Same size, same color, same imperfections, both for the left foot.”

“They’re scientists! They could have easily just cloned it or something.” His stupidity amazes me.

“But why would they go through all the trouble to do this?”

“Energy credits you dumbass! They want money and energy!” I’m sick of this day and just want to go home. “Get one of them in here!”

TIMELINE TWO

Within seconds head brain scum is standing in front of me. "You're not General Jim," he complains.

"No. I'm Sergeant Major Greer. General Jim is my direct superior. What you want to say to him you can say to me."

"I don't think so."

This guy has balls. "You know, energy theft is a serious offense. What makes you think you can call the shots?"

"You want what I have."

"You mean this boot? I don't need a boot." I drop the boot and note to the ground.

"Not the boot. Emergence."

"You can move past the time machine idea. I'm not buying it."

"Then get General Jim in here. He'll buy it."

"Lieutenant!" I yell out. What does this twit take me for? I'm not a damn fool. "I want that machine tested top to bottom. You tell me what it is as soon as you know. I'm going home."

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

0833

5 DAYS, 8 HOURS AND 38 MINUTES LATER

Sitting in my chair with my cup of scotch and a cigar I listen to my audio player trying its best to entertain me. The music I've heard a thousand times over has become stale and bores the hell out of me. The singer sounds as though her throat is hoarse and the instruments are high pitched and annoying, but for some reason I find myself putting it on most nights.

I used to have a girl here who would keep me company but she is long gone. Good riddance though. She was just holding me back. Sure it was nice coming home to Samantha every night with dinner ready and a new audio recording she had found at the market, but now I finally have time for myself. I don't need to listen to a

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

woman complaining or yelling at me about stuff. Just me and myself. The way I like it.

"Sergeant!" Dammit! Thomas bangs on my front door like a little child running to his parents, *"We've examined the machine."*

The one day I have off has been ruined once again by this frekker! I don't know how many times I've told Thomas to leave me alone when I'm at home but still, he shows up.

I throw open the door, "What is it Thomas?"

"It's a time machine!"

"What?"

"We examined the lab coats' machine. It's a real time machine!"

"C'mon," do these people really think I'm going to believe any of this?

"No really! Our own lab coats have confirmed it! They have definitive evidence that it works. We even have video footage of their boot experiment!"

"Have you turned it on to test it?"

"No, sir. I wanted to wait for you to be there."

"So you came in here with untested results?" I wish I were surprised but it's nothing new coming from him.

"Uhm," there's always an 'uhm', "we have been highly advised not to turn it on."

Of course they don't want us to turn it on otherwise that would prove it doesn't work!

Thomas asks, "Do you know what you may want to do with it, sir?"

The image of the graphene skin robot is the first thing to come to mind. "If it works, and that's a really big *if*, I think I do." I begin conceiving a plan for the off chance he is right about the machine. I know it won't work, but it's an exciting thought to think about none-the-less.

TIMELINE TWO

CHAPTER 8

THE DESTRUCTION OF DYRITH

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

TIMELINE SIX
ALEX

TIMELINE SIX

TYRAN

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

2212

13 HOURS AND 37 MINUTES LATER

SAM AND I JUST CROSSED THE GULF

of Old Mexico right as the sun fell below the horizon leaving the sky a dark purple haze.

The land is flooded all around us from the rising sea levels causing odd plants and trees to grow all about. The high ocean levels are filled with salt so the water is undrinkable, but the trees, as Sam pointed out, holds the rainwater very well and is clean enough for me to drink. Instead of the way that Carleena and I had travelled before, Sam and I stay near the coastline, which seems to have saved me from the dehydration I had gone through before. I'm not sure if he had this planned or if he's just walking randomly, but either way he knows how to survive out here even though he doesn't need food or water to survive. Even knowing this, he still tries to convince me that there is flesh and blood under the suit.

"It's probably a nutrient fluid that is pumped straight into my body," he explains, "With this high tech armor, they probably couldn't risk any openings in the suit that could make me vulnerable to attacks or possible respiratory failure due to the thick air near red-zones."

A city from the olden days is seen sticking out from the water surface about a kilometer off shore. Buildings covered in moss and sea creatures protrude from the gulf surface showing off the great city that used to exist. The water has risen so high that there are rumors of entire cities still inhabited by people from before the Great War and they now live below the surface. This is probably just a lie my brothers would tell me to entertain themselves. I can't imagine Olena allowing such a thing to happen.

"So what do you remember?" I ask Sam.

"Not much," he replies, "I have weird memories but nothing definite. What I do remember is dark and disturbing, but those just seem like screen shots in my memory instead of actual events."

Looking over to Sam I notice he is continually picking at his suit trying to find a way he can take it off. He tells me he is a human in there but I have a hard time believing his story that he woke up thousands of kilometers away from home with no memories and a suit of armor on. He has conversations like a human but he is so exact on everything he says that he seems almost robotic. When I found the mask in my old village I didn't see any trace of a human's body. He could possibly just be a computer in there. But then why would the flying man kill him?

"What was your family like?" he asks pulling his hand away from chipping at his silver suit.

"They were great," I say trying to keep the frog from climbing up in my throat. "My brothers were a little mean to me sometimes but I think that's what brothers are there for. To pick on you and make you stronger, you know? Then there was my sister who was always awesome. Whenever my brothers were picking on me she would usually take my side and defend me, which usually led to me being picked on more. My mom was easy to talk to. Well, sign to. You wouldn't know it, but I just started speaking a little over a year ago. Before then it was all sign language."

"Is that why you wear that thing on your throat?" he asks pointing to my voice box.

"Yeah. I'm not sure if you know this, but anti-species are born with weird throats that make it to where they can't speak. These boxes work with our brain somehow and emit what we want to say."

"I think I remember hearing about that when I was a kid," he says, "I didn't know if it were true or not. I figured it was a human rumor."

"Anyways, my mom was pretty cool. My dad was stern but understanding. When I was alone with him he would let down his walls and speak to me like a real person but when we were around others he had to be condescending and put me down. I think it was an ego thing or it was to make me into a man like how my

TIMELINE SIX

brothers were doing. I don't know. Either way I don't think I needed any of that to grow up."

"So if your story is true and you came back in time, why aren't you staying back in the village after you saved your family?" he asks.

"Because the flying man could come back and if he does, all of this would be for nothing. I need to find and stop him before he can kill anyone else. But it's not like I didn't think about it."

"Did you even go see them when you got back here?"

"No. When you were passed out after I saved you I debated going to see them but I decided against it. I think if I did then I wouldn't be able to leave again. I miss them so much but my mission isn't over until the flying man is dead. With Olena by my side I am guaranteed to defeat him."

"Olena? Was that a dead family member of yours? Someone close to you?"

"You don't know about Olena?" I'm guessing they may know her by a different name in the east. "She is our protector. The goddess of life and being. She is always there when you need her."

"Oh. Got it," he doesn't sound like he knows what I'm talking about.

"Did you speak to Olena in the east?"

"Not that I remember."

"Oh," I hold back the question for as long as my tongue will let me, "then who did you pray to?"

"If I remember right, nobody."

"What do you mean?" Maybe he is confused by the word 'pray'.

"I don't want to put down anything that you believe but all that stuff doesn't really make sense to me."

"You don't believe in Olena or whatever she goes by in the east?"

"No. With so much science out there, religion just seems barbaric."

How could he say such a thing and not fear of what she may do? "Are you crazy? You can't say that! Olena can always hear you!"

"Like I said kid, I'm not too concerned," Sam throws his arm in front of me to stop my walking. "We have to stop over there."

We stand in front of a sign the reads, 'Welcome to Dyrith'. Through the intense conversation I hadn't even noticed the approaching city. "What? No. We're after the flying man, remember?"

"Yes, but the words in front of my eyes are telling me this is where I'm supposed to be. Apparently the humans have prepared some sort of mission for me."

The flying man moves so quickly. We'll never be able to catch him if we keep making pit stops. "We'll make our way through but we have to continue straight north, okay?"

"You got it."

Making our way through the town the buildings become more congested and enclosed on one another. Businesses are set up randomly next to small homes as if there was no plan or design for the city. Places for buying alcohol have been made next to schools, which are next to graveyards, which are next to courtrooms. Nothing in this city makes sense. Smoke pours from peoples' lungs as they walk down the streets as if that is the only air that's out here. Walking down the sidewalk there are plenty of naked and half naked people running around, some of which are stumbling over drunk and others throwing their bodies around like they are on 'Olena-knows-what'.

"Woo! Gettin' wrecked tonight!" a light green, naked man yells running by me. I don't mean to hate my own race so much, but wow. These people are not worthy of the gift Olena has given them.

"Stay near to me," Sam says trying to keep me safe.

This guy's not my dad. He's not my protector! Who does he think he is? "I don't need your help! I've been on my own for over a year now!"

"The provost."

"What?" he doesn't seem to notice my outburst at all. That or he just doesn't care.

"The leader of the town. I need to find him."

"Why? What do you have planned?"

"I really don't know. That's what I'm being told to do."

"Told to do by who?"

TIMELINE SIX

"This helmet is connected neurologically and is transmitting my mission into visual words over my eyes. I may have had amnesia or brain damage, that's why I need this suit on. At least that's what I can come up with so far."

"Do you think you're hurt under there? Like burnt up or lost a lot of body parts? That's why you need it?"

"I don't know."

He seems to be getting more and more confused the more I talk to him. I guess asking the same questions he's asking himself may not be helping to recall his memory. I'm still skeptical there is a human in there at all.

The sky is dark as we make our way through the town trying to avoid the drunk and high wastes of life. Dozens of people stare out their windows at us as we walk down the street. I'm guessing the giant silver man I walk with is drawing most of the attention. We arrive at a community center and stop.

"Here," he says.

"Here?"

"I'm being told this is where the provost is."

The building was built extravagantly, but has not been well kept. Painted words cover all sides of the building while one wall seems to have gone through a fire of some sort. Several of the windows placed between the white columns holding up the large awning are shattered or cracked while the front door of the building appears to have been kicked in and half heartedly repaired.

"So what do you plan to say to him when you see him?"

Sam hesitates to answer. "Let's go in," he says ignoring my question.

"Go ahead," I tell him, "I'm going to stay out here." I don't know this guy very well so being in a small, abandoned-looking building with him doesn't seem like the smartest idea. I don't have much to hold onto, but being killed here isn't my plan.

Sam walks inside.

What am I doing here? The flying man definitely isn't in Dyrith. Why would he waste his time in such a disgusting place like this?

I watch the towns' people run around as if there are no laws or rules in this city. Annoying, horribly performed music plays somewhere down one of these curvy

TYRAN

streets while a giant bonfire burns at the other end. Some sort of party or something is going on tonight. I can't imagine this is what it's like every day here, but either way I need to try to help their souls.

Olena, it's me, Tyran. I apologize for the nasty habits of these towns' people. You have given them such great bodies to work with yet they insist on ruining them with unnatural activates. Please be easy on them. They are blind to what they do. And I would also like to apologize for the harsh words of my companion, as he is also blind. He obviously has ignored you when you spoke to him and therefor is forced to be in a constant state of confusion and discomfort within his suit, if there is anything in that suit. If he truly is human in there and is destined for good, please send me a si-

Boom!

My entire body shakes as a loud explosion erupts from the second floor of the community center sending glass and sparks raining down on top of me. I about run inside to help my silver friend, but before I can get the door open he drops from the window above landing on his feet next to me. The blades emerged from his arms and a small gun coming out of his shoulder tells me this guy isn't wearing a protective suit, he's a war machine.

A small police force and fire squad pulls up where we stand, all of them exiting their small vehicles with their guns drawn. For such a ridiculous town, their response time is incredible.

"Freeze!" they yell.

They are only there for a few seconds before two little bombs soar from Sam's stomach.

Boom!

All vehicles are destroyed along with all the officers nearby.

Sam has known his mission all along.

He's here to kill.

TIMELINE SIX

SAM

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

2245

4 MINUTES EARLIER

//ARRIVED AT DESTINATION = COMMUNITY CENTER.

//Approach Provost.

Who?

"Here?" Tyran asks me.

"I'm being told this is where the provost is."

"So what do you plan to say to him when you see him?"

//Kill Provost.

What the hell? What am I doing here?

//Enter.

"Let's go in." The decision now seems to be in the hands of the suit.

"Go ahead. I'm going to stay out here."

I try to speak but my suit won't let me reply to him. Why is it holding my tongue?

//Walk.

I have to get this damn thing off of me. I can't even control my own actions now.

I enter the dark, messy building where the wallpaper is peeling and half the tables are tipped over. I'm not sure if this place has been abandoned or if there was just a big party here a few hours ago. Making my way down the hallway I see a few anti-species passed out, holding bottles of liquor and burning cigarettes. I continue looking for the door marked 'provost' without waking the slumbering partyers. How could the leader of this town be staying in a place like this?

{Rooms} = ^Pool. ^Game room. ^Gym. ^Classroom 1. ^Classroom 2. ^Classroom 3.

The words being re-scripted over my vision continues until I arrive at the steps at the end of the hall. Next to the steps reads 'provost' with an arrow pointing up the stairs.

//Walk.

Upstairs is three rooms. I crack the door of the first one open.

^Bathroom.

I crack the next.

^Kitchen.

The last door I open is a bedroom with two people inside.

!! WARNING !! ANTI-SPECIE AUTHORITY !!

Inside lie a man and woman on a bed, both snoring obnoxiously loud. On the floor next to the bed lies another woman fast asleep wearing nothing but a pair of socks. A smoldering bowl filled with ash and burnt plants lies next to the bed along with a half dozen liquor bottles and several lines of a yellow powder, which appears to be the same thing surrounding the provost's nostrils.

{Action} = Neutralize.

//Forearm blades activated.

What the hell are these?

Protruding somehow through the metal on my arms are long serrated blades sticking out a half meter past my fists.

//Jump + ^Impale.

No! I've lost all control!

Stop! Stop!

Slice!

The provost's eyes open wide to see my blade stabbed through his chest. His racing pulse vibrates up my blade filling my head with the sound of his pounding heart.

"I'm so sorry!" is all I can muster out of my mouth. What have I done?

Convulsing and tearing up in pain, he looks next to him on the bed to see my other blade through his wife's heart. Her pulse stays silent, as the blade had impaled directly into her heart forcing her to die immediately. The man violently shaking, as

TIMELINE SIX

if suffering through a seizure, looks back at me while I am unable to look away from him. We hold eye contact as the pulse in my head slows to become silent.

!! WARNING !! ANTI-SPECIE GUARDS !!

//Activate shoulder turret.

How the frik do I get out of this thing? A small turret comes from my right shoulder and shoots all men behind me before I can turn around to see them in the doorway.

{Targets} = ^Neutralized.

Turning around I see four men drop to the ground, each spewing blood from between their eyes.

//Destroy facility.

Are you kidding me?

Trying to flee, I make my way over the four anti-species dead on the ground.

!! WARING !! ANTI-SPECIE GUARDS APPROACHING !!

The suit is still in control. I can't stop and try to explain myself to these people. Even if the suit let me, how could I? Turning back around I leap over the still asleep woman on the ground and the bloody couple in the bed to get to the closed window on the other side of the room.

//Grenade dropped.

What?

Fire and debris explode from the second floor as I burst through the glass window and fall to the ground below. Landing next to him I attempt to speak and explain the situation about the suit to the kid but still I am unable to get a single word out. This damn suit is wired deep in my brain and I can't figure out how to override it.

!! WARNING !! ANTI-SPECIE INCOMING !!

My vision gets stuck on the oncoming patrol vehicles ahead as crosshairs fill my line of sight. The vehicles come to a screeching halt.

"Freeze!" one of the anti-species pointing a gun yells.

I feel my stomach open up, not just the suit, but deep inside where my digestive tract should be as if I were on the operating table being cut open.

What the hell am I?

Two small missiles soar from my insides, each hitting their vehicle targets ahead of us.

{Targets} = Neutralized.

"Sam! What are you doing?" Tyran yells to me over the crackling fires and raining metal of the vehicles.

"I don't know!" Finally I can speak. "We need to get out of here before I do anymore damage!"

{Destination} = ^Dyrith Power Grid.

No! I can't do anymore!

{Threat} = ^40%.

//Sprint.

I run down the sidewalk away from the half standing community center.

"Hey, wait up!" Tyran yells.

With no control of my body I am unable to stop for him. I don't have any free will to do anything! This is definitely more than just a suit protecting my body.

Somehow, even at my insanely quick speed, I look to my left to see Tyran keeping up with me. He has something strange going on with him as glowing blue force fields of energy are being launched from his feet, projecting him forward matching my speed. Is this something all anti-specie can do? I knew they were different but this is just insane.

//Arrived at destination = Dyrith Power Grid.

Here? Is this it?

"Sam! What are you doing?" Tyran cries to me again coming to a stop in front of the military base with me.

!! WARNING !! BULLETS INCOMING !!

My legs, which I feel are about to jump away from the bullets, stop their task as Tyran's blue energy wall shields the both of us. This time the energy comes from his hands, not his feet.

!! WARNING !! ANTI-SPECIES !!

"Get out of here!" he yells.

TIMELINE SIX

Is he now my protector?

I follow his orders and jump into the air.

My turret fires in all directions out of my control killing all the anti-species below, except for Tyran. Before my firing halts another missile flies from my stomach destroying the power grid building along with all the anti-species surrounding it. Sparks and ash rain down around us as all the music and laughing has stopped and is replaced with cries and screams.

{Targets} = ^Neutralized.

//Next destination = Ura.

“What’s going on with me?”

GLIDER

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

2257

MEANWHILE

“EMERGENCY POWER FAILURE”

The hospital lights go off as all the power is disconnected to the building allowing my restraints to come free from the metal arm bars.

Running to the hallway with my wristbands still attached I encounter the woman who said she would help me escape. “Sir, I’m going to have to ask you-”

“Wooo!” She is interrupted by a completely nude hospital patient sprinting past us down the hallway.

“Mr. Mantis! Come back here!” She attempts to stop him as a dozen more patients run by like inmates in a prison riot.

In a fit of excitement one grabs a hold of my shoulders and shakes me back and forth.

“Ahhh!” he screams at me. With my head bobbing from side to side I am barely able to make out the man’s giant smile and enlarged nostrils. I push him away as he continues to run down the hallway laughing and having a better time than I’ve ever seen anyone have.

Exiting the building with the several other escapees I’m introduced to the horrors outside. Smoke plumes coming from the community center and another area of the city pour into the sky while the streets are filled with frantic anti-species sprinting every which way. Still looking somewhat like a town party there are some laughing and continuing to drink and smoke while others are cowering down and crying in fear. I turn around to see three teenagers, one of which was the last I saw before I blacked out. The three of them stand against a building passing a smoking stick around their circle not noticing that I see they have my glider.

“Hey!” I yell sprinting toward them.

TIMELINE SIX

“Whoa buddy,” the one holding my glider looks to me as he tries to keep his balance, “chillax man and enjoy the show!”

“Yeah spiz,” another says as I approach them, “want a drag of dis’?”

I rip the glider from under his hands while simultaneously punching him as hard as I can in his nose. I attempt to hide the pain I feel in my fingers as the two other teenagers sprint away. The one I punched falls back on the ground slamming his head into the concrete. Looking down at the glider I see everything is in mostly working condition except the gloves have been removed.

“Hey!” I smack around the teenager on the ground, “Kid, where are the gloves?”

“Huh?” he replies with his eyes barely open.

“The gloves! There were gloves attached to this machine! Where are they?”

His head falls back to the ground as he goes unconscious.

I shake him as hard as I can, “Wake up! I need those gloves!”

But he doesn’t wake up. He has no idea what he’s done! Without the gloves I won’t be able to stop the destroyer. Without the gloves there is nothing to take him down! I can’t wait around here any longer in case the destroyer sees me.

I need help. I need to find my younger self.

JULY 9TH, 312 P.D.

1450

15 HOURS AND 53 MINUTES LATER

I fly passed the next two towns the destroyer will attack to get to my hometown of Kresa. I would like to warn the others, but I can’t risk getting locked up in a loony bin or encountering the destroyer without a way to subdue him. If I have my past self with me I should be able to create the gloves twice as fast.

Crossing the Kresa border I am filled with nostalgia as I’m reminded of all I will lose if I do not succeed. No building here is more than a couple stories tall and have all been built comfortably spread out from one another. The population isn’t

more than a few thousand covering the eight-kilometer area, but they are all my friends and loved ones. I need to move fast.

I don't want to draw much attention to myself incase someone I know here runs into both my young and old self in the same day so I jump off my glider and walk toward my home nonchalantly with my glider tucked underneath my arm. I should be able to find a young Brady working in our basement on the juvenile machine.

"Hey Brady!" my acquaintance Trey doesn't know me as Glider yet. He runs up to me as if we're best friends although from what I remember I never really spoke to him much. I think I met him through a friend of a friend and since then he's been oddly clingy. I've never had anything against the guy but he always seems to talk just a little too much. I hide my deformed hands as he approaches. He stops abruptly in front of me wearing a look of shock, "Whoa, sorry. I thought you were someone else."

Perfect. Easy escape. "That's alright."

I turn to walk away when he grabs hold of my shoulder and flips me around, "Hey, you wouldn't happen to know a Brady Eztuella, do you? You look so much like him that it's crazy."

"No, I don't know him."

I attempt to walk away when he stops me again, "But that glider under your arm? Isn't that his?"

I look down at my technology forgetting that he knew anything about it. "Oh, yeah. This is his. I'm just checking it out for him and giving him some feedback."

"But you just said you didn't know him."

I don't have time for this. "I have to go. It's been great meeting you."

Once again I attempt to walk away but he grabs hold of my shoulder again, "Wait up. I know Brady and I can't imagine him lending out his technology to anyone. What makes you so important that he would let you take it off his hands without his supervision."

"Listen," I come up with the quickest lie I can think of to get him off my case, "I am the official to the ranks' technological division. I am in town to investigate his

TIMELINE SIX

work and possibly purchase it off him. So far he and his wife are the only ones to know about this, but thanks to your excessive interrogating questions now you know. I don't want to have to deny his technology but it is ranks policy that once someone outside the immediate family is made aware of a ranks purchase, we must decline our offer."

"No, no, no, no, no!" he is always eager to please so backtracking comes quick, "Please don't do that to him! I had no idea! I was just looking out for his invention, that's all. I won't say a word, I promise."

I look down at the glider as if I am contemplating to really bring the lie home. "Well, we do really want this," I swiftly look back to meet his eyes, "but you need to promise not to tell a single person until the deal is done. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, sir!" he straightens his back as if he's a ranks member reporting to an authority figure.

"Good. Now get out of here."

He sprints away from me back down the street. If I were a real ranks member I would keep a close eye on him because from what I know about him, he is off to ignore my demand and spread the word.

After walking another half a kilometer and avoiding any other awkward encounters I arrive at my two-story home with the over-sized windows and the solar farm next door. I'm filled with mixed emotions as the memories start flooding back to me. Patches of genetically modified grass grow here and there giving just enough to make my yard the best looking on the street. My wife has her gnome structures set up just right to block my son's half built bike from the neighbors. I liked to encourage his building genes while Rebecca prefers to keep it hidden with the thought that it makes the home look trashy. Compared to the rundown homes nearby, I'm not too concerned about the appearance of our own.

My son, Elijah, should be at school while Rebecca is most likely in the family room knitting or reading. I don't want to shock her by letting her see me like this but I must see her again. Peeking through the living room window I find her. She is as beautiful as I remember with her legs propped up on the couch with *Kresa Today*,

GLIDER

our city's magazine, in her hands. I want to go in to kiss and hold her but I can't now. I need to get to the basement where I'll find myself working on my glider.

Soon my love.

I walk around the side of the house to the large window leading to the basement where I get the first sight of my younger self. He is strapping. Not as strong as I am now but he definitely has a few less kilometers on his face. Now that I see him I can understand Trey wasn't completely out of bounds with his perception of me. My younger self has the first generation blueprints for the glider sprawled out on the table while he fiddles with what looks like the fuse box.

How do I get my attention without scaring him? Would I be scared of seeing myself almost a decade older?

There is no more time to waste. I knock on the window.

Startled, he looks up to make eye contact with me.

"Brady. Come open the window," I tell him.

Terrified, he doesn't move. Apparently, I *would* be scared seeing an older version of myself.

He hesitantly creeps toward the window but doesn't open it. "Who are you?" he whispers.

"My name is Brady Eztuella. I'm you from the future." No reason trying to sugarcoat it.

"I, uh..." he doesn't finish his thought before sprinting toward the stairs leading to the kitchen. Before the humans attacked I didn't have much of a backbone. Eight years of running and fighting have given me the strength and courage I have now but young Brady still has some growing to do.

"No, wait!" I hold up the finished glider so he can see it.

Brady comes to a stop on the third step up to see the machine, which looks fairly different to the original blueprints, but similar enough to be identified as his own. He creeps back over to me to speak through the closed window. "Who are you?"

"I told you. I'm you eight years from now. I know it's going to be hard to believe but I'm here to help."

TIMELINE SIX

"Eight years from now?"

"Here," I push open the window and force the glider through to him, "you're working on this right now." He grabs it, obviously amazed to see his finished product. "I know this hasn't gotten funded yet, but trust me, it will."

"Did you steal my blueprints?" he's upset now, "Change it up enough to not be mine? This is my intellectual property! How dare you-"

"Brady! Stop!" I know how much time and effort he's put into this design so I completely understand his concern for its theft. He doesn't know how important it will be or else he would probably be even more upset that someone stole the blueprints. "I stole nothing from you because it's not just yours. It's both of ours."

"I'm calling the Kresa officials!" Brady sprints toward the stairs again.

"Brady!" I force myself into the window and to the floor below to try to stop him but he's gotten upstairs too quickly. I can't help but to slow down walking past my workspace to take a look at my first blueprints. How naïve I used to be. This exterior design is near the same but the internals are completely flawed. I suppose originally I was creating this for speed, not warfare.

The worn out chair I would always sit on looks much messier than I remember as cotton sticks out from the cushion and the arm rests are merely blocks of wood. The image of it in my head was always so comfortable and welcoming but I see it now and can't imagine sitting in it for more than a couple minutes before my back is ruined. Lining my workspace are the little miniatures of the glider that Rebecca so painstakingly carved and painted for me. She didn't get anywhere close to what I was looking for but I kept them to make her happy. I lift the miniature Rebecca had dropped and broke in the parking lot of the grocery store when she was showing it off to her friends. She had felt so bad for breaking it that she attempted to glue it back together without me noticing. It was so obvious that it was broken but I didn't let her know I knew.

"*Rebecca! Rebecca!*" hearing Brady upstairs reminds me of my mission so I place the miniature in my pocket and race to the staircase.

Sprinting up the steps I see Brady rummaging around in the kitchen for our communicator.

GLIDER

"Brady! You need to listen to me!" I plea.

"Rebecca," my old, annoying, scared voice rings out again, "grab the electro-rod! There is an intruder in the house!"

Really? You're going to make your wife get the weapon while you're looking for the communicator? "Please, Brady! I'm not here to hurt you. I need your help! You can't deny our resemblance."

He grabs the communicator and puts it to his mouth ready to contact the officials. If the authorities show up I'll be tossed into another jail or hospital, "This is Brady Eztuella! I have an intruder at-"

I didn't want to have to do this but I leave me no choice.

Using the skills I've acquired over the past few years I kick the communicator out of his hands and knock him to the ground. "We'll do tests! I'll prove that I'm-" I'm unable to finish my thought as the electro-rod's fork stabs into my back filling my body with a shocking, body-stiffening amount of electricity forcing me to drop hard to the ground like a toppled stool. My vision fades from a vibrating colored image to *black*.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 9

THE STORY OF GLIDER

TIMELINE THREE
GLIDER

TIMELINE THREE

BRADY

SEPTEMBER 10TH, 313 P.D.

1253

1 YEAR, 2 MONTHS, 3 DAYS, 22 HOURS AND 3 MINUTES LATER

THE WARNING TO EVACUATE COMES TOO LATE

Ever since the first attacks a little under a year ago I have been given extra funding from the ranks to create my glider and find ways to mass-produce it to combat the humans' large machinery. Several of my gliders have been given out to soldiers who could be trained how to use them, but without the practice I've had, they aren't able to use them to their full potential.

"They are just flying straight into the ground and the foot operations aren't comprehensible like you said they would be!" the Kresa official, Captain Hunter, screams at me.

"I'm sorry, sir, I did my best. I told you the troops would need-"

"I don't want to hear your damn excuses! You told me you could have a fleet of these done two weeks ago! Where's my fleet?"

"Uhm, sir, if you'll remember I had told you that I needed to have more hands to help with the production. I only had a small team and my son to help make these and we weren't-"

"Dammit Eztuella!" I cower down to try to hide myself from his fury, "If I tell you that I need a fleet of flying machines then I damn well better get a fleet of-"

"They're here! The humans have arrived to Kresa!" Hunter is interrupted by the sounds of yelling and screaming outside,

Here? It's such a small town, why would they want to come here? We have nothing they want.

Boom! Boom!

I need to get home! I need to get to Rebecca and Elijah!

Jumping on my glider I'm grabbed by Captain Hunter, "Where the hell do you think you're going with my property? Leave that glider here and get the hell out!"

“Sir, this is my personal glider! This one has been calibrated to my foot size and weight!”

“I funded it! It’s mine! Now get off!”

I can’t. My home is too far away and the humans are too close. “I’m sorry, sir.”

I power up the boosters and launch myself out the front door. I hear Captain Hunter screaming in anger behind me, but my overpowered glider moves too quick that his voice fades before I can understand the first word out of his mouth.

Bombs going off in every direction accompanied with bullets firing in the distance fill me with fear with the thought that they have already gotten to my home. I haven’t travelled a kilometer yet when the base explodes in a storm of fire behind me. Looking back I see the drones and heavy walking machinery heading in my direction while shooting missiles and destroying all the buildings nearby. They aren’t here to merely take over, but to kill every last one of us!

The human walkers move quickly and are able to smash down entire buildings while leaping several meters in the air clearing a path for the human soldiers. Using both drones above our heads and small, rat-like monitoring bots at our feet make it nearly impossible to hide from them. Luckily they have nothing that can move as quick as I can on my glider.

The horizon, which is usually covered in a light haze, now is completely filled with thick smoke making the visibility only a few meters. I hit top speed to try to get to my house before the humans do, but I’m too late. Where my home used to sit is now a pile of burning rubble. Maybe they had gotten out in time. Elijah was probably over at Robert’s house and Rebecca probably at the store, or maybe on a trip out of town to the new lake that was just put in a few months ago.

I ignore the sound of human troops headed toward me and jump off my glider onto the remnants of my home. While scouring through the debris I burn the skin on my hands but I can’t stop, not until I’m sure they had escaped in time. I find Elijah’s burnt up toys along with his now barely distinguishable drawings for his own glider design. He had shown me a few of these but I had no idea the intricate detail he had put into them, it’s as if they were ready to be built tomorrow. Continuing to dig I come across his burning sheets and pillows, the cotton now black

TIMELINE THREE

and firm. I can still see the drool stains on the pillow cover before the fire over takes them. If he were here he would be so upset to see his room destroyed.

Flipping the burning shingles and smoldering boards off the base of the house I find his favorite shirt, impaled and smashed by the collapsed roof. I rip it while trying to pull it away, revealing the pale green skin of a small anti-species child underneath. It's Elijah. It's my son. Dead. Crushed under the weight of the roof. But it's impossible. He was at his friend's house where they were hiding in the basement, safe.

My heart is no different than the smoldering ash I stand on. My bleeding hands tremble as I try to tare my eyes away from my burning son. The lump in my throat shivers, moving its way up my throat forcing me to gag making me feel as though I'm about to vomit. The wood sizzles below my feet evaporating my tears as they hit.

This is impossible.

"No!" Unable to stand it any longer I drop to my knees and weep, weep like a child with my tears rolling off my son's smashed torso.

This can't be happening!

"Help!" Rebecca?

The voice is quiet, but not far. I try to force the lump in my throat back down so I can yell back but it's stuck, blocking any sound I could reply with.

Like a mad man I throw the charred wood and hot metal off where I think I heard her voice come from. My hands are torn apart by the rigid, burning rubble causing blood to spew with each toss of fiery material. A metal shard stabs through my palm and out the back but I keep digging.

There she is! Half of her face is torn down to the skull while a fallen ceiling beam has impaled the rest of her body. I push and pull trying to get the beam off her but there is no use; it won't budge.

My eyes shake while the world spins around me causing my feet to stumble about until I can grab my stance on our collapsed front door awning. I look through my watery vision to make eye contact with her.

"Ba-abe," her words barely audible through her singed lips.

I see the shadow of human troops in the distance marching through the thick smoke. "I love you so much," I tell her.

"I'm scared," she cries.

"I need you to tell me."

"W-what?"

The lump nearly closes my airway, "Tell me you love me."

"H-help me Brady."

"Do you love me?"

"Y-yes."

"How m-" I can barely speak now, "how much do you love me Rebecca?"

"So much. I love you more than any-" a coughing fit mixed with blood and ash cuts her off. She catches her breath, "Is Elijah okay?"

"Yeah. He's just fine. He misses you."

"Tell him I love him for me. Tell him I love him so much."

"I will." She is in too much pain and the troops are getting closer. I can't let them have her. "Close your eyes."

"What?" she coughs up a bit more blood while struggling to get free immediately followed by her scream in pain. Her piercing, heart-wrenching sounds draw the human drones to us.

"Close your eyes. Everything is going to be alright." I try to hush her whimpering as her shaking eyelids fall shut.

Reaching for my glider a few meters away I eject the hand blade attached to the side.

"Don't leave me," she cries.

"I'm not going anywhere."

Hesitantly, I hold the blade above her blood-drenched neck. Her bottom lip trembles as a steady stream of tears run down her cheeks to the burning wood below her head. I don't want her to open her eyes and see the knife but I crave to stare deep into those beautiful colors one last time. The blood lubricating my palm nearly forces the blade's handle from my hand as I do all I can to keep the shaking from turning to convulsing. She whimpers in pain as I watch her body continually

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struggle for freedom. I've taken too long and caused her to be in more pain than she has to be in. I can't be selfish now and try to keep her around. I need to let her go.

I whisper through my quivering voice to her, "I love you so much Rebecca."

Placing my left hand on the back of my right I push the blade into her throat. Her bloodshot eyes shoot open in shock as she gargles words of pain and desperation. Regrettably, I break eye contact while I slice through her esophagus and jugular. Her body shakes uncontrollably forcing a loud cry from my mouth.

"I'm so sorry my love."

1...2...3... and her harsh gargling and gasping for air ceases.

Silence.

The troops approaching, the bombs exploding, the bullets firing - all silent in my mind.

My stomach churns and shoulders tighten turning the lump in my throat to acidic bile. I swallow to keep the bulk of it down. Each bullet firing in the distant forces the razor blades in my brain to stab deeper. Dry and cracking, my lips quiver while I try to force to memory her last words, my sons face and not my bloody hands.

"Send in the walkers!" a human yells somewhere within the thick smoke.

Do I stay here and die? Is there any reason to continue?

The troops' silhouettes become more apparent as they get closer.

I lie down next to my wife and hold the blade to my throat.

"I'm coming my love."

1...2... ..

Come on. Just do it!

The knifepoint sitting on my jugular won't stab down. Blood pours from my palms down the blade covering my throat making a nice lubricant for me to stab with.

Just get it over with Brady!

The bowling ball in my stomach weighs me down while the pounding in my head wants me to lift off the searing steel. I try to finish it but I can't.

"Please God, if you're real, just end this. Let this all be over with."

BRADY

The troops are in my front yard. I can't die by their hand.

"Help!" I recognize that voice. It's not a human. Gayle? *"Help! Please, someone help me!"* She's one of the only other people who helped me create the glider. If it weren't for her it may never had been made. *"Please! No!"* I pull the knife away and sit up.

She isn't far away. If I find her I could save her.

"It's coming from over there," one of the humans yells out.

Without thinking I jump to my feet as quick as I can, grab my glider and take off. The humans can't see me through the smoke but that means I can't see Gayle either.

"Gayle!" yelling is risky, but it's the only way I'll find her.

"Brady! I'm here! I'm over here!" she replies.

"Shoot him down!"

Gayle has found shelter hiding behind the Willards' crumbled, burning home down the street. Bullets whizz by my head and ting off my glider as I reach down and grab Gayle's shoulder. I try to lift her onto the footholds with me, but my hands are too mangled and in too much pain to pull her up. I equal out my glider's balance as she climbs up my arm and gets her footing behind me.

"Are you alright?" I yell to her over the sound of exploding gunpowder and missile thrusters.

"Yeah, just get us out of here!"

Avoiding the small missiles and drone detection we escape the city limits just in time to see our hometown completely engulfed by the blaze behind us.

DECEMBER 6TH, 313 P.D.

1414

3 MONTHS, 24 DAYS, 1 HOUR AND 21 MINUTES LATER

Our shelter for the past month or so has been the open wilderness of the west while keeping clear of any human troops that may be expanding their new found territory.

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Drones fly over every few days or so looking for more anti-species, but my glider is a great cover from their detection.

My hands, which did not have the proper medical treatment, have healed improperly leaving them scarred and deformed as if they were caught in a wood chipper. Gayle, noticing my discomfort about their figure, has kept them wrapped and disinfected for me on our journey. In addition to Gayle, I have also teamed up with Eric and Bishop who had escaped from the north where the larger attacks started.

"It was as if they knew every weakness the city had. We were supposed to be invincible!" Bishop tells us about the attack in Freightwood, his hometown. "Before they even got to shore they shot down our missile deflectors and watch towers. Hell, they were even able to get the communication bay before stepping foot on the ground. How could they have known about all that?"

"You know, I hear they are staying clear of the far north," Eric informs us. "It's too cold for the humans this time of year. We could head up that way and try to make a basecamp for ourselves. Maybe even start a little 'non-human' civilization."

I haven't spoken much in the past few months and the others have noticed. We had all lost something, but I can't get over what I've lost. Gayle was overly dedicated to her work and never acquired a family so the most she had to part with was her decades of research papers and experiments, which in her mind might as well have been a family. I don't know much about Eric or Bishop's life, but it's not like they haven't told me. Unfortunately, when they speak it's hard for me to concentrate on their words and not my son's face or my wife's kiss.

"Well, we can't stay on this path. We'll have to head back to the northeast to make it to the far north," Bishop explains, "We'll have to risk getting near the humans though. What do you think Brady?"

I hear his voice but his words are going through one ear and out the other. Not until Gayle's hand touches my shoulder do I realize they are trying to speak to me. "What?"

"I was asking what your opinion on heading north was. We'll head towards the east shore then go north doing our best to stay clear of the human settlements. Does that sound plausible?"

"Uhm, yeah. Sounds good," even after I respond, it takes me a few seconds to figure out what he asked me, "but we'll need to head east far enough past the great lakes longitude to avoid the tough terrain. Hopefully the humans haven't made it that far yet."

"Good idea, Glider." I know what Bishop is doing. By giving me a nickname he is trying to breakdown the emotional walls between us. I really don't care what he calls me at this point.

FEBRUARY 18TH, 314 P.D.

0726

2 MONTHS, 11 DAYS, 17 HOURS AND 12 MINUTES LATER

We've made it past the lakes longitude, however, the humans' main base isn't far from us. Drone sightings have become more common and a fleet of walkers were spotted in the distance less than a week ago.

The land out here has a lot more vegetation than I was expecting it to have. Old cities from before the Great War that were never torn down for materials have been grown over with vines and weeds. Trees grow tall here and animals run rampant taking this part of the world back for their own. We can see the humans' massive city in the distance where buildings continue to grow higher and higher. It will be no time before this whole area is cleared out for their expansion. I continually think how much Elijah would love to see these giant buildings filling the skyline as we make our way across the open wilderness. He always loved adventuring and would be more than excited to join us on our journey to the north. I would give my life to see him and Rebecca one last time.

"What's that?" Bishop runs over to an area where trees in all directions have been flattened. I didn't think much of it as I assumed it was from a stray missile or grenade that missed it's target, but Bishop notices a curious piece of metal sticking

TIMELINE THREE

out of the ground. He lifts it to reveal a metal mask of some sort. Its faceless demeanor and shimmering metal make it a truly frightening site.

“What do you think it is?” Gayle asks.

“I’ve seen this before,” Eric says looking at it with horror, “This was the destroyer. He had come through and annihilated my city long before the humans arrived. We believed he was the humans’ first attack wave. Rumors had it that he had landed near the shores of Old Mexico and made his way north destroying city after city.”

Bishop, without looking up from the mask, says, “I’ve heard of him. People said he had the strength of a thousand men, the speed of a jet and the weapon arsenal of an entire military. No one could stop him, not even the retaliation!”

“If they had one of these things, that means they have a lot more. Maybe that’s why we didn’t stand a chance,” Eric, defeated, admits, “There was nothing we could have done.”

“But what if there was?” I can’t help but think out loud, “What if we could have stopped him? Possibly our race could’ve been saved.”

“Like you said, ‘it’s over.’ There was nothing we could have possibly done.” Gayle tries to bring me back to reality, but all I hear is my son convincing me to carry on. No matter how defeated I was, no matter how much I felt the glider couldn’t be built, he made me continue. If he were here now, he wouldn’t let me give up.

“We have to try,” I bring the first bit of emotion they’ve seen from me out to try to convince them, “I mean, we are still alive, aren’t we? That means there has to be more out there. More anti-species just like us trying to just ‘survive’. We can’t just wait around and do nothing. I think we can take it back. We can take back the west!”

“Listen Glider, it’s a great idea,” Bishop begins his protest, “but there is just no way. We don’t have the resources or tools to ever go up against them.”

“I am your resource. Gayle is your resource. We were working on war machines back home for the ranks. Now if we take this helmet, figure out how it works and how to penetrate the outer shell then we can shut them down. No, we may not be able to get back to where we were, but we can do something. I can’t let

my son have died in vain. He wouldn't allow it!" They look to one another, clearly not convinced.

"I'm with you Glider!" Gayle steps up to me and shakes my bandaged hand. I can't explain it, but I feel like Elijah is with me now rooting me on too.

"Eric? Bishop?"

They nod their heads. "We're with you."

Now time to redeem my family's death or die trying.

Probably die trying.

JUNE 20TH, 320 P.D.

0214

6 YEARS, 4 MONTHS, 1 DAY, 18 HOURS AND 48 MINUTES LATER

Gayle, Bishop, Eric and myself had come across several small groups of barely surviving anti-species on our way north who have banded with us and helped us create a small society in the untouched north. Our scouts who head out twice a month have reported a small human city being built only a few kilometers away meaning it is only a matter of time before they migrate here. We've picked off as many stray humans as we could but have barely made a dent in their masses.

We had come across an abandoned bunker, which was created centuries ago and left alone, and made it into what was supposed to be a temporary base. To keep away from the drones we have dug much further and now have twenty-seven rooms, a fully functional kitchen, four bathrooms and have even been able to get running water from a nearby stream. The exit to ground level, which was at about six meters when we found it, is now at eighteen meters with four different locked doors one after another, which sends an alarm each time one is opened to warn of any trespassing humans.

We have made this our home base for the past few years with all fifty-three of us fitting snugly inside. Efforts to expand out further have continued, but it's slow coming as the search for needed construction material is dangerous. No one has been captured yet but we know it's just a matter of time as the humans continue

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their expansion north. Gayle and I are continually working to create new evasive technologies as well as offensive strategies. With limited daily power supply and almost no computer equipment it has been difficult to further our advancements. Others try to help with our inventions, but without the proper education, they mostly get in the way so they just help with the power production and gathering food. Some use their skills and specialties from their old lives to help with progress of our small community, such as proper food preparation, hunting and fishing and medicine. I have enrolled myself in a martial arts class that one of the citizens teach to prepare myself for the humans when they arrive.

After years of work, Gayle and I have finally completed what we need to take down the other destroyers and hopefully save any anti-species that are left. The bandages I used to wear on my hands have been converted to electric gloves that feed energy from my glider. Through these gloves we are able disconnect the magnetic and electrical currents that hold the material of the destroyer together and hopefully make the graphene skin penetrable. The hertz rate of the gloves also has the ability to disconnect or fry a computer's operating system, but depending on how complex the destroyers are, it may not work that way with them. Inside the glider we have equipped what we call an 'electric spider' to go through the destroyers' material and into the hardware where it will disconnect what it needs to shut them down in case the gloves don't destroy the programming for us. Unfortunately, through all of our travels we've had limited supplies so I have been unable to duplicate the glider, therefore, I will be forced to go alone. I have been able to juice it up and add plenty of modifications to it such as more ammo, better diversion tactics and more efficient power thrusters, but compared to the humans' weapons my best recourse will be staying out of site.

"Are you sure it's time?" Gayle asks me with watery eyes.

"Yes. We've waited far too long as is. The longer we wait the more defenses they will have." We stand in the largest room of the bunker near the exit as I prep my glider for the trip south. To keep myself sane and working well with others I have made myself hard and unattached to many people around me besides Gayle

who will always hold a special place in my heart for all she has done for me. Either way, I have emotionally prepared myself for her inevitable demise.

“What do we do?” she asks.

Something we had brought up, but not gone into much detail about. The initial plan is for me to destroy as many of them as I can and to find their strongest weapons to take them out. As we know, the plan will most likely not work out that way. If I can just take down a few hundred of them I will be happy. “Wait for me to return with more reinforcements.”

Gayle, nearly crying, wraps her arms around me, “You don’t have to do this Brady.”

“Yes I do,” I hug her back.

Over the past few years Gayle and I have gotten very close. She has been my best friend and constant companion. I’ve saved her life more than once and she has saved mine more times than I’d like to admit. She had no family and no one close to her before this, but since then we have truly become inseparable. Most people at our compound believe we are a couple, but Rebecca has not once left my mind. I love Gayle, but I’m in love with my wife.

Nearly all our fellow residents have circled around us by the time she releases me from her grasp, as they have all stayed well updated on my plan against the humans.

Bishop comes to shake my hand, followed by yet another hug. “Be careful out there, alright?” He steps away allowing Eric to give me one sturdy handshake. We’ve had a close, but distant bond so a simple head nod is all we need for a goodbye.

I look around to all the hungry, sick anti-species around me and remind myself of why I am doing this. Although, I’m not sure if I will succeed, staying here turns failure into a guarantee.

“Okay, everyone. I’m off.”

I had nothing prepared, but I find short and simple to be suiting. As I walk away, glider under my arm and the gloves on my hands, I hear Gayle’s quiet whimpering over the hush of the crowd.

TIMELINE THREE

“Glider. Glider. Glider. Glider.” Bishop begins a slow chant of my nickname, which everyone joins in on by the time I’m out the door.

“Glider! Glider! Glider! Glider! Glider!”

With one last look back I take a mental snapshot of why I’m doing what I’m doing.

GLIDER

JULY 1ST, 320 P.D.

0812

11 DAYS, 5 HOURS AND 58 MINUTES LATER

‘WELCOME TO NEW KRIELM’

the sign reads outside of what used to be the anti-species’ most thriving city of Glairefield.

Even kilometers away I see the monsters they have created walking about the massive city. Everyone in the city limits travels in mechanical machines that take long strides as if they were giant insects all roaming about. Drones continue to fly overhead keeping a tight watch of the city while the ground shakes from the giant factories producing who knows what in the distance. The sky is darker over the human cities to match the darkness they’ve brought to the rest of the world.

Feeling my heart about to beat out of my chest I attempt to keep my composure.

Breath in...

Breath out...

Okay.

I power up my glider and soar forward as quickly as I can while setting the aim to the side turrets that protrude from the underside of the glider below my feet. Entering the city limits I hear the screaming below sound like small chirps as I fly by overhead. The giant, mechanical insects that could just as easily swipe me down move out of the way in fear.

‘New Krielm Military Base - This Way’

Bingo.

I tilt my left foot forward and to the right to begin opening fire at the base just a kilometer away. One after another the humans run outside with guns at the ready, but they are all taken down before they can see where to aim. My glider has never seen true battle until today and so far I’m winning!

TIMELINE THREE

1652

15 HOURS AND 20 MINUTES LATER

Where am I?

The room is spinning all around me while I try to regain my consciousness. They must have hit me with a paralyzing bullet or something. I try to hold my head to ease the aching headache, but I find both my arms are chained to the wall behind me, as are my feet to the floor. In the corner of the room sits my glider and gloves, both unharmed.

"You're awake!" I'm startled by the booming voice in the corner of the room. My vision reconnects to a single image revealing a man wearing a facemask and a full human, military uniform. He walks toward me, "What was your plan? Just come in here and kill a bunch of my men then leave? Now you must've known it wasn't going to be that easy."

It's over. Even if I get to my glider I'm in their prison and there is no escape. "Just kill me and get it over with."

"Not so fast. General Jim is going to want the honors of beating the shrep out of you before we decide to put you down. And you will be put down. Luckily for you he is out examining the new power plant but he'll be back by dawn to give you a nice welcome to the city. I hope it was worth it." The man exits the room.

I knew this was a possibility, but I never actually pictured myself in this situation. If I had thought about the possibility of torture I may never have left the compound, at least not alone. I had assumed if I were caught that I would just be killed on site. Is this what I deserve? After all I've been through, this is how my story ends?

A human moping outside the door takes a long look through the window at me then to my glider. He enters the room with his legs chained together continuing to mop up.

"Hey, what did you do?" I ask him.

He doesn't respond.

GLIDER

"Hey man, what did you do to get put in those chains?"

He whispers back, "I'm not allowed to talk to you." As he mops the floor he has trouble taking his eyes off my glider.

"You like it?" I ask hoping for some trust since we're both obviously prisoners.

He nods his head. "A glider?"

"Yeah. Get's moving pretty quick."

He looks out the door to make sure no one is coming, "Why did you open fire on us?"

"Because you all killed my family."

He hesitates to answer, "Yeah... sorry about that. It wasn't my decision."

He mops the corner of the room facing away from me.

"What did you do?" I ask him again.

"I was an inventor."

"No, not as a profession. What did you do to get your legs chained together?"

"That's the reason. I built something that used up a lot of power and the military didn't like that so my coworkers and I got framed for murders we didn't commit. I mean, we were kind of responsible, but it's not like we were holding the blades or anything."

"How long ago was this?"

"It's going on a decade now. They brought me over here from the east to help with their factory construction. When I'm not doing that, I'm mopping."

"Wow, that really sucks."

"The machine was only supposed to turn on for a second then turn off. Instead it fired up and out came the boot and then the metal man, which was way too much! I don't know. Maybe it was our fault those people died, but if all you do is create the door frame that the serial killer walked through, can you really be to blame for the murders?"

"The metal man? You mean one of the destroyer?"

He turns his head away from me again, "I shouldn't be talking about it. You shouldn't know."

TIMELINE THREE

"That's why I'm here! To find the metal men and take them down."

"You're too late. He blew up long ago."

"Well, I'm sure there is more of them causing destruction out there."

"Nope. Just the one."

I'm amazed they hadn't made more, but then again, what would this guy know? "What do you mean he came out? Came out of where?"

"I shouldn't be talking about it," he heads out of the room.

"Wait!" He stops but doesn't turn around. "I need to get out of here. I need to redeem my family."

He waits for a moment to contemplate my plea before making his decision to leave me for death. He closes the door behind him.

2322

6 HOURS AND 30 MINUTES LATER

I try to sleep, but it's no use. In a few hours their general will be here to beat me senseless. I just hope he doesn't drag it out too long, but after what I did, I can see it lasting a while. I'm not sure how well I can deal with torture.

I try to peer out the small crack in the wall to the night sky hoping to see a bit of moonlight but I see nothing but dark. It would be peaceful to know that the same moon I look at is the one Gayle and everyone back at the base look at through the ventilation shafts. If there is some sort of afterlife, then maybe Rebecca and Elijah are seeing it too. I don't believe that, but my imagination comforts me.

My calming thoughts turn from thinking about my family to the possible torture coming my way. I've heard how evil the humans are so I know they'll keep me alive for as long as possible so I can continue to suffer. They'll probably break all my bones and slice all my cartilage. They may even make it a public spectacle so all the little children can come in and take turns ripping the skin from my bones. I am not ready for this.

Crrrrrk.

GLIDER

Please, no! The door to my cell cracks open slowly letting me know the general has gotten back early. I close my eyes and wait for my feet to be cut off and my tongue ripped out.

"Can you really destroy the metal man?"

What? It's the mopping human from before. "Uhm, yeah. Yes."

Holding a pair of bolt cutters he looks around to be sure we're alone. "Look away." I turn my head as instructed. He approaches me and cuts the chains that hold my arms and legs to the room. "I have a way you can defeat him and save your people."

"I thought you said he was already dead," I point out as I shake my hands back and forth in attempt to waken them up.

"He is. But several years ago he wasn't."

Hesitantly, I grab my glider and gloves and follow him out into the hallway. "Where are we going?"

"To Emergence."

Hurrying down the hallway and staying in the shadows we pass a large glass window that looks down on a big room filled with thousands of bikes stuck in place. Each bike is being pedaled profusely by anti-species all while being whipped by machines. "Stop!" I demand while staring down at my suffering brothers and sisters.

"No, we don't have time," he says, "We have to keep moving!"

"We have to save them!"

"You will. I promise."

I trust and follow him again down the hallway feeling guilty for leaving all those innocent people. Maybe this isn't really a prisoner at all and just the beginning of my elaborate torture!

"How were you able to get in that room I was locked in?" I harshly interrogate, "Shouldn't it have a clearance code or something?"

"It wasn't a cell. It was a meeting room. When we found you we turned it into a cell. Most anti-species are forced into slave labor and none are allowed in the human prisons."

He could be lying. "Why haven't you cut yourself free like you did me?"

TIMELINE THREE

He points down to a small blinking light on each ankle. "They'll know." He pushes open the door to a room at the end of the hallway, "In here."

The room is large and empty besides one large doorway type box in the corner, which has been made large enough for a couple grown men to fit inside.

"This is the Emergence," he says, "It was kept at the military base until you opened fire on it. For fear of more anti-species showing up it was brought here for safe keeping. I watched as they wheeled it in. This will bring you back to the day that the metal man was released to the world."

No way am I stepping into this device they have prepared for me. "What are you talking about?"

"Long story short, it's a time machine."

"Right," I can't push the sarcasm harder.

"You need to trust me and be ready to take on the metal man when you get through! Now step inside."

"No way! I'm not getting in that thing!"

"Think about the alternative. If you don't do this you're going to spend the next thirty years being tortured and forced into slave labor. I can't go with you because there needs to be someone on the outside operating it, but I can send you back."

The humans have made this torture process way too elaborate. "Why are you trying to help me? Why would you go against your own race?"

"Because no one wanted this," I sense the sincerity in his voice, "This is pure carnage. I believe humans and anti-species could coexist, but thanks to the humans the anti-species will be wiped out before the end of the century."

"But why risk so much? You're going to be punished for sure! It's not your job to save us."

"Yeah, but it's the least I could do. If you succeed, they'll be a version of me that doesn't have to go through all this."

"The anti-specie! He's escaped!" a voice yells out down the hallway.

"Quick," he yells, "Get in! There is no time!"

GLIDER

He starts pressing a bunch of buttons on the computer forcing lights to flicker all over the machine. A generator type thing attached to the giant box starts to hum filling the room with a growing roar.

Why would I trust him about this? Even if he really is trying to help me escape he is still human. No matter what, he is evil to the core. He has no sympathy and no heart for anyone else, especially the anti-species.

“What are you doing?” he cries, “You’re going to miss your window!”

Then again, I don’t have any other hope. If he’s lying then the worse case scenario is I start my torture a few hours earlier. I could walk back to my cell and put myself into more agonizing suspense or just go with his ridiculous idea. It can’t be time travel, but maybe it could take me somewhere, anywhere.

I step forward onto the platform in the doorway. “What’s your name?” I ask.

“Ocean. Ocean Yannick,” he presses a button causing the machine to send out a bright, white light filling the room.

Flash!

TIMELINE THREE

CHAPTER 10
THE SEPARATION

TIMELINE SIX
ALEX

TIMELINE SIX

SAM

JULY 9TH, 312 P.D.

0400

7 YEARS, 11 MONTHS, 27 DAYS, 19 HOURS AND 22 MINUTES EARLIER

“THE ANTI-SPECIES ATTACK THE HUMANS,”

Tyran tells me, “They destroy everything in the east. I believe that is why you are here.”

Tyran and I travel northeast to the town of Ura, as the sky turns from a dark purple to a light red with the rising sun. The long horizon is filled with scattered motor homes and broken down restaurants making it clear that this area was once a thriving community. Squatting anti-species with nowhere else to go watch at a safe distance as the kid and I walk through their recycled town.

“What do you mean?” I continue the conversation while trying to ignore the dirty anti-species creeping about around us.

“I used the doorway to come back and save my family,” he tells me, “I believe you came back to save your race.” He is really committed to the time travel story.

//Recalling memories...

{Warning} = ^Files damaged.

Only bits and pieces of memories come to mind. I see the anti-species in the east killing innocent humans - women, children, everybody. It's not clear what is happening, but obviously something disastrous has happened to my people and the anti-species are the cause.

“If I could be the savior of the human race, why are you helping me?” I ask, “You're an anti-specie.”

“Before I came back I was in the anti-species ranks. They were all dark and brutal with the humans who didn't provoke us at all. We attacked you all first. That's not the side I want to be on. Plus, if you are going to take out the anti-species ranks, that's where I will find the flying man and avenge my family.”

SAM

He speaks like he already knows my mission when I don't even know. "How do you know that's where you'll find him?" I ask wanting to know more about this war that took place and ignoring the ridiculous part about a time machine.

"I had joined the anti-species ranks before coming back in time. I saw the flying man plenty of times, but he was killed before I could get him alone."

//Deadline = 17:00.

//Speed up.

My legs quicken their pace without my consent, but luckily Tyran is able to keep up by using his super powers or advanced technology or whatever it is.

"Sam? What's going on?" he asks.

"I don't know. I don't have control of my legs. They are forcing me to move faster because we're about to miss a deadline."

Nearly quadrupling our speed we are surprisingly able to hold a conversation with each other. "So what's up with you?" I yell to him over the pounding wind.

"What do you mean?" he yells back.

"You know what I mean."

He thinks for a moment before responding. "My whole family has these powers. They were given to us by the anti-specie retaliation centuries ago and they've been passed down to me."

!! WARNING !! SUPERIOR ANTI-SPECIE !!

{Target} = ^Neutralize.

What the hell?

//Blades activated.

Abort! Abort!

//Denied.

{Torso} = ^0 degree - ^120 degree

No! Stop!

!! WARNING !! ATTACK BLOCKED !!

"Sam! What are you doing?" Tyran and I both come to a halt as he uses his energy shields to block my blows.

//Shoulder turret activated.

TIMELINE SIX

//Fire.

!! WARNING !! ATTACK BLOCKED !!

Mission abort!

//Denied.

//Activate rapid fists.

“Sam! Sam stop! I’m not trying to hurt you!” he’s yelling to me, but I can’t stop my attacks or even speak back to him to explain that I can’t stop. I have zero control! My suit tries to stab him over and over again, but luckily my blades can’t penetrate his shield.

!! WARNING !! ATTACKS BLOCKED !!

He is helping me! Stop!

//Pausing attacks.

//Determining probability of use...

//Activate critical decision-making...

{Kill him} = ^Direct mission. ^The enemy. ^Purpose for creation.

{Keep him alive} = ...

He’s my friend!

//Irrelevant

{Keep him alive} = ...

What the hell?

He wants to kill the lead anti-specie admiral!

{Keep him alive} = ^Common goal.

//Decision made.

//Disengage weapons.

I feel control come back to me as I take a few steps away from Tyran to tell him he is safe.

Worried I may have hurt him I ask, “Are you okay?”

//Threat = ^25%.

//High alert.

He follows my lead and puts a good distance between the two of us, “Why did you attack me? I didn’t do anything to you!”

"I didn't mean to! My body took over as soon as you talked about your powers. It said you were a 'superior' or something."

"What? A superior anti-specie? Like the retaliation?" the fear is obvious in his voice as it cracks, "I am *not* one of those!"

Tyran starts walking off.

"Where are you going? I'm not going to hurt you!" I feel bad for him. A kid his age shouldn't be out on his own out here. "My vision told me we're working together now!"

"You don't know that!" he hollers back, "I'm just going to get the flying man on my own! If I stick with you I'm going to get myself killed!"

//Deadline = 17:00.

//Walk.

My legs are starting to move north again out of my control.

"Tyran! Be careful!" I yell to him, but he doesn't hear me or he just doesn't respond.

I don't want to hurt anyone, but if this is my mission I must continue. I wouldn't be here if it weren't important to the humans. Hopefully he'll be okay on his own.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 11

THE STORY OF TYRAN PART 2

SAM

TIMELINE FOUR

TYRAN

TIMELINE FOUR

TYRAN

MARCH 9TH, 313 P.D.

0412

8 MONTHS, 5 DAYS AND 12 MINUTES LATER

IT HASN'T BEEN EASY HERE.

I've been in ranks for several months and speaking is getting more understandable every day, but being around these people nonstop is driving me crazy! They place me in class to help me speak and act properly, since it turns out Flint didn't teach me so good. It turns out I'm not the only one who doesn't know the language or how to use the voice box as my class is full of students much older than me. Luckily for me English is first language I have attempted to learn so it seems to come easy to me allowing me to pass many of the other students in my class.

My platoon in the ranks has a few dozens of men, each of them dirtier and more vulgar than the last. If the conversation isn't about 'plowing chicks' it's killing humans. Don't these people have any self-respect? I haven't showed them what I can do with my powers, as I don't like to be singled out, plus I don't care for them to know anything about me.

"Yo, Tyran!" Dee hollers to me.

"Yo, Dee. How goes it?" I met Dee a few days into being enlisted and immediately he felt as though he needed to be my 'friend', but I know because of my age he wanted to be more like a father figure. He doesn't know that didn't work out so well for the last guy.

"Not bad. Have you heard the news?" he answers.

"No. What?"

"We got the date for shipping out. The rumors for the preemptive attack are true!"

"Preemptive?" Dee is somewhat my friend because he is patient with words I don't know and is teaching me new ones all the time.

TYRAN

"We're going to attack the bastards before they attack us!" I had heard bastards once before and now know it means the humans. "We're gonna go over there and slit each one of their loud mouth throats. I can't wait to see them bleed!"

This is why I do not like the anti-species sometimes. I know I'm just a kid, but for anyone that should be too dark to say.

"And I hear the admiral will be here soon. He's gonna have a big speech and everything!"

I've heard rumors of the admiral too, but he has never came by our platoon since its creation. I guess he's a great leader or something.

"And, I'm not supposed to know this," he continues, "so keep it to yourself, but he is supposed to come with the Anti-Species Retaliation."

The Retaliation! I wasn't sure they were even still around. If they are working with the anti-species ranks then I know they are all truly evil.

APRIL 10TH, 313 P.D.

1452

1 MONTH, 1 DAY, 10 HOURS AND 40 MINUTES LATER

"He's here! The admiral is here!"

Everyone rushes over to the stage that was set up last night for the motivational speech. I don't care too much to see the admiral, as I don't plan to do any killing on his behalf, but I go to see him because I don't have a choice. My only goal was to get away from Carleena and I've succeeded. Now I need to use these people to make my way to the flying man.

"I'm sure you've all heard rumors," the admiral's voice rings over the loud speakers, "and I want to let you know, they are all true! The humans will attack our land and destroy our way of life! They plan to enslave and murder us! They do not care if you are a child or a woman! They will mercilessly kill each and every one of you! We will not let that happen!"

"Come on," Dee says grabbing onto me, "let's get closer!"

He tugs me through the crowd pushing us closer to the stage.

TIMELINE FOUR

"Today, we have the best and brightest working on not only the defense but the offense against the humans! We will not sit back and only defend our way of life from the hateful, greedy humans, but we will claim their way of life as our own! If they cannot join us, we will have no other choice but to destroy them!"

Dee and I make it within view of the admiral just in time to see him yell out, "The Anti-Species Retaliation is here!"

The crowd cheers, but I stay silent as I recognize the admiral.

It's the flying man!

Every inch of him recognizable from that day he took my family! I could do it now. I could kill him! He would never expect it.

Just as I prepare my power to take him down a dozen men, each wearing red bandanas, walk on stage behind him.

"I present to you, the Fleet Rufescent!" the flying man yells out.

I pull back my power realizing now is not the best time. Each of the anti-species wearing the red bandanas is taller, more muscular and toned than the flying man. Their dark red, shiny jumpsuits hold tight to their bodies and slim way down to the ankles where they wear extremely large boots that stick out nearly half a meter in front of them. They step forward and, as if in a choreographed dance, they jump in the air, but through some sort of magic don't come down immediately. Somehow their airtime is extended several seconds while they punch and kick non-existent flying enemies. They drop back to their feet and strike a finishing pose. Dee applauds uncontrollably while I continue to clench my fists in rage.

"Through a scientific anomaly," the mass murderer on stage explains, "we are able to briefly counteract the affects of gravity. While the boots they wear are responsible for the hovering, their super speed and agility are thanks to decades of medical tests and biological changes in their DNA." The reds walk off the stage as a dozen more anti-species wearing green bandanas are walking on. While I thought the red bandanas looked tough, these greens look like machines with muscles bulging every which way. They are all shirtless wearing some strange metal spine contraptions that start at the nape of the neck and continue down to the tailbone while expanding out to each arm stopping on back of their hands.

TYRAN

"These men, through intensive training and biological miracles have become true warriors able to take on the toughest the humans have!"

The greens surround the stage grabbing under the platform's foundation and, without struggling, they lift the entire stage up and over their heads with the flying man arrogantly standing atop it. I look to our platoon leader who is terrified that the stage he and his men put up won't withstand the strain. The heavy stage is placed back down, unharmed. The greens walk away accompanied by the loud applause of the crowd.

This performance continues through the other groups of colored bandanas to which all of them had some crazy features such as jelly-like skin, six arms instead of two and the ability to disappear completely from sight.

"No, this is not magic, but complex science with centuries of research attached!" the flying man explains as the invisible, black bandanas walk off stage, "We owe these great warriors and the scientists who made these discoveries our lives. If you don't thank them, your families will when you come home safe. You cannot succeed in the east without them and they cannot succeed without you. We will strive for peace. If peace is out of reach then domination is our only option! We will not be taken over and we will not be pushed aside! Today we march! Gather your supplies! We leave at sixteen hundred hours!" The flying man walks off stage allowing the platoon leader to step up and give us our less motivational orders for shipping out.

The murderer is too well protected now so I will follow him. But soon, he will die by my hand.

JUNE 8TH, 313 P.D.

0752

1 MONTH, 28 DAYS, 16 HOURS AND 28 MINUTES LATER

"What are you going to do to the first one you find?" Dee asks me, shaking with excitement about coming in contact with his first human.

TIMELINE FOUR

"I don't know. I guess kill him." I have no plan to kill anyone but the flying man but I don't want to let these men know that.

"If I can get close enough, I'm not even going to use my gun," he says pulling a blade from his boot, "I'm just gonna gut him and watch him bleed! These rats don't deserve the life they've been given." I know not all rank members are as bad as Dee but from what I overhear they're all bloodthirsty for the humans. Since the day they were born they've been told rumors that the humans are all monsters and want nothing more than world domination. It may be true but they have no proof. No anti-specie has seen a human in over a hundred years from what I hear, so how would they know?

We've been marching for weeks on end, travelling from one base to another rounding up all the anti-species we can. The cities that don't have a ranks basecamp, which the majority don't, are where we pick up stragglers and wanderers. "They will be used on the frontline to keep us real warriors safe for battle," Dee tells me.

Disgusting.

We've just arrived at the shoreline of Timberwolf where several dozen ships are waiting for us to board and take us to the east. They are built of wood and metal, powered by some strange energy beams that heat the water behind them to project them forward. A few kilometers away there are large flying machines being built to bring over the other anti-specie citizens after we clear a path for them. They will hold weapons and more soldiers to fully take over the east, so I hear. The flying man is high above us showing off his small flying machine and trying to scare us with his authority.

"That man is a genius," Dee leans over and says to me as we lug our bags onto the ship. "You know, I hear he put this together all himself. If it weren't for him the ranks would still be stuck to only two or three cities instead of the entire west as it is now. He made the orders to get the ships ready, to start the recruitment and even, now I'm not sure about this one, but even single handedly found out about the human attacks. I don't know how he did it!"

"What makes you think he is telling the truth?" Everyone admires the flying man so I've held my tongue, but I just let it just slip out.

TYRAN

"What do you mean?" Dee seems offended, "Why would he lie about that?"

"I don't know. Forget it."

We walk for a second longer before Dee leans to me again and says with a quieter tone, "Personally, I don't care if he made it up or not. I'm sick of us anti-species getting the short end of the dick." I'm not great with English, but I know what the correct analogy sounds like. "They sent us over here hundreds of years ago because they were scared of us for no reason. Now, because of that, we're giving them a reason to be scared of us. It's time we stop sharing this world and take it for ourselves!"

This society truly is sad and I want no part of it. 'I'm only here to avenge my family' is what I want to admit to him. Please Olena, keep these monsters from succeeding.

JUNE 14TH, 313 P.D.

0233

5 DAYS, 19 HOURS AND 21 MINUTES LATER

"Incoming!" One of the green superiors with the muscles holds up a large metal shield, which protects our ship from the bullets coming at us from the shores of the east.

After several days of rocking on the open ocean and being cramped in small quarters we arrive to the land of the humans in the dead of night. The firing of bullets and missiles from the shore has lit up the pitch-black horizon showing off their inadequate defense. I wasn't expecting to travel this far with the ranks as I thought I'd be able to get to the flying man much sooner. My ears ring as the bullets continue to bombard our ship surely filling the hold with water. Looking to our neighboring boat I see the first death of one of the other rank members. His face explodes out the back of his skull like a hoidenberry popping between the tongue and roof of the mouth. I'm shaking as I try to hold back the water in my eyes from dripping out as his comrades on the boat simply drag his body to the back of the ship and take his place in the attack.

TIMELINE FOUR

What am I doing here? I didn't mean to sign up for this. If I had know what it was going to be like-

"Ready?" Dee interrupts my thought as he anxiously bounces up and down holding a rifle in his hand.

I'm here to kill the flying man. Am I ready to die for a cause I don't believe in? No. Am I ready to avenge my family and leave this horrible place? "Yes."

We follow our training and jump to the smaller motorboats attached to the side of the ship. Dee and myself, unfortunately, got assigned the same one along with a few others that sit down with us. I nearly tip out as we splash down on the rocky currents.

"Here we go!" Dee hollers, powering up the motorboat speeding past the others around us.

We have a speed we're supposed to keep to, but he has decided to go far passed it to get to the shore as quickly as he can. While I'm about to tell him to slow down I realize everyone else in the boat is gripping their guns, nearly pulling the trigger prematurely from pure excitement to kill the humans.

Olena, it's Tyran here. Please look out for me and the humans today. If they are truly innocent, please spare their lives from these dark rank members who are unable to see the carnage they crave. If you can also keep me safe in these travels so I do not end up a corpse before getting to the flying man, I would be truly grateful. I know you have plenty of things to with this battle going on and everything, but if you are able to check in on me every once in a while to make sure I'm okay, then I would be truly grateful. Thank you for all you do for me and this world as you are not obligated to do any of it, yet do it anyways. En nombre de Olena oramos.

I open my eyes to see the giant, glowing bullets fly through the air into the water ahead rocking our boat left and right as if it's about to capsize.

Crash!

The small boat that held four men next us now sinks under the surface after being hit by one of the giant, fiery bullets.

What am I doing here? I didn't want to come this far to just die because this psychopath steering the boat!

TYRAN

One is headed straight for us! "Dee!" He's distracted! He's not going to react in time! We're about to get hit! The electricidad flows from my hands and the energy expands in a long sheet above our heads, protecting our boat. The impact pushes the entire boat down, but doesn't destroy it. The giant bullet bounces off my protective energy shield and into the water nearly breaking my arms at the elbows in the process. Our boat levels out with just a couple inches of water sitting at our feet.

"Dude," Dee can't say much more. The electricidad glows in the dark so I've caught the attention of a few of the boats around us.

"Let's go! We don't have time!" I take the motor controls from Dee's hand to get to land. If we just sit here we'll be dead in minutes.

I drive until our boat maroons on the rocks forcing us all on the sand. Many of those from the boats around us don't leave my side. *"We're with you Tyran!"* one yells.

I don't want to be with you murderers.

"Tyran!" Dee yells not in support, but to warn. Without turning to look I create the wall of energy to take the impact of a hundred bullets coming toward us from some sort of turret machine. I make another field of electricidad below the first to shoot the energy forward knocking the turret gunner to the ground. He attempts to jump out of the way, but he is unable to as his body crashes into the dirt. The other members of my platoon run forward and surround him while he's away from the trigger. The tall human curls himself into a ball on the ground as the anti-species, who look like children compared to him, begin to beat him senseless.

I make eye contact with the suffering man as I watch Dee pull a large knife from his boot and stab it into the human's back. My stomach summersaults inside me while blood oozes from the human's mouth as he attempts to pull himself away from the group of anti-species surrounding him. With a swift kick from one of the other rank members the human's nose shatters to bits in his skull. Unable to bare the site any longer I turn to face the splashing ocean to try and forget where I'm at. Bullets firing and bombs exploding, but I can only hear the screams of the tortured human.

Please Olena! End his suffering. End all of their suffering.

TIMELINE FOUR

End my suffering.

1218

9 HOURS AND 26 MINUTES LATER

The sun has been up for hours while the fighting continues. Without fail we were able to take down the St. Srana base on the bay and march forward taking down all nearby towns and villages. Everyone who was in the boat with me stays by my side for their own selfish reasons.

"We head to Krielmopolis!" The flying man. He is close! I turn to see him flying ahead of the Retaliation just a few dozen meters away.

Whizz!

I hear something else? Something...

"Look out!" the warning from far away comes too late. A long-range missile flies toward the superiors, but hits their leader instead. It hits the flying man! He takes the full impact and erupts in a million pieces showering the soldiers behind him in his blood. The flying man's body and machine parts are scattered across the desert ground.

"No!" I seem upset by his death, but not for the reason the others think. I sprint toward the destruction hoping there is a part of him still alive for me to kill. Seeing him die wasn't good enough! I was supposed to be the one! I had things to say to him! I wanted the last thing he saw to be my face! I've imagined this moment for so long and now it was just taken away from me! Why would you take this from me Olena?

"There's another one!" I look up to see another missile barreling towards us. The electricidad pours from my hands and I create the longest wall of energy I've ever made. It's large enough to protect all the anti-species stretching a kilometer or so in each direction. The impact doesn't hurt anyone but me as I'm thrown to the ground from the strength of the projectile.

The green bandana superiors who are left alive don't hesitate to run forward and help me hold the wall of energy up as it is hit several more times from more

TYRAN

incoming missiles. I push myself to my feet and place my hands back on the electricidad to keep it from fading away. The greens look to me with amazement and shock for what I have created. I don't even need to use any strength now as they are taking the full impacts for me. I just need to touch it every once in a while to keep it strong and firm.

After a few seconds the missiles stop so I can pull my hands away allowing the energy to fade away.

No one moves or speaks for a moment as they try and digest what they have just witnessed from me.

"Tyran! Tyran!" Dee begins the cheer of my name.

One after another the rest of the ranks join in.

"Tyran! Tyran! Tyran! Tyran!" they cheer my name, but I feel no joy. I feel no pride. I do not care for these killers. I only cared to avenge my family.

I failed.

It's time for me to leave.

I kick off my shoes and use the energy on my feet to shoot me forward toward the middle of the east.

"No wait!" Dee yells.

I do not stop. I don't know where I'm going, but I do not stop.

JUNE 22ND, 313 P.D.

1512

8 DAYS, 2 HOURS AND 54 MINUTES LATER

'Welcome to Krielmopolis'

The sign reads. Somehow I ended up getting to the same city the ranks are headed to next. Large and spread out, the human city of Krielmopolis is mostly open desert land with a few tall buildings here and there with a large group of buildings in the middle. Walking toward the city I pass a small building all by itself surrounded by yellow authority tape as if someone had died there.

'Lab 87'

TIMELINE FOUR

I've been on my own for several days and it's been a nightmare. I've already gone through all my food and water and now have been wandering aimlessly trying to find a place to go. With the flying man alive I had purpose, but now – now I don't know what to do. Olena leaves me lost.

The anti-species should be here in no more than a day so if I can't redeem my family, I can at least save these humans. Walking down the streets I draw in plenty of attention from the tall humans that are walking about, unaware of their coming doom.

"Ahhhh! Anti-specie!" a woman screams when she sees me.

"I'm not here to hurt you! I'm here to warn you of what's com-"

"Oh god! All the military is gone! We're all going to die!" The humans all run away from me as if they can't hear what I say. I guess word has made it here about what happened at the shore.

The military is gone? They must all be headed toward the ranks to cut them off.

With the humans running away from me and clearing a path, I come across the rundown military base of 'Ft. Bildine'. Where the vehicles are supposed to be, there is nothing; no guards watching the base and no police watching the town. The doors to the base were left open as if the entire force rushed away without a thought. They just left them defenseless. These poor humans don't stand a chance.

Bang!

A bullet ricochets off the wall next to me. Turning around quickly with my electricidad ready, I see one of the humans pointing a rifle at me with several more humans standing watch behind him.

"We're not going to let you just come in here and take our home!" he says as his hands shake with fear. He doesn't deserve this, but I don't deserve to die either.

With as little force as I can, I shoot a wall of energy toward him knocking him to the ground.

Bang!

Another bullet from high up in a nearby building hits the ground next to my foot. Afraid of another shot being taken at me I run and hide inside the abandoned

fort. The humans screaming in both fear and rage echo outside the door as I slam it shut.

Dim light shines in from the openings in the ceiling illuminating the dust floating around in the empty hallways. Walking away from the door I look into the open rooms lining the corridor outside the reception area. The gunroom, ransacked and torn apart, the bathroom, dark and filthy and the kitchen - not empty! Not completely anyways.

I find a small amount of water at the bottom of a bucket, which I hope is good to drink. In it floats dust particles and Olena-knows-what, but at this point I don't care. I chug what little is left and pick at what little crumbs I can find on the counter tops. After getting all I could find inside my stomach I make my way back down the hallway to try and find a back door or a different exit away from the humans. There is one door closed in the entire hallway and when I try to pull it open I discover it's locked shut.

"Hello? Is someone there?" a dry, cracking voice calls out to me from inside the locked room.

"Hello?" I respond.

A group of voices start screaming out for help.

"Help us!"

"We're trapped in here!"

"We need water!"

I push and pull but can't get it open, but I think know what might.

"Stand back!" I yell. Small amounts of electricidad rapidly shoot from my palms, but they only make a dent in the door without opening it.

The first cracking voice yells out to me again, *"Check around for something to pry it open from your end. Most of the restraint is coming from our side so all you need to do is get the door-"* a couple coughs mixed with phlegm and liquid interrupt his sentence. He clears his throat, *"If you can get the door over the bottom latch we should be able to push it open."*

TIMELINE FOUR

I run back in the kitchen to find anything that resembles a crow bar, but all I can find is a large butchers knife. Hoping it'll work, I sprint back to the door and jam the knife between the door and the ground.

"I'm trying!" I holler, "I can't get it!"

"Slide it to the left as far as it will go. You'll feel a release latch next to a larger one. Push the smaller release latch up then to the left."

I do as he says and the door lock releases. The door being urgently thrown open pushes me down to the ground letting the men and women sprint out of the room pass me toward the kitchen. They are nearly naked and covered in dirt and blood and have obviously not eaten in a long time. One almost stops to hug me until he sees what I am.

"Don't worry," I tell him, "I'm here to help."

I hear the other humans in the kitchen rummaging around trying to find any bit of food they can, unfortunately for them I know there isn't anything left. Looking inside the room where they were at is a disaster. One corner of the room has been dedicated to their waste while another has been used for a dead body covered in a lab coat. Apparently one wasn't able to hold out.

Walking back to the kitchen I see they have found some old bread that I had decided against eating for fear of getting sick.

"Do you have any water?" one of the women asks ignoring the fact that I am not human.

I shake my head 'no'.

"What's your name?" a man nervously asks with a mouthful of green mold.

"My name is Tyran."

"I'm Muvato. This is my team," he responds.

They rip moldy kitchen scraps from each other's hands as they refuse to make eye contact with one another. Not much of a team. "Why were you locked up?" I ask.

"I guess it doesn't matter now that we've been taken over by you guys, but we created a time machine and apparently the military didn't like it. When the call came in that your people were attacking, everyone just left. No one let us out."

"A time machine?"

"Yeah. It can send things or people to the past."

What? I didn't think this was possible! Olena sure is great for what she had planned for me. "How far?"

"I don't know. It's probably around here somewhere."

"No, how far can you send someone back?"

"July 2nd, 312. 15:15."

I don't remember the exact date it happened, but that may be enough time to save my family. "Can you send me?" I beg.

The scientists look to me confused and concerned. "What do you plan to do?" another asks me.

"I need to save my family!"

"Do you plan to help the anti-species win this war?"

"No."

I use my age to my advantage and look as innocent as possible as they are obviously skeptical to help me.

"What do we get out of it?" Muvato asks me.

I rip the bag off my back and toss it to him, "You can have whatever is in there. There is a gun and ammo for you."

Like a group of deranged animals they dig through the bag, pushing each other back and grabbing what they can for themselves.

"No water? No food?" one complains.

I take a step back in shock as Muvato lifts the gun I had just given to him and points it at me, "You helped us escape and for that I am thankful, but you're still an anti-specie." With the gun barrel not straying from my chest the scientist creeps toward the door.

If Olena truly made the technology to go back in time I need to use it. "Please, Mr. Muvato. I need this," I nearly cry, partly out of desperation and partly for pity, "My family was killed right in front of my eyes. I need to try and save them. Please."

TIMELINE FOUR

He steps out into the hallway with the gun still pointing at me, "Sorry kid. You're not human. You can't be trusted." The rest of the scientists follow him out into the hallway.

"Please!" if I weren't so dehydrated I would have tears running down my cheeks.

But it's too late. They're gone.

I collapse to my knees feeling hopeless. Even if the machine is around here, I won't know what to do with it.

What am I supposed to do Olena? What is my purpose?

"Hey?"

Startled, I jump to my feet as I see one of the humans hadn't left yet.

"My name is Ocean," he says, "What do you really plan to do?"

In his current condition he looks only a few years older than I am, but for all I know we could be the same age. I can't tell the age of a human. "My family had a small village in Old Mexico called La Palomar. The flying man, the admiral of the anti-species ranks, dropped a bomb on it and killed them all. I want to go back to save their lives."

He ponders for a moment, "If it weren't for you, we would have all died in there. I will help you."

Yes!

"Come with me." I follow Ocean down the hallway as he peers in each door looking for something.

"He's in here somewhere!" the humans out to kill me have entered the building!

"Who the hell is that?" Ocean asks.

"A small mob of humans are trying to get me! We need to hurry!"

We rush down the fort corridors as he searches what feels like every room in the building.

"Here! It's in here!" Ocean yells having found what he was looking for.

I rush over to him as quickly as I can.

"I hear him down this way! Let's get him!"

TYRAN

I follow Ocean into the room to see a giant box-thing big enough for a person to stand in. "Quick, get in!" he quietly urges me while he hooks electrical cables up to the back of the machine. I push a desk and whatever else I can find from the room in front of the door to hold back the humans.

"Down this hallway!"

"Ocean! Hurry!" I yell to him as I get to the platform of the machine.

Crash!

The humans push on the door as Ocean rushes to a light screen on the side of the machine.

"There is no where to go anti-scum! Get out here!"

"How much longer?" Terrified, I clench my hands hoping he will hurry.

Crash!

The door is slammed on again pushing the desk even more.

A hum grows as lights and sparks go off all around me in the machine. I hope that's a good sign. "I hear something in here Ocean!"

The door is thrown open with a group of humans entering, all with their guns pointed at me. "Get away from the anti-species, kid!" the rifle owner yells.

Quickly Ocean bends down and picks up a small box attached to the machine.

Switch.

The lights around me begin to brighten scaring the other humans in the room.

"Good luck Tyran!" Ocean screams over the growing roar of the machine.

"Thank y-"

Flash!

TIMELINE FOUR

CHAPTER 12

THE PROMOTION

TIMELINE SIX
ALEX

TIMELINE SIX

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

JULY 4TH, 312 P.D.

1200

11 MONTHS, 18 DAYS, 3 HOURS AND 12 MINUTES EARLIER

“HE IS WHAT WE NEED.”

My future self is meeting with the lab coats, Matija Jabaar and Dr. Haru Xaun, the two scientists I had almost met with a few days ago at the technological advancement meeting. The two of them and myself sit at the table while my future self, the general, paces the meeting room here at Ft. Bildine. Matija continues his sales pitch, “Sam will be able to give you the defense you crave from the outside villages and, god forbid, the anti-species. With his impenetrable skin and the serrated-”

“You don’t understand,” my future self interrupts him, “We created your monster. He was spotted two days ago stealing a boat from Tepus Dock and is now heading to the west. Now we need to know his weakness.”

It’s weakness? “But sir,” I whisper to him, “I thought we created it? Why would we need a weakness?”

“Sakusei sa remashita ka?” the silent lab coat finally opens his mouth with gibberish, “Wareware wa yuiitsu no aojashin o motte imasu.”

Jabaar translates, “We’ve never created anything yet, not even a functioning prototype.”

“Yes, you have,” the general replies, “In a few months you create the robot and send it back. For reasons I can’t release to you now, you must tell me its weakness.”

“Send it back?” these two lab coats were obviously not associated with the time machine lab coats.

“If you want to help your race and save your job you need to tell me its weakness! It is imperative that we know immediately!”

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

"It has no weakness," lab coat number one says overly confident, "Even a sheet of our graphene skin a molecule thick is strong enough to withstand a mortar blast point blank."

"Then you have a new task lab coats," the general says, "You're one and only job will be to find a weakness. I don't want you working on your computers. I don't want you working on new vehicles. I only want you to pursue a weakness for the robot. Do you understand?"

"Sir," lab coat leans over the table, "it has no weakness. I don't know how else I can say that."

"Everything has a weakness!" the general yells slamming his fists down on the table, "If you can't break the skin, destroy the brain! Send an electric pulse in or freeze him or something! I need him to shut down."

"Okay," lab coat number one reluctantly stands up, "we'll get started right away." The two of them exit the room.

"General," I ask as he has a seat next to me, "if Sam is our greatest advantage over the anti-species ranks, why do you want to find a way to stop him?"

"I'm not sure how that time machine works and I'm not willing to change your future by telling you something you shouldn't know yet. It could create some paradox or something like that. You will find out eventually."

What in the hell would happen? "Can you at least tell me the next part of the plan?"

"What the hell is going on?" I recognize that voice. My immediate superior, the current General Sebastian Jim, kicks the door of the meeting room open.

I stand up quick and throw my arm over my chest in respect.

"Who the hell is this?" Jim puts his hand on my future self's shoulder.

"You're going to want to take your hand off of me Sebastian." I wouldn't dare call him anything but general, much less his fist name!

Well, I guess I would.

General Jim looks deep at my future self then to me, "Greer, are you related to this frik?"

"Uhm..."

TIMELINE SIX

General Greer thankfully chimes in while ripping General Jim's hand off his suit. "Your services are no longer needed Sebastian. You can stick around, but I am your general now. You report directly to me. Your first assignment is to-"

"You don't speak to me like that you worthless sack of piss!" The testosterone levels are off the charts as Jim hollers out the door behind him, "Someone get in here with handcuffs and bring this scum to a jail cell until I have time to deal with him!"

"That's fine," General Greer says while two men rush in and pull my future self's hands behind his back, "I'll just need to speak to Mr. Hagerfield before I'm locked up."

Though I don't know what he's talking about, the look of fear fills Jim's eyes. "Stop! Stop!" he yells to the men who are pulling General Greer away, "All of you get out. You too Greer."

"He stays," my future self says as the confused henchmen exit the room. "Now here's what's going to happen Sebastian. You're going to give up your position as General and grant me all power to the funds and troops. I will also be taking your spot on the Eitman board so I can have full control of the power distribution to the military."

"That's not how the chain of command works," the fear shivers in his voice.

"In a state of national catastrophe, as general, you can appoint whoever you like in any position if you feel it necessary. It feels like a national catastrophe to me. I mean, a dozen men were just slaughtered down in a fort under your supervision."

"But just giving up my seat? That doesn't happen."

"There has never been a reason for it to happen. Doesn't mean it wouldn't happen now."

For the first time I see Jim shaking with fear. He's always been in full control, but now he has been shut down by my future self - by me. I don't know how it's possible, but somewhere along the line I become the biggest badass of all time!

Jim steps up to General Greer and tries to say as quietly as he can, "You have no proof. It wouldn't matter."

My future self's response is too quiet to hear, but is immediately followed by Jim walking out of the room.

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

General Greer fixes his suit where it had been scuffed by Jim's hand.

"What did you say to him?" I ask the first of many questions.

"I told him I know where to find the body."

Still no straight answers from him. My future self is a fan of riddles.

"Let's just say your old general isn't the stand up guy you think he is," he says,

"Now, let's get moving! We've got a war to win!"

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 13

THE STORY OF SAM PART 2

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

TIMELINE TWO
SAM

TIMELINE TWO

ALEX

NOVEMBER 29TH, 312 P.D.

0702

4 MONTHS, 24 DAYS, 19 HOURS AND 2 MINUTES LATER

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN

when all of the enlisted need to go through their national defense tests, which include target practice, agility, hand-eye coordination, speed, patience and endurance. Last year I came in third out of eight hundred men. This year I'm in the running for first.

I was at the top of my class in both academic and physical tests making me a prime candidate for the defense efforts. This means several different task forces approach me constantly wanting me to join their force. So far I have stuck with the sniper program as it uses the best qualities and skills I have to offer. It's been three years since I was out of the academy and no need for defense has shown itself, so mostly I work as local police for the city of Griever. I have no kids and no wife, which allows me to dedicate a hundred and ten percent into doing the best job possible.

"Hey douchebag!" my best friend, Chase Thompson, shoves me as he walks pass to take his place at the starting line of the hundred meter dash. "Ready to get your ass kicked?"

"You know me, I'm ready for anything." I've never lost a race to Chase once in my life, but he likes to believe that I've never won.

Chase and I met when we were twelve and have done just about everything together since. Our physical fitness started when we were young when we decided to start throwing a ball back and forth in the front yard. When we both believed we could throw further than the other one, our life-long competition began. From sprinting, to jumping, to spitting the furthest, we've challenged each other every step of the way. These contests have translated well to my military career where I've been able to surpass many of my fellow military mates, as well as Chase. Not wanting to be outdone in shooting practice, Chase decided to go into the pilot

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

academy where I have shown no interest. I'm smart enough to have been a lab coat, but the thought of sitting in a room all day trying to do math or mix chemicals would drive me insane, so the sniper program is where I've ended up.

"Take your marks!"

Chase and I, along with a half dozen other men, crouch down and prepare to sprint.

"I've had some bad gas, so you're in for a pretty miserable run," Chase says. Poor guy is always in denial.

Bang!

The blank fires and we're off!

Head to head, I casually jog while he huffs and puffs trying to keep up. The other men are no challenge for either of us as we begin our first and second place leads. We make eye contact just in time for me to throw him a wink and push off. Kicking my feet up a little more than I should I am able to knock dust and dirt all over Chase's torso until I'm far enough away where even that can't reach him. I pass the finish line seconds before anyone else does.

"You're lucky the sun was in my eyes!" he cries as he comes to a stop holding his knees trying to catch his breath.

"How the hell does that stop you from running faster? It's a straight course!" Not to mention the sun isn't even facing our direction.

"Just wait for the three hundred. I got you."

"Alexander Van Hayes, report to the recruiting office!" a voice rings out over the PA system.

"Grab me a sandwich from the mess hall," I tell Chase as I walk away.

Not having to look back at him I know he is flipping me off as I leave.

In the recruiting office, currently doubling as our meeting room, Lieutenant Thomas, Sergeant Major Greer and two other men I don't recognize sit at a long wooden table. I have a seat across from them.

"We've been watching you Hayes. You've done some great work the past few years," Sergeant Major Greer gives me an honorable compliment, "We are currently in development of a new division and would like you to be a part of it. It is very

TIMELINE TWO

demanding and time intensive, but we believe you are the perfect candidate. Interested?"

"Yes sir!" I don't know if I am or not, but I know how to respond to a superior.

"Perfect. We'll get you prepped at once."

"Prepped?" I speak out of turn realizing that Sergeant Major Greer believes the meeting is over.

"Yes. You will be undergoing some tests," the lieutenant says.

"I'm sorry, sir," I'm playing with fire here, "if possible, I would like some more information about the division before committing."

"But you said 'yes, sir' not a few seconds ago." I've never met Sergeant Major Greer before now, but I've heard he can sometimes be verbally abusive so I try to stay as positive as possible.

"I apologize, but I believe I said 'yes' to the interest, not to the commitment. I am on the fast track in my current division to be leader by the end of the year. If the decision is mine to make, I would like to have more details about the project."

The lieutenant replies, "These two men here, Dr. Haru Xaun and Matija Jabaar, have created blueprints for a great warrior called Sam. What we need is the decision-making, fast reflexes, and drive for action that you have. We need your skills and know-how to be implanted into the computing program of this warrior."

"What exactly does that entail?"

"We will spend a few hours mapping your brain from top to bottom," the lieutenant continues, "decoding your neurological synapsis and convert them to ones and zeros on a computer chip. Once this is placed into the warrior, it will have all of your skills with the advantage of super strength, speed and indestructability. What do you think? You can skip the rest of your training tests today and come straight with us."

"And the warrior, what will he be doing? Obviously you have a plan for him otherwise you wouldn't be spending so much on this project."

"We will use Sam, or in other words, you, to take back the west," this is something the lieutenant was not supposed to reveal to me as the look of disappointment covers Sergeant Major Greer's face, as it should. I am an anti-species

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supporter and have no desire to attack them for land. These are the same reasons why our world fell apart in the first place.

"I'm sorry. I will have to respectfully decline."

"Excuse me?" Sergeant Major Greer jumps from disappointed to furious, "We just offered you one of the greatest positions in our force! You will be the fight against the anti-species. You will be the one in charge. You will, in a sense, control our entire force. How can you possibly say no to this?"

"I'm sorry, sir. If you'd like I can point you in the direction of the next best candidate."

"You are the best!" the lieutenant continues to try to sell it to me, "There is no one who can do it better. You are right, this is a very expensive undertaking, which is why we can't risk a loss on an inadequate cadet."

I have made my decision. I will not kill those who do not deserve to be killed. I do not speak.

Sergeant Major Greer breaks the silence, "Is this your final choice, son?"

"Yes."

"It goes without saying that everything we spoke about here today is entirely confidential. Now get back to training." My leaving has clearly upset them but I don't mind. I have a sandwich waiting for me.

TIMELINE TWO

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

DECEMBER 9TH, 312 P.D.

0200

9 DAYS, 18 HOURS AND 58 MINUTES LATER

“IS THERE ANYONE ELSE?”

Thomas asks me.

The lieutenant and I sit in a room with the robot lab coats trying to figure out a solution to the disrespectful and ungrateful Hayes.

“No. If we’re going to spend all these energy credits there is no one else we can use but the best,” I answer.

“He said he wouldn’t do it. What else can we do?”

I look to lab coat number one, “What if we just create the consciousness in the being? I’ve heard of that happening before.”

He chuckles before replying, “I’m convinced you don’t apprehend how strenuous that would be. Artificial intelligence isn’t something you can just throw together.”

“It’s not that hard to make. Just have an image or sound spark a response. See an anti-species, kill it. See a human, help them,” I tell him scratching the back of my head.

“There! See that?” lab coat excitedly yells as I lower my hand, “I bet you didn’t even think about scratching your head, did you? It just happened. We need to stop linking our consciousness and ourselves together as one. Consciousness is an illusion created by the brain to help us survive both physically and socially, as its only purpose is to translate our five senses into something that makes sense to us. Once the image or noise is translated we think that we are making a conscious decision of how to react to it but we’re not. Our brain uses a system of memories, genetics and instincts to react to certain situations in a certain way. For us to go in and create a camera that translates and understands an image then searches through its entire database for the correct reaction and then executes the action in

the response time needed for battle would take years upon years. We would either go through and individually program the computer with every image, noise, smell, taste and feeling, then create and link them to certain memories in an artificial hippocampus, which would end up taking thousands, literally tens of thousands of man hours. Or the second option is we create the learning process and allow it to learn on its own like a child, which will again take years and has a higher probability of an undesired outcome.”

“Okay!” I yell not wanting to hear his cocky brain-head lecture anymore.

“Furthermore,” this guy doesn’t frakking stop! “What happens when there is a dilemma in the brain? You see a pretty girl and want to talk to her, but every memory you have of making the first move has ended in rejection leading to public and self-humiliation ending with soul crushing sadness, but at the same time your instincts are telling you to ‘go for it for the sake of reproduction’. How does a computer that wants to do two different things come to an agreed action? You need to add in foresight to be able to accurately predict the outcome of a situation with little or no knowledge about the topic. Now that we have foresight, we need to create a system in the subconscious to process the weighing of pros and cons. To be able to-”

“Stop! We get it!” I feel my face begin to boil as his constant yammering has caused a blood vessel to bulge from my forehead. He wasn’t trying to teach, he was purposely being condescending to stroke his ego and I won’t tolerate it!

“Can’t it just be a robot made to kill anti-species?” Thomas asks relieving the building tension in the room, “Why does it need to have all this extra intelligence? We know the task it is supposed to do.”

“Okay. Create it,” lab coat’s sarcasm and degrading replies are about enough for him to be banished from this town, even if it is just degrading to Thomas, “What you’re asking is near impossible. We need his consciousness, which can identify the correct target through reasonable and logistical thought.”

“Let’s say we use his brain,” Thomas continues, “Why would he kill the anti-species? He doesn’t seem to want to at all. Are you just going to go in and delete those positive memories of the anti-specie race in his mind?”

TIMELINE TWO

Both lab coat number one and two chuckle forcing a second blood vessel to pulsate in the back of my neck. “No lieutenant. We’re not just going to ‘delete memories’. I know you don’t know the intricate details of intelligence relayed on a computer, but going in to locate and delete specific items from the hippocampus isn’t an easy task. The positive image of the anti-species in his mind can be as simple as a phrase his mother said to him one time when he was a toddler or a series of a thousand good things he’s heard and thought of throughout his entire life. What we will do instead is put a filter in that will block certain types of memories and release only the ones we want him to see. Using triggers such as ‘anti-specie’ plus ‘good’ will activate the filter. If a positive thought happens to slip through, we’ll be able to detect it and activate a fail safe to get rid of it.”

“What memories will you implant?” I ask while practicing my meditation breathing exercises.

“We will implant memories of the anti-species going to war with us. Show them torturing and murdering the humans for sport. This will make it to where he will find it logical to kill the anti-species, and as long as the filter is in place, he will know no other reality.”

“Okay, well we don’t have his permission. So we can just scrap that idea,” Thomas says trying to get us back on track.

“Do we really need his permission?” lab coat one whispers.

Thomas nervously replies, “How do you mean?”

“Well, we only need to map his brain in our scanner,” lab coat explains, “We can do it while he’s asleep. Knock him out for a few hours and get him back in bed before reveille.”

He’s still an inconsiderate frik, but maybe this guy isn’t as bad as I thought. “How long will the scan take?” I ask considering the possibilities of his plan.

“Usually only two or three hours, but with him asleep, maybe a little longer.”

Thomas shuffles uncomfortably in his seat, “If he wakes up and finds out what we’ve done we’re all finished with! Even if we can convince Eitman this was necessary we will still be dishonorably discharged. This kind of abuse isn’t tolerated.”

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

"C'mon, lieutenant. Why don't you grow a pair?" I look to the lab coats, "Do you have a way to knock him out for that amount of time?"

"I'm sure we can cook something up."

I stand, "How much time do you need to get a lab set up in Griever?"

"Set up a new lab all the way in Griever? I don't think you understand how much work that will be for us. Just finding an appropriate building will be a hassle not to mention the transporta-"

"That is where Hayes is at. We have no choice. We don't have the time to bring him all the way back here to Krielmopolis in one night. How long?"

"Give us a twelve percent increase in funds and help with transporting the equipment and I can comfortably say two weeks."

"You get six percent. I can't have any eyebrows raised by how much I'm spending on a single project."

"Ten it is."

He is trying to be smart with me and I don't appreciate it. "Eight percent and no more. How long?"

"For eight percent we can get it done in about a month."

I turn to walk out of the room and end the negotiations. "Nine percent," I holler back to him, "and you have two weeks. Get it done!"

DECEMBER 23RD, 312 P.D.

0015

13 DAYS, 22 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES LATER

Hayes sleeps in a small six-person barrack-room on the outskirts of Griever military base where Thomas and I have been waiting outside since the sun went down. Thomas holds the syringe the lab coats made for us in his shaking hands while he nervously looks around for witnesses. As long as Hayes doesn't wake up before we get him back he shouldn't have any idea what happened.

There are about thirty barrack-rooms at this location as this is one of the largest military bases next to Ft. Bildine and St. Srana. The barrack-rooms are each

TIMELINE TWO

separated by ten meters of road decorated with the rows of fake trees to provide the rooms with a small level of privacy. Being one of the nicer barrack-fields in the entire east, there is a constant series of soldiers keeping watch for any crime or misbehavior, which is common given that downtown Griever, or party central, is only an hour walk away. Given our titles of lieutenant and sergeant major we have been able to freely survey the area every night for the past week to time when the guards come by Hayes's cabin. The guard has just walked over to quadrant six of the barrack-field telling us that at this exact moment we have eight minutes to get Hayes off this base.

"Let's go!" I say as I pull Thomas toward Hayes's room.

Creeping inside we are hit with the excruciatingly loud snoring of all six soldiers easing our first concern that one might have still been awake. Three bunk beds are lined side by side, which for our luck, Hayes has decided to take one of the bottom three.

Standing over Hayes's sleeping body I whisper, "Okay, do it."

Thomas, white with fear, turns into my grandma as he moves far too slow when injecting the needle into Hayes's arm. Hurriedly, I push down on Thomas's hand injecting the needle into his vein followed immediately by the soldier's eyes jolting open. I push the fluid in as the lieutenant is clearly freaking out.

"What are-" Hayes is unable to finish his thought before he falls back to sleep.

"Dammit Lieutenant! He looked right at me!" I say with as much anger as one can whisper.

"Sorry, sir." He doesn't even have the balls to look me in the eyes when he's apologizing.

"He had better think that was a dream. Now go grab the stretcher. We only have five minutes!"

The wuss runs outside and brings the stretcher next to Hayes's unconscious body as quietly as possible. The two of us lift the heavy body onto the stretcher silently and wheel him outside to be placed in the car to be brought back to the lab.

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

1 HOUR AND 17 MINUTES LATER

Hayes is on the metal table that lab coat number one and two have set up in their new lab for the brain scan. The room is small, cluttered and badly lit. "You had two weeks? This is the best you could do?"

"Sergeant, please. Not now," he must be losing his mind if he thinks he can talk to me like that. He seems to be wrapped up in setting up the brain scanner so I'll wait to chew him out later.

Thomas sits in the corner of the room staring at his feet. "This isn't right," here he goes, "It's actions like these that lead to imprisonment. I'll never see sunlight again after this!"

"No," I tell him, "it's actions like this that make sure our side wins when war comes to us. No war has ever been won with easy judgment calls, Thomas."

"Sir, do I need to be here for this?" he whines.

How the hell did he make it to lieutenant? "You're dismissed."

Thomas gets up and hurries out of the room.

"Okay lab coats, when can I get him back to his cot?"

"It's going to be several hours. I'm going to have to ask you to have a seat outside with Thomas."

What the hell? "It's my funds I'm giving you! You can't tell me..."

"I'm not trying to be rude, sergeant," he rushes over to me so he can keep his voice quiet, "I just want this done as quickly and efficiently as possible. Dr. Xaun and I work best alone."

Holding back the urge to knock over his stack of papers sitting on the desk I reluctantly step outside to stand in the hallway where I see Thomas sitting on the ground twiddling his thumbs. He must be trying to figure out where he left his balls.

0520

3 HOURS AND 42 MINUTES LATER

TIMELINE TWO

“... and that was the second time my parents left me at the store. The third time, the only thing I can remember was my diaper was completely full and-”

Unable to listen to anymore of Thomas’s mind-numbing stories I march back into the lab. “What’s the hold up? We need to get him back before everyone wakes up!”

“Shh!” Jabaar runs to me with his finger over his mouth. He whispers, “we can’t have any extra noises during the brain scan. Whatever he hears could alter his natural thought process and may give us undesired results.” I look back to Hayes whose forehead and scalp is covered in a spider web of wires and cables, each one connected to a different input on the master computer thing they are using.

I whisper back, “How much longer lab coat? We need to get him back right now!”

“Very soon. The machine is creating the optic retrievals from his hippocampus now.”

“Kare ga okite imasu!” the doctor loudly whispers.

Jabaar runs from me back to stand above Hayes.

Concerned I ask, “What’s going on?”

“He’s waking up!”

“What?” I have trouble keeping my tone at a whisper, “I thought that was supposed to keep him asleep for the entire procedure!”

“It was, but apparently his tolerance is higher than we thought.”

Hayes’s eyes are cracking open. “Inject him again! Give him more!”

“We’re all out, sergeant! You had all we made!”

“What’s going on?” Hayes in a daze asks, “Where am I?”

He still seems somewhat asleep.

Ding!

A light on the machine flashes. “What does that mean? Is that bad?” I ask worriedly.

“It’s at ninety-nine percent. The brain scan is almost finished.”

“Brain scan? What?” Hayes brings his hands to his head to feel all the cables attached to him. His eyes widen, “What the hell is going on?” Ripping the cables off

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

his head he forces himself off the metal table where his legs go out from underneath him as a side effect to the sleeping serum. Both lab coats stand back afraid of what Hayes may do to them.

I try to fix the situation, "Hayes, now calm down. You've done a great thing for our nation. Because of you our race will thrive now! Do you understand this?"

Surprising for a cadet like him, he yells back at me, "What have you done? I told you no! I refused to do this so you kidnapped me! You just made a huge mistake!" the soldier pushes himself back to his feet using the metal table for support, "Wait until the Eitman board and Krielm officials hear about this. I hope you enjoyed your time as sergeant because those days are through!" Pushing me back he stumbles toward the door.

Even if Eitman agrees with the technology we've created, Thomas is right; we will be banned from the military and thrown in jail. We'll owe decades of pedaling or worse, be banished from Krielmopolis!

He's walking out the door! I don't think.

I don't assess.

I do what I was trained to do.

Act.

Bang!

Alex falls. His face slamming down on the hard hallway floor in a bloody mess sends a loud crack through the room. He twitches a few times before he becomes still. The pistol in my hand still smokes as I replace it to my holster.

Thomas, shaking and nearly in tears, creeps back into the lab not turning away from the dead soldier. His voice cracks as if he's never seen a dead body before, "Sergeant? W-what have you done?"

"I did what had to be done. We've lost a great cadet. Truly a sad day for us all." I look back to the lab coats that silently clean their equipment as if they had not seen anything. "Did we get what we need? How long before Sam will be operational?"

Jabaar hesitates to answer, "Uhm, we'll need at least ten months."

TIMELINE TWO

"You have eight," I walk out the lab door stepping over Alex's body, "Get this cleaned up Thomas and make it quick."

FEBRUARY 8TH, 313 P.D.

0815

1 MONTH, 16 DAYS, 2 HOURS AND 55 MINUTES LATER

"What the hell have you been doing with my credits, Greer?" It is my bi-yearly meeting with General Sebastian Jim about our past year and future funding for the Krielm force and he is not happy about the missing funds in a classified grant check given to the lab coats, "Eitman is up my ass about what you've done! Who the hell are these guys?" We stand in a large room with a vaulted ceiling in the Eitman Facility somewhere on the tenth or eleventh floor. Large solar windows let light pour into the room casting our long shadows against the floor and up the wall.

"General, I'd like to introduce you to Dr. Haru Xaun and Matija Jabaar. They have created something unlike anything you've ever seen before."

Jabaar and Xaun step forward holding the hologram of Sam along with the graphene skin sample. They give Jim the same presentation they gave to me months ago. However, this time the hologram has been programmed with Hayes reaction time and critical thinking. Unfortunately, Hayes isn't here to see it after the tragic training exercise that ended with his death.

"This? This is what you've spent two years of funding on Greer?"

"Sir, you don't understand. We also have something else in our possession." I hold up the blueprints we had confiscated from Lab 87, "I'd like to present to you the first ever time machine."

"Don't play games with me sergeant!"

"I know. I had the same reaction too, but it's been proven. It's been created and tested and ready to use at your command."

"You bought this too?" he asks, clearly upset.

"It was donated to us."

Still not sold, "What do they have to do with each other?"

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

"Sir, I'm sure you've noticed the downward spiral Krielm has been in. Pedaling is at an all time low, air filtration systems are failing and the simple green houses don't hold up the way they used to. Moral is depleting and life has become stale and stagnant. What Krielmopolis needs is a change. We need something new!"

"Get to the point Greer."

"We need the west! We need to take it back! What we do is spy over seas and find out where all their bases are: all their defenses and all their growing cities. When we make our way over there we'll know exactly where to attack first. They'll never know what happened!"

"You know that won't work! Any drones, no matter how small, will be detected in less than a week over there and they'll ready their defenses and the intelligence will be worthless."

"Exactly. We get all the information we need from the west and remotely send it across the Atlantic by way of transmission buoys back to us and implant the results into Sam. It won't matter if they destroy the drones or begin prepping for war at that point because we will have all the information we need. After we set deadlines and destinations, we'll send Sam back in time. He'll be able to destroy their armies, the city leaders and any other force they have before we, technically, ever send the drones over to retrieve the information."

"And we can't get the funds back for this?"

Uh-oh. "No sir. They have all been spent."

"Okay. Then we need to make sure he is truly a war machine."

Thank God! If he didn't go for it, I would be canned.

"What is its master attack range?" he asks.

"Master attack, sir?" Sounds like this isn't the first he's thought about a weapon like this.

"A finishing move. If we're going to have something with these capabilities we need it to do some serious damage. Have a bomb implanted inside it."

Lab coat one steps in, "He comes with a full arsenal of grenades and low range missiles."

TIMELINE TWO

“Not something he drops. A finishing move for it and everyone around. It needs to be destroyed.”

A little confused I ask, “Sir, if we’re spending this much time and energy credits on him, won’t we want to get him back in one piece?”

“That would be ideal, but it needs to have a way to do such a severe amount of damage that the anti-species will be truly handicapped. Plus, we wouldn’t want them to get their hands on it to reprogram for their own-”

“He,” lab coat one rudely interrupts the general.

“Excuse me?”

“It’s a ‘he’, not an ‘it’. You keep calling him an ‘it’.”

I’ve never seen anyone interrupt the general before, much less interrupt him without an apology. Neither one of them take a breath as the general’s eyes begin to boil the air around us.

“Please forgive him, general,” I say trying to ease the tension. “He’s a lab coat. His social skills aren’t exactly where they are supposed to be.”

“You had better get your lab coat in check Greer.”

“He uses real intellectual technology,” lab coat speaks out of turn once again, “so we won’t be able to program him to activate a self-destruct feature unless it is a true last resort. If we take away his thought process for self-preservation then the entire system will fall apart. You see general, all the pieces of the brain, even in a computer brain, need to work together as a whole. If you take out-”

“Don’t program the bomb into his computing,” Jim calmly and effortlessly gets the lab coat to quiet his rant, “Set a timer on the bomb and we will time our fleet to ship out immediately after he is destroyed. Good work, sergeant. You better hope this works.”

General Jim picks up his hat and marches out of the room.

The bi-yearly funds meeting couldn’t have gone any better. ‘Good work, sergeant’. Damn straight good work.

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

CHAPTER 14

THE REALIZATION

TIMELINE SIX
ALEX

BRADY

JULY 9TH, 312 P.D.

1625

6 MONTHS, 29 DAYS, 15 HOURS AND 50 MINUTES EARLIER

“LET ME GO!”

the intruder yells while being hauled off by the Kresa authorities. The strange man who broke in through the basement window while I was working violently thrashes about trying to get free of his restraints.

“Thank you officers.” I hold my son and wife close to me as they haul the stranger out the door.

The door shuts and finally there is silence again. With my heart nearly beating out of my chest I pat my son on the shoulder to let him know everything is okay.

“That was so cool!” my son yells as if he wasn’t even watching what just happened.

“Oh my god!” Rebecca leans over the kitchen counter trying to regain her breath, “That was insane! Did you know him?”

“I have no idea who he was. He just broke in through the window downstairs, starting sprouting off about time travel and all this crazy gibberish. He’s just an insane person.”

“Was he my uncle or something?” Elijah asks me.

“No, no. I don’t have a brother. Why would you say that?”

“Well,” Rebecca begins with the obvious statement I already knew she was going to make, “you have to admit he looked a lot like you.”

“Just a coincidence, dear. If I had a distant relative, I would know about it.”

“Is he coming back?” Elijah asks.

I crouch down to reassure him, “Everything is going to be okay now. He’s never coming back.”

TIMELINE SIX

Rebecca claps her hands together, which is something she does when she is ready to change the subject, "Alright! Everyone back to what they were doing. Momma needs to prepare dinner." She walks toward the ice box sliding her hand on my shoulder as she passes.

Elijah, having come up with an exciting idea for himself, jumps up and down in the living room. "Ooh! Can I help you with your glider some more? I'm all done with my homework!"

My glider. I had almost forgotten. "You know after all that, I think I'm done working for the day. I'm just going to go down there and clean up a bit. Why don't you go in the living room and read more of your *Adventures of Knute Phillip*. Last I heard he was still stuck in the mountain range."

"No dad, he is already out! Now he's fighting Luke Weston!"

"Whoa! He's already to the barn? Knute moves quickly nowadays. Let's see if he can beat him before dinner is done."

Elijah runs to his room to grab his book while I head back downstairs to reevaluate my design.

Getting to the basement I find the glider the intruder had pushed in the window for me. Flawlessly designed, beautifully crafted and nearly the same as my blueprints with just a few tweaks here and there forces me to question its functionality. Not only that, but the wear that has been put on this thing suggests it's been used for years. Not just used, but may have even seen battle. Some of the modifications it has I've added to the blueprints in just the past few weeks making it impossible for that man to have stolen and created so quickly.

Unable to withhold my curiosity I place the glider on the ground and step aboard. By an odd coincidence the footholds are the perfect size giving me a snug and safe connection to the magnetic fields holding tight to my feet. The sensitivity for the foot controls has always been a concern of mine and testing this out I realize why. Engaging the rear thrusters with more force than expected sends me flying forward into the basement wall knocking all the pictures off the wall and giving the house a good shake.

"Brady!" Rebecca worriedly yells to me, "What's going on? Are you okay down there?"

"Yeah!" I reply as I regain my composure, "Everything is fine down here. Just being clumsy is all."

"Well be careful! I have a plate of food for you that I refuse to waste in the trash if you die down there!"

I would usually have some witty reply to her dark jokes about my inevitable death but my mind is going a million kilometers a minute. This is my glider! He stole my blueprints and created it! This is my livelihood! This is Elijah's livelihood! I cannot let a thief take that away from us.

1815

1 HOUR AND 50 MINUTES LATER

"...and then after Luke shot him with the plasma ray, Knute was unconscious. But luckily," Elijah, in the middle of explaining the latest installment of Knute Phillip's adventures, shoves a forkful of food in his mouth before trying to continue, "he had his over sized sidekick who still had ahold of the grenade launcher they had stole from the pawn shop owner that-

He's cut off by his mother, "Finish chewing your food then speak."

I bring my empty plate to the kitchen as Elijah swallows down the last bit of tofu. "Anyways, the sidekick was able to get the grenade and shoot the cliff side, collapsing down on Luke and all his men all while saving Knute!"

Rebecca meets me in the kitchen with two more plates in her hand, "Very interesting. I can't wait to hear what happens tomorrow!" Luckily Elijah isn't old enough to get the sarcasm in her voice.

"Can I go outside now?" he asks while already putting on his shoes.

"Sure. Just don't go far," Rebecca adds the plates to the already heavy load in the sink.

"Kay!" the door slams shut.

TIMELINE SIX

Rebecca and I silently stare into the sink as we scrub the dishes clean letting the absence of constant noise relieve any stress that there may have been. I love Elijah, but boy does he like to make a lot of noise. Sometimes it's nice to have complete and total silen-

"How are you doing?" Rebecca asks, interrupting the one point eight seven seconds of silence.

I look up to her, "Good." With a quick, yet sufficient answer I look back to the sink to lift another dirty plate.

1...2-

"You were pretty quiet at dinner. Are you still shaken up about earlier?"

"Well," I don't really know how to explain the situation about the glider, but I'm not one to keep things from my wife, "it's strange. My glider that I've been working on, it's- it's finished."

"That's great!" her excitement and my tone aren't matching up right in this situation. "So what's the problem?"

Having pondered it for a while, I've come to a decision. I need to go speak to the intruder and get some answers. "I'm going to go down to the officials station and see if I can't talk to that guy. I need some answers from him."

"I don't know if that's such a good idea. I think the best thing to do is just forget about it, for our sake and for Elijah," she turns away from me to dry the dishes. "No need worrying about something we can't do anything about."

I have no plans to forget about it.

2048

2 HOURS AND 33 MINUTES LATER

"Name?"

The man behind the window asks.

"Uhm, Brady Eztuella."

"Who are you here to see?"

"I don't know his name. But, uhm, he broke into my house earlier today."

"I'll have an officer escort you down the corridor. Stop him when you find him. If he doesn't want to talk to you you'll have to leave."

Bzzzz!

A door to the right of the window opens up followed by the greeting of another officer who seems to have spent too much time around prisoners. "Let's go!" he yells as if I'm the one in trouble.

Not wanting to annoy him I rush over and follow him down the hallway of cells. I told Rebecca I was heading out and luckily she didn't ask where I was going, although, I'm sure she knew. I'm not the best liar when it comes to my wife.

Walking down the hallway I peer into the cells looking at all the low lives and degenerates as I pass by. No privacy to go to the bathroom, no window to see the sunlight; what a horrible life.

"You don't understand! You have to let me out of here! There's going to be an attack!"

"That's him!" I tell the officer while rushing down the hallway to where the voice is coming from.

"No running!" His yell terrifies me enough that I stumble and nearly collapse over my own legs to the ground.

I compose myself and slow down to a casual walk as I make my way to the cell. I get to the intruder and again am shocked by the resemblance to the man I see in the mirror every morning. "What's his name?" I ask the officer who is still slowly making his way over to us.

Arriving to the cell he lifts a clipboard from the holder next to the locked door, "Brady Eztuella." He throws the clipboard back down and starts walking back the way he came.

"Did he just tell you that? Or what? How did you get that name?"

Annoyed, he answers back, "We ran his prints."

It's impossible. "Uhm, can you test again?" I yell out to him.

I hear a loud sigh before the man disappears behind a closed door.

"Do you believe me now?" the intruder asks through the bars.

TIMELINE SIX

"How did you get the blueprints for my glider?" I feel is a more important question than 'how did you fake the fingerprint test?' I've spent the better part of my life working on these blueprints and I can't let him or anyone else take that away from me.

"Please, Brady! You need to get me out of here. Our son and wife are in great danger! If you don't get me out we're both going-"

"Don't you dare talk about my family!" I don't think I've been verbally angry in years, "So help me, if you hurt them I will put an end to you!" I feel pretty safe to throw out threats with a rows of bars in between us.

"It's not just *your* family Brady! It's both of ours. You're not the only one that is going to lose them," a look of sincerity fills his eyes.

I know he's lying but I just don't know why, "Here." I reach in my pocket and pull out a small DNA test I had brought with me. It's hard to deny the similarities between us so the possibility he is distant family is not completely unreasonable. I slide the DNA test into the cell while no guards are around. "My DNA has already been put in the chip so prick your finger on the needle point on the bottom. This will tell me if you're-"

"I know how it works." He pricks his finger and tosses it back.

"Now we need to wait just sixty seconds." I stare down at the DNA test hoping he won't try to make conversation with me while we wait.

"Brady," damn, "you looked at the glider. You saw it is nearly identical to what you had planned. How could I have possibly taken that from you?"

I will not humor his delusions.

"In a few months the humans are going to attack. If we don't start building an army now they will win and destroy Kresa. That includes your family, your friends and everyone you know! When we're leaving the burning city we save Gayle's life. She becomes your only friend after the attack."

He knows about Gayle too? How long has he been stalking me?

"You find Elijah's body smashed under his collapsed room. He was working on glider blueprints, just like the one we're making. He is so talented, he has so much potential. He'll change the world someday!"

Thirty seconds left.

"And Rebecca... I hadn't seen her in so long, but I never forgot how beautiful she was. Her smooth skin. Her glistening eyes. And that little crack in her voice when she gets upset."

Twenty seconds.

"You slit her throat. She is burning and suffering under the ceiling beam from the kitchen and you put her out of her misery by slitting her throat. You watch her die."

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

"Her death never leaves your mind. To this day, eight years later, you can still feel the blade in your hand stabbing through her throat. The blood..."

Ting!

It's finished.

'IDENTICAL MATCH'

What?

It's not possible.

"You see Brady. I'm not lying to you. You have to get me out of here!"

No matter how much he tried, he couldn't fake this. He couldn't swap his own DNA to be identical with mine. How could he? "How? How is it?"

"The humans created some sort of doorway. We come across it several years from now and use it to come back to this time and stop the downfall of the anti-specie race. We had nothing to live for, but now we do. We can not only get our revenge, but save our family too. This is why I'm here!"

"No," the only reasonable reply that comes to mind.

"What?"

"No. It's impossible. For time travel to exist time itself would have to be constantly repeating over and over again for eternity so you could revisit it at any time. There are too many paradoxes and holes with it. So no, it's not possible."

TIMELINE SIX

"Listen, I don't understand it either, but it happened! I am here! How else would I have a completed glider of yours?"

"That takes me back to my first question; how did you get my blueprints and create the glider so quickly? Your nose alignment sensory was something I had added to the blueprints less than two weeks ago. How could you have created that in less than two weeks and gotten it installed?"

"Because I've had eight years, Brady! Eight never ending long years of hiding and construction all to get to where I am now. Look at all the facts and you will see that what I am telling you is true."

"So if I were to believe what you're telling me, and I definitely don't, what would be the next step of your plan?"

"We get to the provost and tell him what is going on and warn him of the coming attacks by the humans. We gather as much of the military as we can and we fight! The humans' only chance to defeat us here is with a surprise attack that has already arrived, but with me that option is off the table. We can defeat the humans and keep the west to ourselves."

I can't help but think that we anti-species have been away from the east for so long that it could be possible the humans have created a time machine. I'm sure a hundred years ago a perpetual motion engine seemed impossible, but here it is.

"Brady," he continues with his plea, "whether you believe me or not, isn't the smallest chance that I am telling the truth worth the gamble? Think of Rebecca and Elijah."

He is a thief. He is a liar. Time travel is impossible. But for the extremely off chance that he is telling the truth and traveling through time is somehow possible, "What do you need me to do?"

"First, get me out of here."

BRADY

CHAPTER 15

THE DESTRUCTION OF URA

TIMELINE SIX

SAM

JULY 12TH, 312 P.D.

0822

2 DAYS, 11 HOURS AND 34 MINUTES LATER

//ARRIVED AT DESTINATION = ^URA

//Kill King Hilario.

The town is covered in trash while the buildings, what's left of them, are crumbling and falling apart. It takes me a few minutes to see anyone in the town at all, but when I do I understand why this place needs to be taken out.

Homeless anti-species lie on the ground and in alleyways covered only by small papers or tattered blankets. All color here has been washed out and replaced by strong tones of greys and browns. Even the anti-species here seem to have lost their bright and vibrant skin tones. The only sight of wealth is on a hill on the far end of town where there sits a large mansion, or maybe castle would be a better word. It's glistening in the sunlight while the rest of the city is stuck in the cast of its shadow.

I've been travelling for several days alone trying to figure out my end mission, but anytime I try to recall the memories I'm presented with an error message across my vision. I've attempted a few times to remove the suit from my body, but there is nowhere to grasp or get leverage. It's as if this is one giant piece of metal that was molded onto my body. Anytime I feel worried about my physical state inside the suit or claustrophobic about being stuck inside, some sort of hormone outputs straight into my brain immediately relieving the stress. Under normal circumstances that would be amazing, but it halts any desire to find the answers for what's going on with me.

"Hey! Who goes there?" the assertive voice is a shock juxtaposed to the tone of the townspeople.

Turning around I see three small anti-species, each holding pistols pointed at me. Clearly these men are in service to the king.

//Destination = Castle.
//Kill King Hilario.
//Critical Analysis engaged.
//Use anti-specie companion as diversion.
What? He's gone. I can't.
//Anti-specie companion = ^Deleted.
//Attack.

The blades eject from my forearms just like before while my legs have begun their sprint towards the guards.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The bullets fly at me, but merely bang off my metal skin like little rubber balls bouncing off a wall.

//Damage = ^0.

There is nothing they can do to hurt me! Not in this suit!

I leap into the air and come down slicing through each of their necks sending blood spewing across the ground and against the wall of a nearby building. Twitching and gasping for their last breathes of air they each drop face first into the thick pool of blood spreading across the dirt road. As the blades are being sucked back under my arm's metal skin I attempt to shove one of my fingers in with it, as this is one of the only openings I've been able to find on my entire suit. Hoping to find a way to remove the armor I push as hard as I can into my arm but unfortunately the metal shell engulfing the blades are so tight that I doubt even a single hair would be able to fit in between. The blades disappear as the opening becomes perfectly camouflaged with the rest of the suit once again.

//Threat = ^Neutralized.

Returning to my resting pose of perfect posture and trying to ignore another failed attempt to remove the suit, I get back to my mission at hand and continue on toward the castle.

Clap. Clap. Clap. Clap.

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An applause break has broke out around me from the impoverished anti-species who witnessed the murders I just committed. They have obviously wanted to see them dead for a while.

"My people," the shrill, high pitched voice of a man rings out over an intercom system that runs through the town, *"this evening there will be the weekly praising for the Hilario's fathers! Be sure to bring your designated Ura scarfs, as all are required to wear it. The ceremony will begin at sun down and the praising at midnight. Remember, don't fall asleep!"* The intercoms turn off after the short and confusing message. I don't know anything about the king, but I already don't like him.

//Head to King's Castle.

Walking through the town I turn several heads, some of which in fear and some in confusion. There seems to have been shops and restaurants here at one point but now they are abandoned and left for the rodents and squatters. A woman in the alley nearby rocks her small baby in her arms, which moves its mouth like it's crying but no sound comes out. In fact, no one here speaks at all as they are all without a voice box. A completely silent town.

Several meters away from the base of the hill where the castle sits stands two more guards keeping watch.

//Sniper Activated.

Nice, a new weapon!

From the side of my head ejects a small gun the size of a pencil. I'm disoriented for a moment as my vision turns into a zoomed in scope making it seem as though the guards are only a meter or two away. Without any conscious control from myself the gun silently fires off.

Thpp.

Thpp.

Both men drop to the ground allowing my whereabouts to still be unknown to the rest of the castle. I avoid the stairs that lead to the castle gates and instead head around the back of the hill to go unnoticed.

"Hey you! Stop!" So much for the advantage of surprise. Six guards, each with a gun pointed at me stands at the top of the hill looking down at me. I suppose a three-meter tall man wearing a silver suit of armor is a hard thing to go unnoticed.

//Sprint.

My legs have taken over as I rush up the dirt hill toward the castle.

"Fire!"

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

//Damage = ^0.

They have no idea what they are up against. With my go-to attack ready, I use my forearm blades to cut the four nearest guards in half.

//Shoulder Turret Activated.

One after another the men drop dead to the ground, each taking a bullet from my shoulder turret or from one of the ricochets bouncing off my suit. An alarm is heard roaring through the castle as guard after guard comes sprinting from a side castle door.

//Damage = ^0.

I analyze and identify the largest conglomeration of guards standing on a balcony atop the tallest tower of the castle.

//Missile Activated.

As if a small animal was trying to make its way out of my body, my torso, where my intestines should be, opens up to reveal an arsenal of weapons. A small missile engages and bursts from my innards toward the mass of anti-species guards. In a ball of fire each of them is launched from their perch and down the hill to the base below. The townspeople waiting at the bottom of the hill are there ready to finish off the ones who survive the landing.

I make my way to the castle wall where in front of the closed entrance stands four more guards, each of them unaware their bullets are worthless in this fight.

//Sprint.

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With blades out I slice through them like they were pieces of fruit for lunch. Keeping up my momentum I burst through the locked door to make my way into the castle corridor revealing a large archway with the ceiling several meters above my head. Filling the hallway stands well over sixty guards, each with their guns pointed at me. The row in front is crouched down with the row behind them using their shoulders as gun rests. The row behind them is bent over, just barely higher than the two rows that lead. The row behind them uses that row as gun rests. This continues for several meters back allowing all sixty of them a clear shot at me.

"That's far enough knight! Drop your weapons and surrender!" the head guard yells out. They obviously haven't been watching outside otherwise they wouldn't even attempt to attack me. I don't want to have to kill all these people, so hopefully they will stand down.

//Attack.

No wait! Their bullets can't hurt me! No need to attack! I can talk my way through this!

//Attack = ^Temporarily Delayed.

"I don't want to have to kill you," I announce to them hoping I can decrease the bloodshed of this day, "but if you try to shoot me, I will have no choice. Honestly, no choice at all." This is the first indication that I can have some sort of control of my actions.

"Then drop your weapons!" the lead guard yells.

"I cannot."

"Then we will be forced to open fire on you!" He doesn't understand.

"No, I really cannot drop the weapons. They are attached to my body. I'm not here to kill any of you, only your ruthless king. And by the state of this town, that shouldn't upset any of you."

The guards subtly look to one another as if contemplating what to do.

//Reading facial expressions = ^Curious.

"And we are here to protect the king!" the head guard says, being the only one not considering my offer.

“Guards, do you want to die for this king? He has driven this city into poverty while he, I’m sure, sits on a throne of gold or platinum. Do you get to see these riches? Are you living in the lap of luxury as I’m sure he’s promised you?” I’m making assumptions, but I feel confident, “I can help you! I can free you from his rule and you can run your town the way you want to!”

“You are a murderer! And under our strict set of governing rules set forth by our Hilario’s forefathers, you are to be put to death! Guards! Aim at the ready!”

With none of them having the courage to stand up to their king they ready their attack. “Please,” I beg them, “you don’t have to die, but if you fire at me I will have no choice but to kill you.”

“And you leave us no choice,” the head guard knows what he is about to do. He knows he is about to die, but unfortunately he has placed his allegiance to his king before the safety of his fellow guards. “Fire!”

The bullets rain toward me with each banging off my suit and back at them. The ricochets take several down before I can move into action.

//Blades engaged.

//Attack.

I rush through the frontline decapitating the first six guards that my blades come in contact with. Jumping and spinning in a circle I am able to cut through six more behind them, forcing four of them dead and the other two in critical condition. Impaling a man’s torso with one arm and the other in his crotch, I lift him above my head and throw him into a row of guards knocking many of them to the ground. Slicing and punching my way through the crowd I make it to the end of the hallway where the firing has become silent.

//Damage = ^0.

For fear of witnessing the path of death behind me I do not turn around to check the outcome. I attempt to block out the moans and grunts of pain coming from those I left alive as I exit the corridor.

Making my way to the next large hallway the alarm indicating my presence slowly runs out of juice and becomes silent. Lining the walls down the giant walkway are great pieces of art framed with gold and silver. Awe-striking paintings

TIMELINE SIX

of war hang next to engravings of gods and goddesses. Bowls of rare fruit and vegetables sit on pedestals every dozen meters or so, separated by the occasional marble statue.

Entering the great hall I find the king sitting on, as I expected, a golden throne. His eyes are closed while several half-naked anti-species women feed him loaves of bread spread with chocolates and assorted berries. His puke green fat rolls over the side of the throne's armrests as he revels in his gluttonous filth.

"Is he gone?" the king asks not knowing whom he is talking to.

The women, noticing my presence, step away from the king.

Annoyed that there has been more than two seconds without food shoved down his throat he opens his eyes. "What the hell is this?" he expresses the first feeling of fear I'm sure he's ever had to endure as he notices me standing in his private quarters.

//Kill King Hilario.

I march towards him with my right arm blade engaged, "Hello *king*. My name is Sam. You haven't been very pleasant to your kingdom as I see. You sit here on your throne enjoying the riches that you have done nothing to deserve while the people of Ura are without food, homes or even the ability to speak. I'm not from this area of the world, but so far this is the only place I've seen where the citizens aren't wearing voice boxes. I can't image every single resident here has willingly opt out of the use of verbal communication." I haven't felt much pity for the anti-species I've encountered since arriving here, but I will feel nothing but pride and joy for taking his life and saving this city from his reign of greed.

"Guards!" he yells to the pile of corpses outside.

"Go!" The anti-species women listen to my command and run out of the room shutting the door behind them. The women's screams are heard echoing through the king's room as they find the mutilated guards outside.

"Don't hurt me! I can give you whatever you want! I have power, money, women, anything you could desire! It's all yours!"

I stand at the base of his oversized throne, "I've seen your people and how they live. I have seen your home and how you live. Whether I was on a mission or not, I would still take your life. You deserve none of what you have."

"Oh please! You can't do this! I'm king-"

Not letting him say another word I jump in the air and stab through his jaw, out the back of his skull and into the headrest of his throne. He gargles on his blood for a moment as his wriggling tongue falls from his mouth landing on the berry and blood soaked bread at his feet.

I finally realize why I am here as I watch his grotesque body become still and silent. I'm on a peace mission. Not only am I getting revenge for the anti-species attacking, but also making the anti-species lives better by freeing them from their corrupt and outdated governments. By the time I'm done here the west will be an entirely changed place!

//Ura completed.

//Next Destination = Roria.

Next to the throne sits a microphone, which I'm sure is the same one he used to make the announcement to the townspeople earlier. I grab it and press the red button, "People of Ura!" I begin, "King Hilario is dead as are all of his guards. Come claim your food and riches from the castle and remove the voice boxes from the deceased guards in the side corridor as well as the ones lining the hillside. The kingdom is yours!"

I set the microphone down and attempt to walk out of the castle when I'm stopped by a young, crying anti-specie boy at no more than thirteen years. He stands at the far end of the room without looking away from the corpse slouching in the blood-drenched thrown ahead of him.

"Father?" he cries.

I don't regret what I have done, but any amount of pride I was feeling just seconds ago is completely diminished. I find myself stuck staring at the boy's watering eyes, but not because the suit is keeping my legs from moving. The young boy didn't do anything wrong, yet now he must live with the image I have just seared into his mind.

TIMELINE SIX

A stampede of malnourished Ura citizens rushes around the corner at the end of the corridor making their way to the large palace room where the boy and I stand on either side. One after another they hurriedly enter the room bumping into the young crying boy knocking him side to side until a family of six rushes in and knocks him to his knees.

I watch the child force his head between his knees on the ground forming into a ball to protect him from the heartless stampede surrounding him. The crowd in the castle has grown so large that the boy can no longer be seen. Feeling his pain I push my way through the rabid townsfolk to arrive at the young boy who is being stomped and kicked mercilessly. I grab a hold and lift him to safety above the heads of the silent mob. Holding him above the crowd as I make my way toward the exit I see the rivers of tears, snot and blood ooze to the floor below.

“Let me go! Let me go!” his piercing scream fills me with even more remorse for what I had done.

{Stress} = ^76.

//Releasing endorphins.

But no matter what, the king deserved it. I shouldn't feel bad for this kid because if anything he was just going to grow up to be just like his father. He's just another anti-specie ready to kill and torture at the first chance he gets. If I care for the human race at all, I can't help this child.

“Ahhhh!” the crying child continues to scream for me to release him so I gladly abide.

Not yet out of the mob I drop the crying kid to the ground and let the Ura citizens deal with him. For all I know ‘father’ was already letting the kid put laws for Ura into effect. I'll bet he's the reason these people don't have voice boxes or colorful clothing. Although I don't desire for him to be trampled to death, I refuse to look back at him as he will get exactly what he deserves whether that is a nice family to take him in and raise him well or a smashed torso and broken bones. I continue through the rampaging Ura citizens toward the castle gates feeling good about my decision.

//Next Destination = Roria.

SAM

I'm sure someone will help him up.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 16

THE RISING OF THE RANKS

GLIDER

JULY 13TH, 312 P.D.

1148

1 DAY, 3 HOURS AND 26 MINUTES LATER

“REALLY, YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO ME,”

I eavesdrop on Brady and Rebecca’s conversation as he tries to convince her of my identity. *“There is no way he could’ve fooled the DNA test. And you said it yourself, he does look a lot like me.”*

“But it’s not possible. Time travel isn’t possible!”

“Listen, we’ve been away from the east for so long. Who knows what the humans could have cooked up over there? The point is, he came back for a reason and...”

It took a lot of convincing for Brady to get me out of jail, but somehow with my past self’s lack of confidence and awkward demeanor he proved it was just an argument, not a home invasion. Brady begged me to let him explain the situation to Rebecca, as he knew she wouldn’t recognize my new tone I’ve acquired over the past eight years.

I sit in my old chair that is placed perfectly for me to see both outside to the front yard through the living room window and the stairs behind me through the mirror by the door. I place my back to the conversation between Brady and Rebecca to give them the illusion of privacy in the kitchen.

“What if it’s just a trick?” Rebecca’s words pierce my ears. Although I understand her skepticism, I can’t help but be hurt that she would think I would lie to her. *“Like you said, we don’t know what the humans have created! What if he is just a clone of you to try to drag you into a trap?”*

“Why would they go through all that trouble to clone me? I’m a nobody. If they would clone anyone it would be the provost or a general or someone like that.”

“Your glider, you said it was revolutionary. What if that’s what this is all about?”

TIMELINE SIX

"Honey, he has the glider already. If they wanted it, the clone would have showed up months ago to get it not after they have already built it."

I can't take it anymore.

Walking into the kitchen I am filled with nostalgia as the smell of Rebecca's famous Cesar dressing still lingers in the air.

"What do you want?" Rebecca angrily asks.

"Listen, I'm not here to hurt anyone. The real situation is there is a monster coming and I need Brady's help to stop him. What I need from him is to help me create the weapon to stop it and for him to come to the provost with me so we can begin to build an anti-species army. Without him, the provost won't believe I'm from the future. It doesn't matter if you believe me or not, but this is happening. I've travelled too far and too long for this to stop here. I love you Rebecca, but to save you and Elijah I need him to come with me."

She seems to somewhat recognize who I am or what I am saying because the twinkle I remember from so long ago returns to her eye. "Well, Brady isn't going anywhere without me. We're coming with you."

I don't want her to get hurt, but I know I can't change her mind once she has stuck to an idea. Plus, I could never say no to spending more time with my lost family. "Okay, we need to leave as soon as possible. Begin to gather your things while Brady and I head to the provost."

"Gather our things?" she asks, "The provost is only a couple kilometers away. It won't be a long trip."

"We cannot take on the humans with the force of Kresa alone. We need to travel to the other cities to prepare them for battle as well. If I plan to convince them, I cannot leave without Brady and if you will not leave his side, then you will have to come with."

Rebecca grabs Brady's hand. I stare at their intertwined fingers trying to imagine them as my own. I keep my mangled hands behind my back so she can't see what they've become. "You better be back in no more than three hours. Got it?" she orders.

Brady replies to her, "Got it."

GLIDER

She looks over to me for another confirmation.

I tell her, "Got it."

She faces my younger self and forces their lips together right in front of me. I crave it so badly, but I know she wouldn't kiss me how I am now. She doesn't trust me.

I say with frustration in my voice, "Let's go."

I walk out the door trying to keep any sign of depression at bay.

1307

1 HOUR AND 19 MINUTES LATER

"So let me get this straight," Emilio Kent, the provost, says, "you say you're from eight years in the future and this guy here is your past self and you've come back in time to reconnect with him and start an army to face the human invasion that is inevitably going to attack in a few months from now?" Unsurprisingly, he doesn't believe us.

"Listen, you're the only one who has the power to gather the troops together," I tell him, "It's time the west stops living in these separated towns and cities and instead binds together to make a true force to be reckoned with! We are all too vulnerable by ourselves, but as a society that works together, we have a fighting chance."

"And tell me," he isn't even considering it, "why should I believe you? Sure I see the resemblance between the two of you, but that proves nothing. I look like my son, my wife looks like her sister and my dog looks like my mother-in-law. Give me some hard evidence that you are from the future and that the humans are going to attack."

Brady chimes in, "Do a DNA test. I didn't believe him at first either, but the DNA test doesn't lie. Trust me, there is no bigger skeptic here than me and even I believe it."

"I'm not doing a DNA test. We don't have those at our disposal to use on every whack-job that comes in here." He's not even giving us a chance.

TIMELINE SIX

"Mr. Kent, please," I begin, "we will do the tests ourselves. You will see from our-"

"You expect me to take your tests at face value? Do you take me for a fool?"

"You are asking for proof and I'm offering it. We need you on our side or all is lost. Do you want to be responsible for the destruction of Kresa and the downfall of the anti-specie race?"

Hoping politics might sway him, he responds, "Kresa isn't dying, humans are not attacking and you are not from the future! Now get out of here."

I knew this was going to be a challenge, but I can't give up. Without his support we are dead in the water. Brady steps in once more, "Mr. Kent, do you know what my job is?"

"I said get out!"

"I'm an inventor. I've created a glider with capabilities that you could never imagine. What if I said you could have it, free of charge? All you have to do is run these tests. If they come up negative, it's yours. If it's positive, you gather the troops together and help us start an army."

The provost, obviously intrigued, takes a moment to respond. I hold my breath, "I'll have to see the machine first."

"Of course."

"Alright," Finally! "If it holds up to what I'm imagining, I'll let Captain Hunter have it for his team. Go get the glider and we'll hold the tests in a couple weeks."

"Mr. Kent," I say, "we do not have a couple weeks. I will get the glider and bring it here tonight and the tests need to immediately follow. When the tests come up positive, you need to promise that tomorrow we will gather the troops and prepare for battle."

"Tomorrow? There is just no way that we can get the entire town gathered by-"

"Please. We need to try. This all has to happen immediately or else we may not get the chance to fight back at all."

He contemplates once more. "Okay. If the glider holds up we will run the tests tonight. But hurry up and get it. I have a dinner date in a couple hours."

GLIDER

Brady and myself run out the door and sprint home to get the glider. We would have used it to get here, but the last thing we need is to draw negative attention to ourselves from the townspeople. 'What is he doing?' 'He can't fly that here!' 'That thing needs to be illegal!' 'He's going to kill someone!' The town of Kresa is open to scientific advancement, but is still very conservative and need to be eased into groundbreaking innovations.

Sprinting home a familiar voice yells out to us, "*Brady!*" a soothing voice for me, but a nuisance for my past self. Gayle had been my only true friend for the past eight years while for Brady she is an overbearing coworker. She has always wanted to be more involved with the glider, but I never wanted to share the credit since I could do it all myself, or so I thought.

"Gayle!" I yell out.

"Oh my god!" she is in reasonable shock as she sees an older and younger version of myself looking back at her.

"Now don't be scared. It's me," I try to tell her.

"Who are you?"

"Sorry," Brady takes over to ease her confusion, "this is my future self. He came from eight years in the future to help save the anti-species from the human invasion." Well, he tried.

"Explain it on the way!" she says beginning to run with us back to my house. I know what Brady is thinking right now, 'Why is she coming with? Doesn't she have better things to do?' but I enjoy her company. If it weren't for her I never would have gotten myself off the burning rubble of my home. Thanks to her, I am alive.

1438

1 HOUR AND 31 MINUTES LATER

After plenty of convincing from us that he truly wanted the glider, Emilio Kent finally agreed to run the DNA tests on my past self and I. Gayle, maybe or maybe not accepting the truth, stands by to see what the results are going to say. Through a

TIMELINE SIX

more extravagant process than the finger prick test, Brady and myself are put into a machine that recognizes brain wave activity, blood type and, of course, DNA.

Coming out of the machine I see not only Mr. Kent examining the results, but the old Captain Hunter as well who bought the glider from me years ago when the humans attacked. Or I guess months from now. I'm not sure how this whole timeline thing works.

Mr. Kent stares at the results in shock, "I can't believe it."

"This is such dog-shrack!" Captain Hunter comes back with an expected reply, "Time travel? Are you kidding me? This is a load of shrep. You can't trust these machines!"

"These machines have never lead us wrong before captain," Mr. Kent says defending us and his expensive machines.

"Yeah, right." Luckily we don't have to try to convince the closed-minded captain as well.

Gayle, who stands nearby, speaks up on our behalf, "Listen, I'm getting nothing from helping these two, or, err, one but you have to believe them... him. Brady is no liar. If he says this is him from the future then you need to trust him!" And this is why Gayle was the perfect friend.

"What do you say Mr. Kent?" I ask, "Can we get the troops together?"

The captain once more tries to tare down our idea, "We can't waste our time, funds and resources on an obvious scam! Come on Kent, tell them to blow off and get back to their stupid science experiments."

"What are we getting out of this captain?" knowing Hunter won't take my side, I try to speak to him while simultaneously building my argument to Mr. Kent, "The cost of doing this is small compared to the risk of doing nothing."

"Kent, you can't be seriously considering-"

"Shhh!" Mr. Kent silences the captain. We hold our tongues waiting motionless for the provost's decision. I feel as though he already knows what he will do but he just enjoys the attention of keeping us in suspense. "Okay," he finally breaks the silence, "We will get the troops together. We will pull in a town meeting tomorrow at the Centre. Susan!" An assistant, who has obviously been listening in

the whole time, sprints into the room. "Have the word sent all across town that I want as many people in the Town Centre tomorrow to hear my speech. Get the kids to knock on every door in the town before sundown tonight accompanied with flyers titled 'The Human Threat is Real'. We don't have much time so get going!"

"Yes, sir."

The captain knocks a stack of papers off the provost's desk in a fit of rage as he storms out of the room following the assistant.

"Thank you sir," I tell him, "now we need to head to the north east to gather the troops there. With all your men behind us, there is no way they can say no!"

As we are about to leave to begin packing Mr. Kent stops us, "You know, I heard about another strong army that may be willing to help you. They are currently at Wymail Wilds being advanced and working on their training. They call them the Anti-Species Retaliation. I would suggest going to them as well," he hands us the results of the medical tests, "Bring these with you to convince them. And if I find out this is some sort of trick, so help me I will make sure the two of you rot in a prison cell. You seem like trustworthy people so I want to believe you, but I need to remind you that I am not the person to cross."

"Thank you," I say. Looking to my past self I realize he is more concerned about the threat than I am. After all the proof that was put in front of him I thought he would be completely convinced, but apparently he still has his reservation.

2216

7 HOURS AND 38 MINUTES LATER

"Tomorrow?" Rebecca isn't excited to hear the news, "No way! We can't just pull Elijah out of school and take him on a four day trip to Wymail Wilds for a hunch!"

Rebecca, Brady and I stand in my old bedroom going over the plan for the next few days. I have set Rebecca's suitcase on the bed, but she has refused to put any of her belongings in it.

"It's not a hunch. It's fact!" Rebecca was speaking to my past self, Brady, but I figured now would be a good time to step in, "I've seen it with my own eyes. Death is

TIMELINE SIX

coming for everyone in this town, but we have a way to stop it. It doesn't matter if you believe it or not. This is happening!"

She rolls her eyes.

"Babe," Brady tries relieving the tension, "you need to stop taking this as just a harebrained theory and accept it. You said it yourself that you're not going to let me leave without you."

"I didn't think it was going to be tomorrow! I mean, my god! My life is here! My friends are here! Are we even coming back?"

Brady looks to me for the answer. "If everything goes as planned," I reply, "yes. We'll be back here in just a few months."

"A few months!" Rebecca throws her hands up and paces for a moment in disbelief, "We are not leaving our home for a few months! I mean, my God!"

"Yes we are," taking charge is something my old self would never do, but I hope it's what she is looking for from me, "If we don't do this, you will die. Elijah will die. Everyone you've ever known will die. This isn't something I came up with to cause a fuss. I didn't make this up for attention. I didn't stay in hiding for eight years for a game! This is going to happen! The sooner you get that through your head the better. Now go pack your things!"

"Hey bud," Brady turns our attention to the doorway where Elijah, nearly in tears, stands holding his Knute Phillip action figure his mother had carved for him. Brady crouches down to his eye level, something I used to do to comfort him when he was scared, "Come on in here. Everything is alright."

Elijah, keeping his distance from me, walks to my younger self.

"You wanna see daddy eight years from now? Look," he points to me.

Elijah and I lock eyes. Thinking I'd never see my son again and now being face-to-face with him forces emotions I can't explain to be flushed about my body bringing me nearly to tears as well. The feeling to have lost your son but now, eight years later... it's like a dream.

"Hey little guy. Do you recognize me?" I can speak to leaders and warriors, but when I speak to my son my voice trembles.

GLIDER

Elijah steps back toward the wall, terrified of me. The temporarily soft part of my heart hardens over again.

Brady steps in to ease the tension once more, "Elijah, what do you say to a little trip tomorrow? Going to Wymail Wilds to go shopping and see the sights? I hear they have a huge water slide there! Would you wanna try that out?"

Rebecca steps between Brady and my son, "Elijah, go to your room. I'll be in in a minute." Elijah, still having not said a word, runs out of the room down the hallway. When he's out of ear shot Rebecca whispers to Brady, "I'm not letting you just pull him away from his home like this. It isn't fair to him! You know he doesn't handle change well!"

"Rebecca, please. This is bigger than you or me or even Elijah. This is the continuation of our species, the protection of our home!"

"Then you can protect the home without us. We're staying," Rebecca walks out of the room to go comfort Elijah.

I bring my past self back to reality, "Get your things together. We need to leave right after Mr. Kent's speech tomorrow."

I'm not as upset as he is. While he is devastated he'll have to be away from them, I'll just be happy to know they are still alive this time next year.

JULY 14TH, 312 P.D.

1200

13 HOURS AND 44 MINUTES LATER

"We have never had to fight for our freedom, we have never had to fight for Kresa, but that changes on this day!" Mr. Kent announces, "We have received undeniable news that the humans are going to attack! We are calling for all men and women who can fight to rise up and help defend our land! In only a few months time the humans will be here in Kresa to not only take over the city, but to kill every last one of us! They are heartless and do not respect our way of life! So many years ago the humans kicked us out of..." Mr. Kent continues to yell out to the Kresans as Brady and myself stand off to the side of the stage. There is only about a hundred people

TIMELINE SIX

standing nearby listening to Mr. Kent so we are depending on word of mouth from these people to gather a large group of soldiers for our ranks. Next to Brady stands Captain Hunter who doesn't even look up at Mr. Kent while the speech is being given, instead merely peers off at the crowd to gauge their reactions accompanied with the occasional murmuring under his breath of 'this is garbage.' "...known only as 'the destroyer'! He has no plans to make it to Kresa, but he does pave the way for the humans to get here and if that happens we will not stand a chance! Our only hope is to take down the destroyer long before he is able to make a dent in any nearby city. We will take sign-ups for the next two days then ship out to Wymail Wilds in a week's time. We do not wish to make the deadline so soon, but as you've heard time is of the essence! Any and everyone we can gather together will..."

"Hey!" Brady whispers to the side of me, "you made it!" but not to me.

I turn to see Elijah and Rebecca standing behind us, each with a suitcase in hand.

Rebecca kisses him on the cheek, "The thought of you leaving and me never seeing you again was more than I could bare. If I couldn't stop you from leaving, I figured we'd just have to come with."

"What about your friends and Elijah's school?"

"Like you said, this is bigger than us."

Rebecca and Brady hug and Elijah joins in. Even though it's my past self, it doesn't feel like it. I don't remember this moment, I don't remember ever hugging them in this situation and now it kills me that she doesn't trust me enough to even talk to me. My son looks me in the eyes and hardly recognizes me as if I'm a stranger on the street. It will just take them some warming up to me I suppose.

I hope.

"And you're not going without me," Gayle has shown up too, bag packed and all.

"That's great!" I reach over to give her a hug.

She half-heartedly accepts as I have forgotten she hasn't gone through everything I've seen her experience yet. She has no idea how much she has helped me the past eight years. The keeping my hands healthy, warning me of drones when

GLIDER

no one else was paying attention, finding food and water when any hope seemed pointless and just keeping me company when taking my life was only hours away. She turns her attention to Brady, "So, when are we heading out?"

"As soon as Mr. Kent's done," he replies.

"...and a fight for your people! We will not let them take this away from us! We will fight! Gather your things and set your affairs in order for we leave in one week!"

The crowd slowly and awkwardly claps as Mr. Kent steps off stage. "What do you think?" he asks me, "Did I touch on everything?"

"It sounded perfect," I tell him regarding the half I was able to pay attention to.

Captain Hunter says without looking at us, "This can't be happening. You all have lost your jabbering minds!"

Mr. Kent, luckily having had enough with the captain, says to me, "Well Mr. Glider, since you seem to know the most, I think it's time you have a rank. How does Admiral sound?"

Hmm, admiral? "I like it."

"You've got to be kidding me!" Captain Hunter has begun his preteen hissy fit.

"Captain Hunter, you will report directly to Admiral Glider for any and all concerns you may have. Do you understand?"

The captain turns and walks away kicking the dirt as he pouts.

"Don't worry, he'll come around," Mr. Kent unsuccessfully tries to convince me.

"You know, I wouldn't care too much if he didn't."

Mr. Kent steps back to address the group of us, "Are you ready to head out? I have a team here gathering the troops to meet us at Wymail by the twenty-fifth but I'm ready to leave now if you are."

"Let's do it," I answer for the group.

Brady, Rebecca, Elijah, Gayle, Mr. Kent, Captain Hunter and I all begin our four-day travel across the deserted landscape to Wymail Wilds in hopes to bring the retaliation on our side.

TIMELINE SIX

JULY 16TH, 312 P.D.

2208

2 DAYS, 10 HOURS AND 8 MINUTES LATER

The seven of us gather around the fire sitting in the middle of the long, unforgiving desert on the way to Wymail Wilds. The glider sits next to Brady as he is constantly examining its layout and construction as if relaying it all to memory for when he gets back to Kresa to add to the barbaric blueprints on his workspace. Surrounding the fire is four tents; one large one for Elijah, Rebecca and Brady, one for Gayle, one for Captain Hunter and one for Mr. Kent. I have chosen to opt out of the use of a tent, as I prefer to sleep under the stars. For so many years Gayle and I were forced to be inside all the time for fear of being spotted by drones and, on top of that, the shelter we stayed in was several meters under ground with four locked doors to travel through with exiting and entering a hassle making lying under the clouds a nice change.

“...that’s when I found out I was meant for greatness. Sure it wasn’t easy but no one...” Mr. Kent continues his monologue on how he got to where he’s at today. He’s a nice guy, but I don’t really care about his backstory. Looking around the fire I see most the others don’t either. “... and the teacher pointed at me and said ‘Emilio, what are you doing wasting your time with all these kids. You should be out there doing something great.’ And do you know what I did?”

Clearly being a rhetorical question to get us involved in his long-winded story no one responds.

“I did something great! I left home that day and ventured to the capitol where I ran into the great Drake Diego and although I wasn’t supposed to just wander into his office, he saw something in me and said, ‘he’s going to be at my desk someday.’ And do you know what?”

I try to seem interested, but my eyes keep veering across the fire where Rebecca, Elijah and Brady sit tightly pack together on the ground. Elijah’s eyes slowly drift shut and then pop back open with all of Mr. Kent’s upward inflictions

while Rebecca and I frequently make eye contact, she of which pulls away first every time. Brady notices this then whispers in Elijah's ear followed by my son frantically shaking his head 'no'. My past self removes his arm from Rebecca's shoulder, grabs Elijah by the hand and escorts him over to my side. Brady stands while he sits Elijah down next to me.

"Now Elijah, this is still me, but just in a few years from now. I know it's hard to understand, but he has missed you very much and would like to speak to you."

The lump I remember so well from the day he was taken from me returns to my throat making it difficult to speak, "Hello Elijah." The harsh clearing of my throat forces a jolt of fear from him. "Don't worry. I know it must be very strange to see your old man like this, but he isn't lying. In only eight years time your papa is going to be looking just like me." Do I call myself papa? Is that a strange thing to do?

Elijah has never been a boy with much courage for conversing with strangers. Add that to my change in demeanor over the past few years and this is a very difficult conversation to hold. "Since I know it must be strange to be around your dad like this you can just think of me as your grandpa for now. Is that easier on you?" I have no idea why I just said that.

No head nod, no 'mhmm' or any sort of notion that I'm even speaking English. He leans back on his palm as to get as far away from me as possible without having to physically get up and walk away.

Brady, taking the role of tension easer again, "Are you tired bud? Is that it?"

Elijah nods.

"Alright, how about we get you to the tent so you can lie down."

Elijah jumps up grabbing onto Brady's hand while they walk toward the tent.

'I love you so much and I've missed you more than you know. You mean the world to me and I will never let you out of my sight again.' The lump works as a perfect filter for any emotion I want to convey. I'm only meters away from him but it feels like I might as well be on the other side of the earth.

"What's the future like?" Startled, I look up to see Rebecca standing next to me. "I mean, if you were really there."

TIMELINE SIX

I slide over motioning for her to sit next to me. Hesitant, she obliges. “Uhm, the future,” I try to find the right words, “Well it’s different. Definitely not as it is today.”

“No really. What is it like?”

Not sure if she is truly curious or is interrogating me, I think back on the past several years of my life. “The sky is dark, very dark. Not just at night, but all the time, as if a dark cloud constantly hangs over the human civilizations. They travel in giant machines, getting no exercise and constantly ready to fight anyone who threatens them. Their energy production comes from the anti-species slaves and that’s it. The ones they didn’t kill are forced to ride on bikes all day, every day to provide the humans with their greedy energy needs. They are being whipped and tortured, not by humans, but by the machines that the anti-species are ironically powering themselves. I saw the production facility with my own eyes on my way to the doorway, after I was captured.”

“How did you get away?”

“Of all the ways, a human helped me. He was also a prisoner of the other humans.”

“And he helped you? Why?”

I’ve thought about this question every day since I’ve been back. Why did he help me? He gave me a vague answer, but I find it hard to believe. I’m sure he could have figured out a way to send him back in time instead of me. “I believe it was because he felt guilty.”

“So not all humans are bad then.”

“No, they are. His legs were chained together when he found me. He was a person willing to go against his own species to get revenge on them. He wanted me to succeed just so he wouldn’t be a prisoner. They are all bad and selfish.”

She doesn’t respond.

I force the filtering lump in my throat out of the way to let out a message I’ve waited to say for nearly a decade, “I love you Rebecca. I love you so much.”

I refrain from grabbing her hand with my mangled and scarred fingers as she leans away from me, just as Elijah had done. “This is just too weird,” she says, “I

mean, how do I even know who you are? Because you're definitely not the person I married."

"But I am," I hold back any sign of pain from the violently harsh remark she just made, "Sure I'm different now, but that's because you don't know what I had gone through to get where I am. You weren't there for the transformation." I can't hold it any longer. I grasp her hands and hold them tight, "These hands were destroyed in the fire that you died in. I did everything I could to save you but I couldn't. I wanted to get you out of there so badly, but I wasn't strong enough. You need to believe who I am and that I did everything possible to save you."

Her glazed over eyes keep from locking with mine. "I want to believe you but you need to understand my stance. The fact that you're here, the way you got here, it's impossible! I just can't believe there is anyway to travel through time. You were the one who explained the science to me years ago. You're the one who convinced me that it's impossible to be seeing you right now."

"I know. I didn't believe it either and I'm still having a hard time getting it through my head, but there are only two possible realities right now. Either I was able to come back in time by use of a time machine made by the humans, or I'm dead and have been reconnected with you in an afterlife. For me, an afterlife is harder to accept than time travel. So I'm going to believe I'm here with you. Alive."

A tear rolls down her cheek landing on my hand. There is no stopping me. I lean in and force my lips against hers. Her eyes widen, then fall shut, accepting my love. The warmth with a slight amount of saliva is just as I remembered. Our wedding, our first time making love, every single kiss we've ever had floods back into memory. It's just like the first kiss, but this time, I'm not letting go.

"Are you two even listening?" She quickly removes her suctioned lips as Mr. Kent rudely kills the mood. "Anyways, as I was saying. When I was elected I told my mother, 'mom, the next time you hear my name I will have brought order back to this town and my name will be spread throughout the city.' And guess what?" I hadn't even realized he was still talking that whole time, as I was lost in memory. I want to go back.

TIMELINE SIX

Rebecca stands up and walks toward her tent where Brady stands in the opening. Following her with my eyes I lock eyes with Brady who unpleasantly stares at me. He saw the kiss, but he must understand the circumstance. That is my wife too.

Burning embers fly into the wind as Captain Hunter stomps out the fire. "Okay, I think that is enough stories for tonight. We have an early start and need to get our rest. We head out at o' five hundred." He turns and walks back to his tent followed by Gayle and Mr. Kent entering their own.

"I'll tell you the rest tomorrow. Good night everybody," Mr. Kent announces to the group as he shuts the flap to his tent. Filled with emotions I haven't felt in so long I'm sure I will be unable to sleep at all tonight. After all I've seen, all I've gone through, I have trouble removing the smile from my face. I lie down and stare up into the clouds.

I kissed my wife again.

JULY 18TH, 312 P.D.

0955

1 DAY, 11 HOURS AND 47 MINUTES LATER

After camping, walking, camping, walking, camping and walking we finally arrive at Wymail Wilds. We had all taken turns caring Elijah as he gets tired easily and the last thing we need is a fussy child walking with us. Even Captain Hunter was polite enough to take a turn, even though he complained the entire time about my son's presence with us at all. I feel like we wasted a good amount of time as I could have gotten here in half a day on my glider, but without Mr. Kent, I probably would have just ended up in another hospital for the insane.

Entering the city limits we are greeted by the watch guards monitoring the city population. They do not have much crime or issues here, however, this is a scientific city and they like to keep everything in check so when people show up or people leave they want to know about it. The founders of Kresa were once Wymail Wild locals, but split off from the strict rules and lack of entertainment. If any

scientific breakthroughs were to happen in the west it would probably take place here at Wymail.

The city has been constructed under very specific planning with science labs outnumbering businesses two to one. Everyone who walks the streets are dressed in fine suits made of recycled materials with a personal energy generator that works off their everyday kinetic energy. These generators power the lights and equipment needed wherever they go in contrast to the city working off one power grid. There is power streaming out to large machines that need more input than the personal generators, such as water filtration systems and hospitals, but this power is drawn directly from the buildings and not distributed throughout the city. It seems like a perfect place, but sometimes it feels good to unwind and have a good time. Good times, although not said out loud or written down, have basically been banned here.

Brady, Rebecca, Elijah and Gayle wait outside while Mr. Kent, Captain Hunter and myself speak to the Wymail provost, Jose Majiah.

"Now, how did the time machine work admiral?" he asks me. Of everyone I've tried to convince of this, he is the first to not write me off as a nut job immediately. Or maybe he has. He has a poker face stronger than anyone I have ever seen in my life.

"To be honest, Mr. Majiah, I'm not sure. I had to move quick and with the situation I was in, I didn't stop to ask of its inner workings or whether or not it truly was what the humans said it was."

He jots down notes after each answer I give. "And the humans? What day exactly will they attack Wymail?"

"I'm not sure about that either. The humans will hit Kresa at the beginning of September of next year, but they will already have been in the west for several months before that. As for the destroyer, I'm not sure when he'll arrive. Probably within the next few months. Maybe weeks."

"So you're here in Wymail Wilds to take use of our technology and recourses, am I right?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Kent has told me the possibility of the retaliation being here too?"

TIMELINE SIX

He jots down a few more notes. "Yes they are. Do you expect to take them to battle?"

"I only plan to fight the destroyer. He is just one man, but very powerful and on a very specific mission. By taking out all the west's leaders and weakening the northeast defenses at Glairefield, he makes way for the humans to come in and destroy everything. When he gets here to Wymail, you will most likely be his first target."

He writes down a few more lines in his notepad, not at all moved by my last statement. He stands, "We will help you. I will introduce you and your captain to the retaliation and brief them on what is coming."

"Thank you, sir!" I am nearly ecstatic, "Thank you so much!" For the first time in eight years I have the feeling that things are going to work out.

Mr. Majiah's assistant walks in, "I'm sorry, are you busy sir?"

"What is it?" he calmly replies.

"We've just gotten word from Roria about a possible science experiment gone wrong. They've never seen anything like it and believe it must have come from here. They want someone to come check him out."

"Did they give you any more information about it?"

"Just that he has some sort of biological powers. They have him in a cell right now and he may be dangerous."

"Admiral," Mr. Majiah looks to me, "would you like to go check this out for me?"

"But," trying to express my feelings yet stay completely professional in front of Mr. Majiah has left me with a temporary lack of words, "I-I thought you were going to show me the retaliation?"

"I can show your past self and brief him, plus I have your captain here. They can handle everything, correct?"

I don't want to insult him for all he is willing to do for me, but I was very much looking forward to seeing the retaliation and briefing them myself. "Sir, I believe that with my knowledge and understanding of how things will play out I will-"

GLIDER

“Nonsense, I’m sure you’ve brought everyone up to speed. Plus, if your glider works as well as you say it does, you’ll be there and back before tomorrow night.”

I know how the chain of command works and one more time of me telling him why I shouldn’t go is me basically saying ‘no’, which would be completely disrespectful after how much he is willing to help. “Yes, I will go.” I believe Mr. Majiah respects me, but he doesn’t believe in Mr. Kent’s decision to make me admiral after I have had no training, which, I suppose makes perfect sense.

“Perfect,” Mr. Majiah walks passed me out of the room, “Captain, come with me.”

Captain Hunter, getting what he wants, shoots me a glance that he has won. He still thinks this is just a power game I’m playing.

Stepping outside the capitol building I walk to Brady, “Listen, I need to go to Roria for a day or two. While I’m gone I need you to start work on a set of gloves that work off the glider’s power.” I write down on a piece of paper the specifics of the gloves that I had lost in Dyrith. “The hertz have to be perfect and will have to run off the booster’s excess power. You can begin the prototype and when I get back I’ll help you connect them to the glider.”

“Is this what takes down the destroyer?”

I hear Mr. Majiah’s voice yell out, “*Admiral, Roria awaits!*”

I pat Brady on the back, “I’ll be back in two days. Take care of our family. Let them have fun here, but don’t let them out of your sight for long.” I jump on the glider he has been holding onto for me, “And that waterslide you were talking about, it’s actually just an aqueduct. Break the news to Elijah softly.”

“*Brady,*” Mr. Majiah yells out, “*I’ve got to speak to you. Come along.*”

My past self is clearly nervous as these are the types of things he would never agree to be a part of. He has never been in charge and now everyone here is going to look to him for answers. Knowing how I used to be, this won’t be easy on him and Hunter is going to try to take the lead when he fails. I just hope when I get back I can regain my place in charge.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 17

THE RETURN

TYRAN

JULY 13TH, 312 P.D.

2022

4 DAYS, 13 HOURS AND 33 MINUTES EARLIER

SOMEHOW I ENDED UP BACK IN RORIA,

a place where I really have no business in as I know the flying man isn't here, but this is where I started before and it's a good place to start now.

It's been a while since I've been here but not a thing seems out of place, the only difference is I'm not showing up starving, dehydrated and mute. I've grown a lot since then and plan to work much quicker to find the flying man. No job, no moving in with a pig and no getting sidetracked from my mission. As long as I keep my mind where it needs to be then I'll be able to get to the ranks and finish him off once and for all.

Walking down the street I recognize a few people such as the old woman who would wait by the grocery store every day before it opened or the three little kids who run around causing trouble and don't seem to have any sign of parental guidance. There are days I missed my life in this city but overall I'm happy I got out. There was nothing for me here except falling into the routine like everyone else: wake up, go to work, come home, sleep and repeat. That may be all right for some people but not for me. I can't live that way. Olena did not plan for me to live that way. There has to be more to life than that.

"Hey buddy, ain't seen you 'round here before?" The voice pierces my ears like knives. Flint. What are the odds? How is it possible that the first person I run into is the man I never wanted to see again? My spine shivers with anger as I turn around to face him. "You alright there tiger?" he asks.

That's right. It has never happened. He doesn't even recognize me. "Yeah," I try my hardest not to knock him to the ground where he stands, "never better."

TIMELINE SIX

"You've been in the city long?" Just like before, he likes to strike up conversations with people he doesn't know and who have no interest in speaking to him.

"Nope. Just rolled in." I need to get away from him before I blow.

"Where you off to?"

"Just wandering."

"Wanna grab a drink? I'm buying?" he asks walking closer to me. After getting to know him I realized he has no friends at all. If I were more socially aware of how people acted outside of La Palomar I would've noticed how annoying he was to live with when I first met him.

"Nah, I've got places to be," I say

"It will just be a quick one. C'mon." He throws his arm around my shoulder and walks me to the nearest pub. It takes everything in my power not to snap his arm in half.

"Bartender, two Jagers and Fritz please," he hollers making his entrance in the pub known.

"Flint!" the bartender, clearly happy to take his money, hollers back, "Whoa, hold on. He looks a little young."

"I-"

I about answer when Flint cuts me off, "He turns eighteen years today! We're celebrating."

"Hey-oh!" The bartender is either striving for tips or is just as enthusiastic and annoying as Flint is. "Happy birthday then! Two Jagers and Fritz on the house."

Two pints of yellowish liquid are placed in front of us as I sit on an uncomfortable, wobbly bar stool. I've never drank before as I know it's bad for people's brains so I have no intentions of drinking this whole beer. I take a sip to humor him.

"So what really brings you to town fella?" he asks, "No one ever just 'wanders' to Roria."

That's not true because this is the second time I've done it. "I have business here," I try and keep my answers short and to the point.

"Business you say? What kind of business are you into Mr...."

"Oh, uhm, Glass."

"What kind of business are you into Mr. Glass."

Technically he's never met me before so I'm not sure why the fake name is necessary. I guess I just feel safer with him not knowing who I truly am. "Water."

"The water business?" he acts surprised.

Apparently this isn't a believable business. "Water filtration systems. I sell high quality filtration systems."

"Well you've come to the wrong town son. Our water is golden here." I know it is, I used to clean it. "It doesn't come much cleaner than Roria."

"It can always be better."

"You're in business for yourself?"

I take another sip of beer. "No, I work for a bigger corporation located in Dyrith." It's one of the only other cities I've been to so I want to drop the name to make my story more believable.

"Oh man. You haven't heard the news then, huh?"

"What?"

"I hate to be the one to break this to you, but Dyrith had a horrible catastrophe a few days ago. Apparently things went pretty wrong there and some buildings exploded. We don't know the exact details but people died. Sounded like quite a few."

I wouldn't expect word to travel so fast out here with all the space between cities. "Oh wow," I act surprised, "that's horrible."

Flint, obviously feeling bad for me, lifts his glass, "To Dyrith."

I lift mine and clank it against his. I try to only sip on my beer but he pushes his fingers to the bottom of the mug and forces me to chug. Before I know it the whole glass is gone.

"Another round bartender!" he yells out.

"No, I can't-"

"Nonsense! You just found out your home town has been destroyed and you're going to deny another drink?"

TIMELINE SIX

Two new glasses are placed in front of us nearly overflowing with the stupidity water. Speaking of Dyrith's destruction brings up the thought of seeing my village in Old Mexico being destroyed. I know they are all safe now, but the man who killed my family is still out there waiting for his next chance to attack. "One more drink, then I have to go."

2212

1 HOUR AND 50 MINUTES LATER

Before I know it there are six empty pint glasses in front of us and an empty bowl of fried potatoes. My stomach churns and my head spins but I don't seem to mind it.

"You kno-you knows what Mr. Glass?" Flint mutters.

"Call me Tyran," the words fall out of my mouth like jelly.

"Tyran, what do you say you come up to my place and I cook us up a nice meal? I've got everything you could need, plus my pad isn't too bad. What do you say?"

I don't quite feel like myself. I know I have something to do, but some food sounds like a much better idea. "Yeah... yes. Yes. Let us eat."

Walking becomes a bit of a blur. After the bartender scoops up the generous tip that Flint left we walk outside and then suddenly I'm entering Flint's home. His small, familiar apartment brings back a tidal wave of unhappy memories. The couch where I used to sleep is nicely made as if hardly ever sat on. The table where we used to play card games on is perfectly set for one person to eat a meal. And the bedroom... the bedroom is just as I remember it from the last time I saw Flint long ago with the bed still made for two people.

"You entertain guests many here?" it sounded right in my head.

"Yeah. A few." Flint throws on an apron and turns on the fire stove.

My legs weakening from the alcohol forces my body onto the couch with a force that nearly tips it backwards.

"You ever heard of pig?" he asks as I get comfortable on the couch.

TYRAN

"Uhm, you mean like a dirty man?" I ask sprawling my legs out on the couch cushions.

"Ha! No, it used to roam about but they all died. They supposedly tasted pretty good."

"Okay?"

"The point is I got this pig substitute. If this is what they tasted like then damn, it would just be a matter of time before they went extinct again anyways because these suckers are amazing! We woulda just eaten them to death." He tosses a grey cube on a skillet and cuts it up with a knife.

"What do you do for fun Flint?" I think I see why he was always talking so much when I lived with him. He was always drunk! I find it entertaining to get to know him for a second time to find out what kinds of things he may have lied to me about the first time we met.

"You know, the normal stuff. I like to cook, go out and occasionally read." In the entire time I knew him I never saw him lift a single book. "And I'm not too bad in the sack if you consider that 'doing something for fun.'"

Carleena's face, Flint's disgusting chest and the messed bed flash over my vision. "Yeah?" I feel the energy start flowing through my hands as my blood begins to boil, "What kind of people do you bring over here to get in the 'sack'?"

Flint steps away from the hot stove and leans over the back of the couch I'm sitting on, "Oh you name it. Old, young, short, tall, green, blue. I don't discriminate."

There is no stopping it! The energy is growing around my palms ready to attack. "Carleena?" I ask turning to look at him.

"Hmm, no. No, I can't say I've ever been with a Carleena."

Calm down Tyran. He hasn't even met her yet. None of that has ever happened.

He leans over the couch to get face to face with me, "I was more thinking someone named Tyran."

Apparently that stupid water makes you hear things too. "What?" I ask hoping I had just imagined that.

TIMELINE SIX

"Oh, excuse me," he leans in close so I can feel his breath on my face, "I mean, *Mr. Glass.*"

Before my fuzzy mind can process what is going on Flint pushes his chapped, Jaggers scented lips into mine. Is he kissing me? No! This isn't natural!

Without taking his lips off mine he crawls over the back of the couch to sit on his knees next to me. With all the strength my drunken arms can muster I push him away from me forcing him to land on the other end of the couch.

Instead of apologizing to me as I was expecting him to do, he spreads his legs and bites his bottom lip. "Mmmmm," Flint is trying to seduce me in the most horrifying and revolting way imaginable, "this is where you want me baby?"

"Flint!" I am finally able to push the ball of vomit indecisively moving up and down in my throat to the side to get a few words out, "What are you doing? Olena doesn't let this happen."

Flint, not giving up, crawls along the couch toward me, "Don't worry, Mr. Glass. Olena will never find out."

What is he talking about? She knows everything!

Olena, please! What do I do?

I feel the electricidad circle around my palms ready to take him down at any moment. Again, Flint leans toward my lips but I turn my face at the last second so he ends up slobbering all over my cheek. He is just drunk and doesn't know what he is doing. He doesn't deserve to be hurt by my powers again. I do everything I can to keep the energy contained around my palms.

Is this what he was into the whole time I lived with him? "Flint," I push my head far back into the couch to get as much distance between his sinful lips, and me. "I thought you liked girls. What is going on?"

"No," he leans in to kiss me mid sentence, but again, I pull away from him, "I'm pansexual."

"W-what?" Ignoring me, he closes his eyes and leans in to kiss my face giving me just enough space to squeeze passed him off the couch. "What is pansexual?"

"It means what I told you," he says relaxing himself in the empty seat on the couch I left for him. "I don't discriminate against anyone. Why limit yourself to only

half the population in the world when you can experience everything life has to offer? You only have one life to live." As he finishes his sentence he begins to slide off his loose fitting pants.

"Okay Flint! That is enough!"

"I know you want me Tyran." Hit by his crazy assumption and still feeling a good deal of the alcohol I fall backwards onto the chair across from him. "I mean, why else would you spend all night with me at the bar?" he stands up and finishes the process of sliding off his pants revealing his dirty, skintight underwear. He does a slow walk toward me while beginning to remove his shirt. "But if you're uncomfortable Mr. Glass we can see if we can't make it more interesting for you. How about you call me by your girl's name during so you can feel a bit more at home. Just call me Olena."

"My girl?" I'm so sorry for what he just said about you. I've never once claimed to own you as my own! I promise you that! Please just help me sober up and get out of this house! I knew I shouldn't have put that disgusting fluid in my body and I'm being punished for it but please, Olena, put the balance back into my legs so I can stand and get out of here!

"And I can call you something else if you want too. What was the other name you said? Carleena?"

My anxiety and fear switches instantaneously to a deep rage as if I were back here on the day I saw the two of them together. "What was that?" I feel myself ask while envisioning her breaking my heart with this creature.

He leans in close toward my lips and whispers, "Car-lee-na."

I tried to go easy on him because he is just drunk, but so am I and I can't help what I do now! As soon as the warmth of his breath touches my lips I lose all control like a rabid animal freed from its cage. The power surging from my palms sends a wall of electricity directly into his stomach sending him soaring across the room into the kitchen where he knocks the burnt, fake pig to the floor followed by the hot pan landing on his back.

"Ahh!" he screams as he throws the pan off him and squirms away from the stove. "What the hell man?" he whines trying to regain his footing.

TIMELINE SIX

Not able to remove Carleena from my mind the energy keeps flowing from my palms as I walk near him. One after another I shoot the energy, bruising his face and knocking him all over the kitchen making him look like a flopping fish on the sand. I flip the dining room table over on top of him and kick him in the face.

"Tyran! Stop! Stop!" he spits blood with each word.

"I loved her! She was my everything! And she was just something to have sex with to you!" I grab his icebox and dump it all over him.

"Tyran!" my name is barely understandable through his swollen mouth. I continue to hit him, one after another with my energy blasts. If I can't kill the flying man, then I'm going to kill the next best thing.

"Hey? What's going on?" The front door behind me flies open. In the doorway stands the neighbors who I liked because they always kept to themselves.

"Get out of here!" I scream, shooting a wall of electricity toward the door. Worried and confused they run from the apartment down the hallway as I turn to finish off Flint. I'm thrown off balance by the hot pan hitting me in the face. Flint drops the pan and staggers around the kitchen as I slam to the ground. Lying on my back he stumbles toward me giving me the chance to kick him as hard as I can in the ribs. He hunches over in pain as I push myself back onto my wobbling feet. The hot pan hitting me in the face has caused my nose to drip with blood, but the adrenaline I'm filled with allows me to forget all about the pain. Although, it could very well be the Jagers and Fritz doing that.

"Freeze!" the words come from the open doorway as I ready a finishing move for Flint.

I turn around to see four officers, each with electro guns pointed at me. The officers station is only two blocks away as Flint lives in one of the worst places in Roria.

If I were sober what would I do?

"Put your hands in the air!" one officers yells as they slowly make their way into the apartment.

I glance over to Flint standing behind me to see his scared and pained face oozing blood all over the floor. A look similar to the one he gave me when I walked

in on him with my love. She was my love from La Palomar, the last thing I had to remind me of home and he took her from me!

I look back to the doorway and shoot a wall electricity at the officers knocking them all on their backs giving me time to turn back to Flint and kick him in the leg as hard as I can. I feel the shinbone crack on my toes as he crumbles back to the ground.

Unable to hold them back any longer, a steady stream of tears mixes with the blood running down my face. "You took my love!" I kick Flint in the stomach knocking him to his side. "You disobey Olena!" Kicking him again forces him to curl into a ball. "And you try and force me to disobey her with you!" One swift kick to his face knocks him to his back where he lies unconscious on the floor.

"Fire!" Having already forgotten about them, the officers are back on their feet shooting streams of electric wires towards me. Regardless of my state of mind, I react quickly and use a wall of energy to shield me from the shots. Still shielding myself I walk backwards into the bedroom where I throw the door shut and head for the window. *"We said freeze!"*

Ignoring them, I jump out of the apartment window to the ground a few meters below where a dozen more officers have just shown up. Using the power from my feet I jump into the air and fire rapidly to raise me higher and higher away from them. Continuing to blast from my feet and using small bursts from my hands for balance I soar down the street above the officers who attempt to bring me down.

I just need to get out of Roria and I'll be okay.

Flying is something I have always been able to do but never for a long time as it takes a constant flow of energy that, after a while, becomes extremely hard to keep up with. The pedestrians who are still outside turn their attention to me as I soar through the town using my energy to project myself forward.

The city limits! I'm not far now!

My legs and arms are beginning to turn to mush as the power is draining all the energy from my body. My ankles, which take a great deal of the blast impacts, have gone numb making it difficult to aim correctly forcing me lower to the ground. As if that isn't bad enough, the alcohol in my system has forced a field of stars to

TIMELINE SIX

over take my vision as the town around me begins to spin. But that doesn't matter because I'm less than a few hundred meters away from the city limits.

I'm going to make it!

JULY 14TH, 3 12 P.D.

1210

13 HOURS AND 58 MINUTES LATER

Where am I?

The cold floor stings my back while every muscle and bone in my body aches.

My hands! What's going on?

They're in metal boxes! So are my feet!

What has happened to me?

Sitting up I'm hit with an insistent pounding in my head as if I had been hanging upside down for a week and all the blood in my body has been resting in my skull.

I'm sitting in a jail cell! I can't remember anything. Why are my hands and feet in lock boxes? I shake and thrash my arms in an attempt to free them but it is no use.

"You're not getting out of those things," startling me, I look up to see a large, burly guard standing outside my cell.

"W-what am I doing here?" Opening my mouth I realize my tongue has ran entirely out of moisture and is probably leading to the headache.

"You don't remember? I guess that's understandable. Your blood alcohol content was pretty high for someone your age."

"I need water. Can you let me out so I can get a drink?"

"Ha! Not a chance freak."

Oh god! I must have used my powers! "What did I do?"

"Besides attack four officers, two pedestrians, nearly killing a man and then flying through the town leading to you blacking out and sliding across the ground?"

TYRAN

Oh no. How could I be so stupid? Why the hell did I even accept a drink with Flint? "When will I get out?"

"Kid, you're never getting out. You're staying in there until the day you die."

"What?" This can't be happening!

"Don't get too comfortable in there though. With the powers you got, I'm sure someone will be along any day now to cut you open and figure out just what the hell you are." He starts walking away.

"Hey! Hey come back!" I try to stand and walk to the bars but my feet can't move right in these lock boxes and I end up falling back to the cold cell floor. His laugh fades away as he turns the corner down the hall.

Everything I've worked for, everything I've tried to accomplish, over. I'll never achieve any of it now. The flying man got away and is going to go back for my family again.

I'm so sorry Olena. Please forgive me.

JULY 19TH, 312 P.D.

1200

4 DAYS, 23 HOURS AND 50 MINUTES LATER

It's been a few days or a week since I've been put in here, I don't know. There are no windows and they don't let me know what time it is. It's as if they are trying to drive me mad in here!

I get two meals a day, both grey blobs of I-don't-know-what. Since they don't let me use my hands, I have to bend over and eat like an animal on the floor. They tell me Flint is in tough condition but he's going to make it. He may never walk or be able to make full sentences again, but he'll survive. I had no idea the amount of damage I was capable of doing. That kind of crime here isn't tolerated, so there is no chance I'll be getting out. They say the best I can hope for is my hand and feet privileges back an hour a day in a locked room at some point.

Please keep my family safe and healthy Olena. They are going to need you even more now.

TIMELINE SIX

I spend most of my day praying and hoping she can forgive my horrible actions against the innocent. I know I shouldn't have attacked anyone who didn't deserve it, but I lost all control. I hope she understands. Sure Flint did me wrong but his act of adultery did not deserve the beating I gave to him. If Carleena was willing to do that with him then obviously her and I weren't meant to be together in the first place.

I'm so stupid.

"Yo kid, you got a visitor." I wipe the building tears from my eyes and weasel myself up to balance on my boxed, metal feet.

Who could it be? Who would want to visit me? I can't imagine Flint would be out of the hospital yet, but I'm sure it's just a matter of time before he comes by and asks why I did all that.

"This one?" I hear the voice around the corner.

There's no way.

"Are you Tyran?" he asks standing only a couple meters outside my cell.

It's him... it's the flying man!

TYRAN

CHAPTER 18

THE RETALIATION

TIMELINE SIX

BRADY

JULY 18TH, 312 P.D.

1148

1 DAY AND 12 MINUTES EARLIER

WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

It wasn't just a few days ago I was sitting in the living room with Elijah and Rebecca reading a book and now I'm standing in front of an army of super freaks! The lump in my throat swells as I feel the inevitable public speaking approaching.

"Okay men," Mr. Majiah yells out to the Anti-Species Retaliation, "this is Brady Eztuella and Captain Hunter from Kresa. They have been brought here to brief us on the human attacks. Brady, Hunter, this is the retaliation. They are at your command, but remember, these men have risked their lives not only by willing to fight for the ranks, but also by agreeing to medical testing which have forced some of them only a few years left to live. In that time they will be dedicating their time to saving our way of life and truly giving their lives for the cause. Each of the five teams in addition to the super powers has been given extra equipment to truly make them an unstoppable force. Retaliation! Introduce yourselves!" He steps to the side immediately followed by a choreographed introduction to the retaliation beginning with the tall and toned red bandanas.

The twelve of them present themselves in an elegant pose wearing black, skintight jackets zipped to their necks that match the pants that are suffocating their legs. Thick boots that are far too big for their feet go nearly up to their knees where they merge with the pants creating some sort of boot-pant hybrid. The spokesman of the red bandanas steps forward, "We are the Fleet Rufescent! With the use of our graviton boots we are able to reverse the effects of gravity for a short period while our quick metabolic rate allows us to move much quicker than the normal human or anti-specie. Our ability to evade even the quickest fighter makes us the first line of defense against all enemies and threats. We will break down the humans' front lines and pave the way for the second wave. With the Rufescent on the battlefield, the

humans will have no choice but to surrender!" He steps back to join the rest of his team. Their unison marching to the left allows the green bandanas to take their place.

Each one of the greens is much more muscular than the reds. They are shirtless but wear loose pants that go well above their bellybuttons accompanied by the boots with a strong metal toe at the end. On their backs is some sort of metal spine that stretches from their tailbone to the base of the neck then down both arms where it comes to a stop at the wrists where it wraps around as cuffs. "We are the Stout Verdant!" the green spokesperson begins, "Our cells, with regenerative properties from event negation, allows us to break our bones or puncture a vein and have it healed within seconds. In addition to our accelerated healing we have been equipped with a spinal structure that stretches out to our arms, giving us the strength of a hundred men. We will take down the strongest of the human forces with ease! The Verdant will bring the humans to their knees!" Finishing with a punching pose the greens march off to the side with the blue bandanas taking their place.

They don't have large muscles, they're not very tall and there is something odd about the way the blues walk. Twelve of them, dressed in blue button up shirts, which are tucked tightly into their black, pocket covered pants, strut with confidence to present themselves to us. They appear to have the balance of a drunkard on a Friday night as they come to a stop ahead of us. In their hands they hold the strangest looking guns I've ever seen with a large chamber, for some sort of liquid and a barrel that isn't a straight tube, but instead starts fat then shrinks down to a point like a funnel. The spokesman steps forward taking a hard look around, evaluating the captain and I before speaking. "We are the Cerulean! Thanks to the biological advancements of our gelatinous bones we never tare apart. Our skin, muscles and skeleton swerve around blades and bullets with ease. Through years of training we have mastered the art of walking without bones while also retaining our ability to lift heavy objects, such as our liquid metal projectors. Once the liquid exits the barrel and is exposed to oxygen it immediately starts to harden and when the metal hits its target, whether be feet to ground or mouth and nostrils, there is no

TIMELINE SIX

moving afterwards thanks to its solidified state. The use is not to merely destroy the human forces, but to salvage the machines after battle while making them inactive during. With the human weapons at our disposal, they will never rise again!" Watching them walk away I can easily identify the extra sway and careless stroll caused by the genetic modifications.

"We are the Anti-Pusillanimous!" Before I've looked away from the blues the eyesore yellows have began their speech. As one of the most bizarre looking spectacles I've ever seen, these men each have three arms on either side of the torso with the two bottom hands gripping swords that stand out far in front of their bodies. Their skin has an almost orange tint to it, as if they were painted or have some other side effects of the testing. "Our obvious perks are our four extra arms which have been calibrated deep in our motor cortex to work independently from one another. The advantage of being able to catch, throw, punch, scratch and swing two swords all at once is insurmountable on the battlefield. Equipped in our two lower hands are meter and a half titanium swords that can cut through some of the strongest armor in existence. When going against a human with stronger armor-" he pauses to squeeze down on the handle of the sword sending electricity coursing through the blade shooting sparks in all directions. "Our blades can be electrified to shut down the computer chips controlling whatever monstrosities they have inside! The humans stand no chance against the Anti-Pusillanimous!" Almost a funnier walk than the blues, their six arms swing with their body while they march away.

"Finally, we are the Atramentous Arsenal!" the voice comes from right behind my ear but as I turn around I see no one. I look to Captain Hunter who is equally as confused. Like a flash of light a dozen men appear right in front of our eyes having each one of them loaded up with every weapon that could possibly fit on a single person. "Like a shadow at night we can disappear entirely from view even when standing directly in front of your eyes! Thanks to a three hundred and sixty degree camera implanted around our skulls and the modified melanocytes in our skin, we are able to blend in seamlessly with our surroundings causing the illusion of absence. Together with the perfect camouflage we have been given an obvious arsenal of weapons. From grenade launchers, to machine guns, to throwing knives,

to sling shots we are able to keep all our weapons on our bodies at all times with as much as nine hundred rounds of ammo to accompany them. Like our melanocytes, these weapons too will become invisible to the humans. We are the best defense and offense of the anti-species ranks. With us, failure is not a possibility!"

Mr. Majiah steps in front of the group of mutated anti-species. "These men, although only twelve of each here, have a group of over one thousand scattered about the west for all major city defense. These men are the closest thing we have to the unified militarization of the west. We will be able to gather up as many as we can get to in the time allotted. Now, Mr. Eztuella," no, don't ask me to speak, "explain the situation we are in."

No. No. No. No. No. I feel the phlegm building up with the gagging not far behind. "H-Hello," of course the first thing out of my mouth sounds like a dying bird. I clear my throat, "Hello men. My name is, uhm, Brady. Brady Eztuella. I guess you already know that. A few days ago my future se-"

"Brady," Mr. Majiah whispers to me, "it's best not to talk about your future self. That will just confuse them and make them skeptical. It's best you say, 'we received word,' or 'our sources tell us'."

"Okay, uh, thanks." I look back to the men who are waiting patiently for my briefing. I feel Captain Hunter's eyes rolling next to me. "Our sources have given us the word that there is some sort of an attack that is going to happen." What else do I say? Am I supposed to be motivating these guys or something?

"Men!" Captain Hunter pushes me back and takes charge. I'm rather insulted, but couldn't be happier. "In a few months there will be an attack on the west from the humans! From a reliable source," if they knew him, they would be able to pick up on the sarcasm in his voice, "we have been told how to defeat them! You! You are our secret weapon! The retaliation is our key to success!"

Captain Hunter continues the speech as Mr. Majiah steps back to me. "Did that Glider fella say you had something else to work on?"

"Yeah. There were these glove things." I fiddle around in my pocket to pull out the instructions for the glove's creation.

TIMELINE SIX

“I think we may have all this handled if you want to go take care of that. If you go near the center of town there is a small science lab at the military base.” He hands me a card. “Use this to get clearance. The sooner we get those done the better.”

I try to keep my head up while I walk away, but for some reason I can’t seem to pull my eyes away from my feet kicking the dirt in front of me.

When will my future self be back? I’m not cut out for this at all.

BRADY

CHAPTER 19

THE CONFRONTATION

GLIDER

JULY 19TH, 312 P.D.

1215

1 DAY AND 27 MINUTES LATER

“HOW OLD ARE YOU?”

Trying to get the locked up kid to open up to me has become a serious issue, but if he's as powerful as they say I need to get him on my side. He doesn't respond, but he has yet to break eye contact with me, which is unsettling. More than that, he is oddly familiar but I can't put my finger on where I know him from.

“I'm told you have some sort of powers. Would you care to show me?”

“I can't,” it's quiet and barely heard, but I finally get a reply from him.

“I can get those metal boxes off of you.” I crouch down to get to his level. “You can help me and your people if you show me. What do you say I get you out of this prison?”

He holds eye contact and stay quiet.

“I heard about the pain you caused those officers. You're looking at some serious jail time for that.”

Not even a blink.

“I'll be candid with you. I also heard about the flying. From what I hear we've never seen someone with powers like yours. Somehow you are able to harness so much energy from who-knows-where, not just once but repeatedly, and then shoot it out of your feet to fly. That's unheard of! I want you with us Tyran. I want you to join our cause.”

“I know,” finally a little more out of him.

“How do you know?”

“Because, I know who you are and what you're doing 'admiral'.”

“How could you possibly know I'm an admiral? I was just appointed that a few days ago from a town several hundred kilometers away from here.” From

TYRAN

everything I've seen the past few months I wouldn't be surprised if this kid has the power to read minds too.

"You killed my family."

Now I'm getting a bit too much information. "What? I've never killed anyone before."

"You have. You kill millions! Maybe not with your bare hands but you lead the attack."

"How do you mean?"

He looks away from me for the first time.

"Tyran, what are you talking about?"

He tries to hide it but I see a tear roll down his cheek. Poor kid shouldn't have gone through all this at such a young age. Where did he go wrong?

"What do you say you speak to me when you're ready? I'll get out of here and you tell me when you're ready to share. Kay?"

He takes the bait and looks back to me.

"I'll need to know that you're with me Tyran if you want me to get you out of this place. The humans are going to attack and I could really use your help when the time comes. Are you willing to do this?"

"The humans attack?" he's shaking mad now, "The humans! They don't attack! You do! I've seen it! You go over there and massacre all of them!"

This kid is obviously crazy! "Okay, calm down. I-"

"No! No I'm not going to calm down!" I pity him as he forces himself to his feet struggling to keep balance like a peg-legged man. "You kill millions and millions of innocent people, and for what? You lie to all of us and think it's okay just because they are different from you!"

Guards run up next to me, each with electro guns at the ready.

"No, don't," I tell them. I feel sorry for him and his delusions. "Tyran, you don't know what you're talking about. Have they been giving you enough water in here?"

TIMELINE SIX

I see his electric power streaming from the small opening between his wrists and the metal, but nothing can come out very far. Who knows how much energy is being produces in those metal gloves of his.

"I will never fight with you!" he yells, "I will never help you in your journey of hate and power! If I could I would kill you right now!"

One guard next to me pushes his gun through the cell opening, "Sit down!"

The kid holds his hands up and shoots repeatedly at me with his electric power but it only hurts his own hands inside the metal containments. No matter how hard he tries he can't break through.

"Leave him be," I tell the guards, "He cannot hurt us."

Knowing he is a lost cause I walk away from him listening to him scream in fury and anger while still trying to rip himself free from his metal holds. I guess it's for the best. He's too much of a lose cannon to try to control.

1235

20 MINUTES LATER

"Get the sign-ups ready," I tell one of the guards who walks with me. "I head off to Wymail again, but I'll be back in five days to collect the recruits and take them with us."

Boom!

What the hell was that?

I jump on my glider and fly into the air to see the explosion coming from the far corner of Roria where a building has been knocked down, sending plumes of smoke into the air. Below me a swarm of officers run toward the smoking building to assess the issue.

"No! Help me!"

"Ahhh!"

"Oh my god!"

This was no mere building malfunction. He is here and I don't have my gloves! I won't be able to defeat him!

Crash!

Another building crumbles to the ground.

I see him. He sprints down the street towards me while shooting the guards who are trying to attack him. He takes a left and enters the prison I had just exited.

I thought I had more time!

I can save as many as I can while he's distracted in the prison. I fly to the science lab on the outskirts of the city where the best minds can be found. I jump off my glider and throw the doors open. "Everyone! Everyone get out! The destroyer is here!"

The six people working on their computers inside look to me like I'm a crazy person and disregard me as such.

"What are you doing? Can't you hear the destruction out there? Come with me!"

"I'm sorry, can we help you with something?" the smuggest of the group asks. Obviously the scientists in this town put themselves on a pretty high pedestal.

Boom!

Everyone in the room stands up from their desks in fear and confusion.

"Yeah! Now get your asses out of here!"

As if the slower they walk the safer they'll be, they head toward the front door with a casual stroll. I jump back on my glider and continue away from the building as a crowd of citizens sprint toward the city border away from the destroyer's route. Flying into the air I look back to the prison to see the destroyer and the power kid standing next to each other. The destroyer has removed the kid's metal hand and foot restraints and now makes his way toward the capitol building. The kid uses his power to knock down the guards trying to run after the destroyer.

This is why the kid wasn't willing to talk to me. He's on the destroyer's side! He's a traitor!

Now that I see his powers I remember where I know him. He's the son of a bitch who helped the destroyer at the start of all this! I want him and his abilities on our side more than ever, but there is no trust for him. His fate will be the same as the humans.

TIMELINE SIX

TYRAN

JULY 19TH, 312 P.D.

1227

12 MINUTES EARLIER

WHAT HAVE I DONE?

A guaranteed chance to get out of here and I ruined it! I could have let the flying man get me out then just taken him down when we were alone. And I could've gotten these stupid metal boxes off of me!

I'm so stupid. How could I have cried in front of him?

"Guard! Guard!" I scream out the cell bars, "Get the flying man back in here! I'm ready to talk!"

No answer.

"Guard!"

Again, no answer. I'm sorry Olena, I've failed again.

Boom!

I lose my balance and fall to the ground as my body shakes from an explosion outside the prison. Could the flying man be on a rampage here? Is he attacking the city?

A group of guards sprint pass my cell toward the front entrance. "Hey! Hey stop! One of you! Get the admiral back! Get me out of here!"

They aren't listening! They're ignoring me like I don't even exist.

I have a seat against the wall as there is nothing I can do now besides sit and wait for something to happen.

Crash!

Another explosion? What is he doing out there?

The sounds of bullets ring out accompanied with the hollers and screams of the Rorians outside.

The door down the hall flies open but I'm unable to see who it is.

Clink. Clink. Clink. Clink.

TYRAN

Metal shoes?

"Sam?" I ask.

"Tyran?" It's him! He stares into my cell confused to see me. Or I think he's confused. Reading his facial expressions is like a blind man trying to read brail from tree bark. "What are you doing in there?" he asks.

"Get me out of here! They locked me up and put these boxes on me! I haven't seen my hands or feet for weeks!" or days. Again, I have no idea.

He doesn't react.

"Sam? Can you help me? Are you hearing me?"

"In the last town I was in I could have used you, but you walked away from me so I'm not sure if I can reaccept you as a companion."

"Reaccept me? You just walk with me and I walk with you. That's it."

"Sorry. My goggles say I can't help you." He walks away from my cell to continue on.

"Sam, wait!"

He stops.

Please Olena, I know he may be evil, but I need to get out of this place. I will do anything to get out of these boxes and this is all I can think of. "I will help you kill all the anti-specie you need. Whatever your mission is, consider me your partner! I will stand by you all the way until the end to make sure the humans win this war!"

I'm sure his computer processing or whatever is going crazy right now as he's taking more than a moment to respond. If he were human he wouldn't need a computer's permission to help me.

"You will fight with me?"

Forgive me Olena, "Yes."

After a few seconds of letting me stew with the guilt of my gut-wrenching dark promise to him, he grabs hold of the cell bars and pries them open far enough for me to get out. I force myself up and hobble out of the cell doors nearly tripping with each step. "Why did they lock up your hands and feet?"

"They didn't know what else to do with me. Do you think you can get them off me?"

TIMELINE SIX

Like they were made of paper he bends down and tares off the metal boxes on my feet then does the same to my hands finally freeing them. "Alright, if you're coming with me, come on," he says.

I run my clammy hands all over my face like I had never felt my cheeks before. I'll never let anyone take my hands away from me again!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

One after another bullets soar down the hallway bouncing off Sam ricocheting onto the walls and floor. I use my electricity to protect myself while jumping back in my cell to get away from the shots coming toward me. Sam simply walks toward the firing bullets, not at all phased by their impacts.

I wait in my cell for a moment.

Tink. Tink. Tink.

"Ahhh!" one of the guards lets out a horrifyingly pained scream that is cut off by the sound of a rolling head on the floor. I don't see what he is doing to them around the corner but for some reason I still find it necessary to close my eyes to block out the visuals.

Thud. Thud.

Silence.

"Come on if you're coming," Sam yells.

I rush out of the cell toward him attempting to not look at the bloody, decapitated bodies he left behind.

Exiting the prison is like walking into a war zone! Smoke and dust from the collapsed buildings surround us while Rorian officials and soldiers all with guns at the ready stand directly outside the prison door waiting for Sam's exit. With nothing left to lose I ready my electric hands and knock down a group of guards who are about to shoot us. I ready another blast when Sam stops me by pushing my arms back to my side.

"Stand down!" the mayor yells from behind a wall of protective glass, "Surrender yourself or be destroyed!" He is about sixty meters away with a hundred men surrounding his protective glass case. With all the destruction Sam's done, they would have just killed him on the spot if they thought they could. They are scared.

“Mayor Clitchwood!” Sam yells. I’m surprised he knows the name of this guy cause I never learned it in the entire time I lived here. “I know what you’ve done and what you’ll do. To save your people step away from the shield and surrender yourself!”

“You are confused metal warrior! Surrender yourself!”

A little gun that looks to be made for a child’s hand ejects from the side of Sam’s head and aims toward the mayor. All the guards and even the mayor behind the glass steps back afraid of what may happen. I turn my head and close my eyes as the gun fires sending a single bullet whizzing over the heads of all the soldiers and into the glass of the mayor’s protection.

Tink!

Mr. Clitchwood cowers down as the bullet cracks the glass without making it through to him.

I look back up as the mayor regains his composure, “You leave us no choice! Fire!”

I create an electric shield to block myself as Sam runs through the hundreds of bullets firing toward him with his arm blades ready to attack. The impacts of the bullets push my feet backwards sliding me closer to the prison’s exterior wall while Sam effortlessly slices his way through the crowd of Rorian soldiers. Peering through my transparent, electric shield I watch as soldier after soldier is cut apart by Sam as if they were nothing more than troublesome rodents. He must be a robot because no anti-specie or human would ever kill so mercilessly.

Please Olena, help these dead soldiers find their way to you. If they are evil, please help them be righteous and if they are good, please forgive me for assisting the murderer. En nombre de Olena oramos.

Although difficult to make out through my vibrating shield and endless stream of bullets, I see Sam arriving at the mayor’s shield where the leader cowers in fear. The multiple bullets have stopped firing at me and are now only directed to Sam as he jumps in the air and shatters the mayor’s protective glass to the ground.

Barely audible over the ricocheting bullets and exploding gunpowder I hear the mayor yell, “Please don’t! I didn’t do anything! I swear!”

TIMELINE SIX

With no one shooting at me I drop my energy shield to see Sam shove his blade through the mayor's chin and up out the top of his head. Realizing the mayor is dead and that their guns are doing zero damage, the soldiers quit firing entirely. The mayor's bleeding body is dropped to the ground in a terrifying mess to join the dead soldiers. I try to hold strong in front of the soldiers and act like the mutilated body doesn't bother me, although inside I feel the need to break down in tears right in front of them.

"Men!" Sam yells to the soldiers, "if you wish to stay alive, go home. Your leader is dead."

One at a time the soldiers drop their guns and slowly back away as Sam casually makes his way between their lines back toward me. I straighten my back and shake out any indication that there was water in my eyes.

"Are you alright?" he asks me.

"Yeah. I'm good," I answer holding back the urge to vomit.

"Okay. Let's go." He walks toward Roria's border with me following not far behind.

I'm struggling to hold back any regret for accepting his help for he is a ruthless murderer and does not hold the grace of Olena with him. He's already tried to kill me once and if I leave now he'll surely try again. I'll need to escape whenever the time is right. "Where are we going next?"

"Birad Hills."

As we walk I have a hard time bringing my eyes away from the dismembered corpses just left in the middle of the street to rot in the hot sun.

Forgive me Olena, I had no choice.

TYRAN

CHAPTER 20

THE INFORMATION

TIMELINE SIX

BRADY

JULY 21ST, 312 P.D.

1211

1 DAY, 23 HOURS AND 44 MINUTES LATER

I JUST CAN'T GET IT!

I've been working on these gloves with an artificial power source to imitate the glider's output, but it's just not adding up! There is no way to output a hertz rate from a pair of gloves like this! It's like trying to push a gallon of water through a needle head. It just doesn't work! I'm beginning to think my future self never even created these in the first place.

"Dad?" my son quietly calls out from the doorway. I turn to see his quivering lip and watery eyes.

"Whoa, whoa! What is it bud?" I hurry to kneel down in front of him. "Why are you crying?"

With a few sniffles he replies, "I want to go home. I hate it here!"

"I know. I want to go home too. We just have to stay for a little while longer though. Have you made any new friends yet? I saw some kids playing down the street that will almost definitely want to hang out with you."

Before he can answer his mother walks in to tower above me. "How long is this going to last?" the shrill upset tone bothers me a lot, but it bothers me more knowing she had sent my son in here to relay that message to me first.

I stand, "I'm not sure. It doesn't look very-"

"No, Brady. When are we leaving?"

"Babe," I grab her hands but they are quickly ripped from my grasp, "You know why we're here. We've talked about this."

"I didn't think it was going to be this horrible! We have no friends, nobody to talk to and we're staying in a shack! I didn't expect this for us."

"It's a hotel, not anywhere close to a shack."

"I miss my home, Brady. I miss my bed and my couch and my books. If it were just a few days here I could do it but you're talking about months! Think about it, there is no reason we have to be here."

"I want you to stay more than anything but you know you don't have to. Neither of you do. If you want, you two can go home. You can pack up and leave tonight then be home in a few days. But I need to stay."

"It won't be home without you there."

I try to empathize with her but the clearing of Mr. Majiah's throat in the doorway quickly shuts down my thought process, "Can we have a minute?" he asks.

I look to Rebecca, "Take Elijah and go back to the room. Order some food. Try to stay positive. I'll be there soon so we can talk."

She stares me down for a few seconds before grabbing Elijah's hand, "Come on Elijah. Daddy needs to keep working."

Mr. Majiah enters while Rebecca and Elijah exit. "I hope I'm not disrupting anything," he says with the expected lack of compassion.

I turn away from him to continue tinkering with the gloves. "No, you're fine. What's going on?"

"I just wanted to apologize for letting Captain Hunter take lead of the Retaliation. You're a smart guy but his leadership skills are--"

"No need to explain, Mr. Majiah. I understand."

He approaches my desk. "Have we made any headway on the gloves? Is the temporary power output sufficient to what you'll be working with on the glider?"

"Yeah, it'll just take some time."

Mr. Majiah awkwardly has a seat on the stool in the corner of the room. "Is everything going alright here with you and the family? I can try to get them a different room if they are unhappy."

"No, no. That's unnecessary. Just a little homesick, that's all."

"You know I was a scientist before I became the provost of Wymail. I can lend a hand if you'd like."

"Well, I made them once before so I know I can do it again. The problem is I haven't *really* made them before. It's a lot of pressure to try to complete a task that

TIMELINE SIX

you know you've already completed once before but still feel completely lost and disoriented on how to finish the job. If that made any sense at all." I watch through my peripherals to see his eyes not leaving the side of my face for an awkward few seconds. The unreasonable anxiety fills my body causing a shortness of breath while my fingers go numb forcing me to lose grip of the partially finished gloves.

"I'll leave you be so you can work in silence," he announces as I'm bending under the desk to pick up my mess.

I grab the gloves and spin around in my chair before he leaves so I can ask him a question that's been rolling around in my mind for some time, "Mr. Majiah, Why did you accept this so easily?"

He faces me. "What do you mean?"

"This. All this. The war. The gloves. My future self. Why didn't you question it like everyone else did?"

"Like you said, you ran the tests. He was you. Plus, no one can deny the resemblance."

"But you have all the technology to run the tests yourself. Why didn't you do them? You couldn't have accepted time travel as an actual plausibility so easily."

He steps forward toward me and speaks with a whisper, "This is a Wymail secret that we don't want getting around but... I believed the two of you because I know time travel is a plausible explanation."

"But how?" For the first time I feel like I'm speaking to a real person instead of a robot.

"Since we've been able to harness the power of the tachyon, we have come to the realization that time travel is within our grasp. Unfortunately, we have only been able to use tachyons for time travel without being able to grab onto matter. As we got closer, we knew the humans wouldn't be far behind. Turns out we were far behind the humans. Somehow they are able to get normal matter, such as yourself and your glider, to reach speeds of the tachyon giving them the ability to travel sideways in the fourth-dimension or backwards in time for us in the third."

I've given the thought of time travel plenty of contemplation but through the use of tachyons? I didn't think we could even detect them much less use them. "Can I see what you have?"

"I don't see why not. Now that we've been beaten in the time race we could use a few more minds on finishing it."

I follow Mr. Majiah out of the lab, but our walk is cut off by the return of my future self racing in on the glider. In a frantic hurry he jumps off and runs toward us. "He's here!" he yells, "The destroyer is here! He just destroyed Roria and is coming this way!"

Mr. Majiah calmly walks toward my future self, "How much time do we have?"

"No time! We need to evacuate the city now!"

"Glider, we need to know all the specifics of the situation before I send out a city wide evacuation. The level headed people here won't leave without a definite reason to."

"Definite reason to? The destroyer is going to be here to kill all of us! And not just that, he has help! The kid you told me to go check out, well he is working with the destroyer! He's a traitor! I didn't recognize him at first, but then I remembered him from when I first encountered the destroyer. I almost beat him in Old Mexico but the traitor saved him! This must be where the destroyer is getting all his information for defeating us. The traitor gets the information on the town then tells the destroyer."

I step backward from the intense conversation to act as though I'm not within earshot. Mr. Majiah asks, "An anti-species working with the humans? That doesn't make sense."

"And the people from Roria were right. The kid has powers. Amazing powers! A defense like I've never seen before! We need to make flyers and put them all around the city so people will know whom to avoid. The traitor may try to get entail on the city before the destroyer gets here!"

"What gives you that idea?"

TIMELINE SIX

"I think that's why he was in Roria. Why else would the kid have been in the prison there? He is too powerful to be caught willingly."

"Okay. We'll get one of our artists to sketch something up while we send word for the evacuation out of Wymail. We will march to the neighboring city of Perry a day away. How long do you think we have?"

"I don't know. A few days maybe. I made great time on my glider but who knows how fast the two of them can travel."

"Alright, I'll go spread the word."

Mr. Majiah turns and walks away while my future self grabs the glider and begins tinkering with the underside. "Uhm, Brady?" I try to get his attention but he doesn't reply. He seems on edge so I don't want him to freak out if I speak to him too abruptly. I quietly say, "Glider. I, uhm, I seem to be having-"

"What?" he yells.

I speak a little louder, "I seem to be having trouble with the gloves hertz rate that you were talking about. I need to, uhm-"

He walks over to me, "Listen, we can work on that later. For now we need to make sure we get Rebecca and Elijah out of here. You know it as well as I do, saving them, saving our family, that is our first priority."

'Our family.' Something about the way he says it sends a shiver down my spine. He may be me from the future but I'm not one to share my wife with anyone. And two dads and a mom? I don't know about raising Elijah with that going on around him. "Yeah, I've been thinking and it'll probably be best when it comes to Rebecca and Elijah that you-"

"Listen!" he interrupts me again. "We don't have time for this! Go get Rebecca and Elijah out of here now!" Grabbing the glider he marches off in the direction Mr. Majiah had gone.

I lock the door of the lab and head toward the hotel where Rebecca and Elijah are. I guess I'll just have to talk to him later when he calms down.

BRADY

CHAPTER 21

**THE DESTRUCTION OF BIRAD
HILLS**

TIMELINE SIX

SAM

JULY 27TH, 312 P.D.

1545

6 DAYS, 3 HOURS AND 34 MINUTES LATER

//ARRIVED AT DESTINATION = ^BIRAD HILLS.

This is it? This is the city I'm supposed to attack? There is nothing here except a giant hill of dirt surrounded by open land. There are no buildings, no town signs and no indication the anti-species have ever been here at all.

//Enter city limits.

Some of these data files must be corrupt. There are no city limits to enter. What am I supposed to find here?

"Huh, what?" Tyran, who has kept his arms wrapped around my neck while he napped, wakes up to see what is going on. "This is it? There is an army *here*?"

"I don't know. The suit says this is where we are supposed to be." To continue making good time on my mission I hold Tyran while he sleeps. He was very opposed and nervous to the idea in the beginning, but after the first few nights of him fake sleeping to keep an eye on me, he has realized I'm not going to try to hurt him again. That, or he is just unable to stay awake any longer.

"Maybe it's a mess up," he says, "If the humans designed your coordinates, they could have outdated information."

What is my next objective?

{Next Objective} = ^Neutralize armies of Birad Hills.

Birad Hills does not exist. What's the next objective?

//Must complete current objective.

//Enter city limits.

A small river of sand shakes off the large mound of dirt in front of us.

"Did you see that?" Tyran asks me.

"Yeah, it must have just been the wind or a little rodent up top."

Tyran walks up to the mound and places his hand flat on the dirt. "Sam, check this out."

I do the same to feel that the mound is vibrating.

"Do you think there is something under there?" Tyran asks.

"What could be? We're out in the middle of nowhere. It could just be tremors or something."

Tyran wipes away the surface dirt to reveal a hard plastic base underneath. It must be a large bunker or base that has been covered by dirt and sand over time. Birad Hills is a town in a literal hill.

"You think there's a door somewhere?" he asks.

//Blades activated.

Like a snake pouncing from its hole the two long blades abruptly emerge from my forearms to stick meters out ahead of me. With one punch I am able to penetrate the outer shell of the dome creating a large crack then pulling my arm up to create a hole. We peer through to see a twelve-meter drop to the ground below where we notice that this isn't a town at all but a sophisticated secret military base for the anti-species ranks. How could the humans have obtained the knowledge of this place?

{Birad Hills} = Diameter ^1.62 kilometers.

Everything inside is perfectly organized as the buildings, streets and shops are lined in a perfect grid for the easiest convenience. Bright lights shine down from the roof of the dome illuminating the entire base to replicate the hidden sun.

Tyran looks to me, "What are we going to do? Is there someone in here you're supposed to kill?"

^Destroy Birad Hills.

"Yeah." Everybody. There are so many in there and some of them must be innocent but if this is to save my race, I don't have a choice.

I use my blades to rip a large enough hole in the plastic for the two of us to fit through while staying as quiet as possible. Jumping in Tyran uses his energy to slowly land on the ground while I am able to take the impact of the hard landing. Slamming down I send a crash through the entire base echoed by the plastic dome

TIMELINE SIX

as if there were an explosion immediately abandoning the element of surprise. Within seconds two dozen anti-specie rank members are pointing their guns at us.

!! WARNING !! ANTI-SPECIES !!

{Threat} = ^8

//Activating critical decision-making...

“Who goes there?” a voice yells out.

I assumed Tyran would speak since he is an anti-specie but he stays silent. I suppose it is my mission, I should be doing the talking. But what do I say? What am I supposed to do?

{Targets} = ^All anti-species in Birad Hills.

I can't imagine they all have to die for the good of the humans.

“Respond or we will be forced to open fire!”

//Activating shoulder turret.

No! No! “My name is Sam! This is my partner Tyran.”

“What is your business breaking into our base?” the voice replies.

“We are looking for your leader. The captain or general or whoever is in charge here.”

^Negative.

{Targets} = ^All anti-species in Birad Hills.

“How did you find this place?”

Moving down my spine I feel the sensation of control being handed back the suit. I force out my words to overcome the urge to let the suit take over, “We just stumbled acrossed it. Do you have a leader here?”

“You do not have access to the general and you are trespassing in a restricted rank's district. Drop all weapons and approach slowly!”

I feel my arms and legs escape from my control as I am unable hold back the suit any longer.

//Fire.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Tyran jumps behind a nearby building as my turret fires at the anti-species ahead. I try to move but my legs won't let me as bullets, one after another, hit me from the anti-species firing back.

{Damage done} = ^0%.

They can't make a dent. I'm not sure if the anti-species have weak guns or I am truly an unstoppable force, either way they don't stand a chance against my super suit. My turret hits each anti-species firing at me, bringing each of them dead to the ground. A loud alarm is sent through giant loud speakers lining the streets as the white lights on the roof of the dome turn flashing red.

!! WARNING !! ANTI-SPECIES !!

I look to the left where Tyran has jumped for shelter to see that he is looking at me and not at the group of anti-species forming behind him. I attempt to change my aim to help him but my suit won't let me. "Tyran! Look out!" I yell to him as that is the only thing I can force over the suit's control. Tyran turns around to quickly create an energy shield to block the barrage of bullets headed toward him. He projects the wall of energy toward the group firing at him knocking them all to the ground. The kid is quicker than I thought.

Tyran yells to me over the nonstop blasting of bullets, "Finish what you came here to do and let's get out of here!"

//Continue objective.

//Sprint.

//Left.

Jumping over the dead soldiers I burst through the armory wall where inside there are several rank members grabbing weapons preparing to attack me.

//Blades activated.

My go-to slices through their wastes, dropping their torsos to the ground.

//Grenade dropped.

A small, pin shaped device drops to the ground from my back just like it had done in party town.

//Sprint.

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Only a few seconds pass from me leaving the room when the building erupts in a ball of flame, along with it, thousands of bullets and small missiles shooting in all directions.

!! WARNING !! BULLETS INCOMING !!

Impossible to avoid, I'm hit dozens of times in the back from the random bullets launching from the blazing armory. I look to see Tyran holding off several more men shooting at him but he is slowly being surrounded. He is mostly able to block and not do much in the way of attacks besides knocking them down occasionally. This kid isn't meant for warfare.

Can I activate my missiles?

//Access granted.

Would you look at that? Even with the suit in control I am able to act on my own will. I slam to the ground as I feel my insides churning to make room for the missiles hidden inside my stomach. I'm not sure how the suit makes room for the missiles with my stomach in the way but somehow it all fits in there.

//Missiles deploy.

Tyran is given a break from protecting himself as everyone shooting at him is blown to bits by my projected stomach missile.

!! WARNING !! BULLETS INCOMING!!

Turning I see a large turret has been wheeled out by several anti-specie to the center of the street aiming straight at me.

"Tyran! Get out of here!" I yell, "I'll take care of the rest!"

He pushes himself away from those firing at him so he can shoot the energy from his feet and launch himself out of the hole we created. He disappears behind the plastic ceiling as the turret opens fire on me.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

{Damage} = ^0%.

{Targets} = ^362 anti-species.

//Sprint.

//Shoulder turret active.

//Fire.

//Grenade dropped.
 //Sprint.
 //Right.
 //Slice.
 //Rapid fists.
 //Torso spin.
 //Fire.
 //Sprint.
 //Slice.
 //Left.
 //Grenade dropped.
 {362 targets} = ^Neutralized.
 {Damage} = ^0%.
 They never stood a chance.

The alarm winds down making the only sounds heard through the entire base be the smoldering of buildings and the whimpering a single man in pain.

{1 Target} = ^Still alive.
 //Neutralize.
 //Walk.

I make my way to an anti-specie who had been cut in half but struggles with letting go of life. With his voice box damaged, his cries of pain cut in and out from silent to heart wrenching. Even though he and his kind attack my people, enslave us and completely change our way of life I still feel bad for him. It's not like he made the call.

//Stab.

My blade enters his chest silencing his cries. Anti-specie or not, that was a brutal way to go out.

"I'm sorry."

I look up to witness the scattered body parts and burning buildings I've left in my path. Why do so many have to die? They couldn't have all been bad. There must

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have been the good ones here who didn't deserve this. This damn suit won't let anyone live! I need to get this thing off before I kill anyone else.

{Stress} = ^49%.

And I need to get these annoying goggles off my-
//Releasing endorphins.

But if this is what I need to do to save my people then it must be all right. The human military would not have put me here to do so much damage unless there was no other way.

{Objective} = ^Complete.

Using the suit's powerful leg muscles I jump up and exit the hole back to the surface where Tyran sits on the ground leaning against the mound of dirt with tears running down his face.

"You okay kid?" I ask.

"What do you remember about the anti-species attacks? Do you believe they deserve all this? I know they are evil, but for you to just go in and massacre them? Olena could never want this."

I think hard to recall the memories of before I came here to the west but it's broken up and hard to recall. The images sticking in my mind are the women being drug through the streets behind the anti-species who wear some sort of metal spine contraption. Human children are being forced to ride stationary bikes all day to produce power, which the anti-species waste and laugh about it. There are men hung from trees by their feet getting their foreheads split open and forced to bleed out on the ground below. "It's dark, very dark. The anti-species treat the humans more horrible than anything I could imagine. They've taken over everything and left the humans with nothing, not even hope. The ones they've left alive lie in the streets starving to death while some are beat just for fun. The anti-species children play catch with human body parts while the slaves are burnt with large metal rods to keep working." A lot of these memories are just now resurfacing into full playable visuals as I speak them out loud.

"Oh," Tyran seems calm by hearing the news, "I wish I could say I were surprised. I've seen how the anti-species act, the ones in the ranks at least. They

were nasty, blood-thirsty monsters. How could Olena allow something like this to happen?"

Tyran's words don't register as the memories keep flowing through my mind. Human heads are stored in the freezers for eating while acid is poured down the throats of the humans to force them mute, if it doesn't kill them first. Mass grave sites are scattered across the east for all the women and children while fire pits are set up along the city borders where the men are thrown in alive.

"I want to help," he says.

I look to him grateful that he has temporarily distracted me from the dark memories. "I know. You have been."

"What are you talking about? I couldn't help at all in there," his ego is clearly hurt, "I could block bullets and knock a few people down, sure, but it's not like I could have killed anyone. If I was alone I would have just blocked them until they got a lucky shot in."

"What if you practiced?"

"How else do I practice? You've seen everything I can do."

"But is that all you can do? Maybe you haven't been practicing the right way. I am finding out new things about my suit everyday."

"Yeah, a *suit*." I ignore his sarcastic comment as he looks down to his hands. "This is all I've ever been able to do. My father once said it's possible to form the energy into shapes with our minds, but I've never been able to do it."

"Try it again."

"How? How do I try? I've thought about bending the electricity more than you know and still nothing."

"Maybe you're not thinking about it right."

{Next objective} = ^Wymail Wilds.

Deadline = August 1st. 13:00.

"Looks like it's time for us to go." I reach my hand out to lift Tyran to his feet, which he declines to push himself up on his own. "Keep practicing on the way," I tell him, "Try using your emotions."

Tyran stares down at the energy circling around his hands as we continue on.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 22

THE DISTANCE

GLIDER

JULY 27TH, 312 P.D.

1600

MEANWHILE

“DON’T TOUCH THAT!”

Gayle reaches for the glider’s output monitor but I stop her before she can do any damage.

“Why? It’s just the meter.”

“It’s calibrated for the temperature in this room and your body heat will affect the reading. It’s very sensitive.”

We moved into our new lab a few days ago, which is strategically placed between Wymail and Perry so we can stop the destroyer in case he heads to Perry next. We were able to transform an old abandoned greenhouse into the lab, which isn’t great but it’s the best we could do for the time being. Along with Gayle and my past self we also have two of each superior in case the destroyer does shows up. They do a good job staying out of the way and helping when we need them to.

“Are the magnetic rotations staying consistent?” I ask my past self.

He holds a screwdriver deep in the prototype boosters fiddling with the energy source as I hold the motor still. We would be using the glider for the tests but the chance of messing something up on it could put us back weeks and without the glider we are completely shrepped. “No. They keep stopping then starting. They recalibrated for some reason from what we needed to the alternating power limiter of the boosters. This is the fourth time it has done this!”

I’d like to say I know all the ins and outs of the glider but the boosters were the first thing I perfected, which was right about the age that my past self is now. I do most of the work for the gloves, having made them before, but his mind is fresher as far as this aspect goes. “You know how it works! You need to hurry up and figure it out!” I don’t mean to yell but with each day that passes another town is being destroyed.

TIMELINE SIX

"Take it easy on him," Gayle complains to me, "He's doing the best he can. I mean, give him a break."

It hurts that after all Gayle and I have been through she doesn't remember any of it because to her, Glider is a completely different person from Brady and she doesn't like Glider.

"I don't mean to rush you like that, but it's important that we get these done soon."

"Why don't you go check on the retaliation? He have it from here." Gayle says while turning away from me. Brady keeps his eyes in the prototype so he isn't forced to give his opinion about my presence here. I've been stressing them out the past few days but I thought it was understandable why. I decide to take their advice and give them space. Grabbing my glider and powering it up I head to Perry to check on the retaliation. The trip would normally be half a day's march, but I can do it in less than an hour on my glider.

Arriving at Perry's giant silver gates I'm greeted by the newly appointed guards who are protecting the city. The two of them are both black bandana superiors who have the ability to disappear in plain sight along with their arsenal of every hand held weapon available. I land my glider directly in front of them.

"Name?" one asks.

"Brady Eztuella."

The gate opens up following the superior's whispers into the communicator. The buildings here in Perry were built very precisely as they create the exterior walls of the city making the front gates one of only two entrances into the city. The second is on the exact opposite side of the city also being guarded by the black bandanas. The exterior building walls were built without windows so that no one can break into the city that was not permitted to enter. This was not done out of fear of an attack or the possibility of an invasion but because Perry was initially created as a reservation for the anti-species during the scare ages when humans were still here. Back then it was almost like a jailed in city, but they have since transformed it into a thriving metropolis. The possibility for growth outward is very difficult so the

only way they can go is up making some of the largest skyscrapers in all the west. With the population nearing a quarter million now the buildings continue to soar.

My past self and I take turns coming to Perry everyday as we always want someone working on the gloves, but at the same time the greenhouse isn't the most inviting place to sleep. When we arrive we always return to Rebecca and Elijah who reluctantly agreed to stay with us all this time. Gayle comes back as well, but since she doesn't know how to use the Glider she always rides with Brady leaving me in the lab alone. She doesn't trust me enough yet to ride with me.

Entering the town it is clear that the overall moral and attitude of the people have changed as the preparation for war is seen on every street corner. The giant park when you first enter the city is now being doubled as a training ground for new ranks recruits. A yellow bandana superior with six arms trains them in proper sword holding, stabbing and slicing while another group is training with a flexible blue bandana on the proper aiming of a gun. The trainees don't seem prepared or thrilled about the situation, but they do seem to understand that there is no other choice.

"Come on men!" Captain Hunter's voice rings out from the center of town, *"Punch like you mean it!"*

Arriving to his training ground I find the captain standing in front of the green bandanas wearing their super-strength, metal spines. They are all sorted into partners trying to take each other to the ground. They violently beat each other in the face and stomachs spewing blood in all direction accompanied by the endless sound of breaking bones. I'm horrified until I remember the green bandanas have the power of cell regeneration. Mr. Majiah stands off to the side silently taking notes.

I walk to him, "Mr. Majiah, I think it may be time that I take back over the retaliation."

Without looking to me he replies, "I don't think that would be such a good idea Glider. They've come to honor and respect Hunter as a leader and if we switch you guys up on them it would just be confusing. They are a powerful and skilled group, but complex thought isn't their strong suit."

TIMELINE SIX

"You don't think they would be able to handle seeing two people in front of them? I can work with Hunter." Majiah just doesn't want me leading, but I'm insulted he would think I would fall for such an obvious dodge.

He turns to me, "Listen Glider, you're a smart guy, but no war leader. I don't know what your Kresa provost was thinking when making you admiral but that is a title that needs to be earned, not thrown around every which way. Go see your family, check on them and make sure they're happy and then get back to work on the gloves. That is why I believe you are here. Like you said, that is how we will truly stop him."

Annoyed, I jump on my glider and fly toward the hotel where Rebecca and Elijah are staying. Hunter's orders continue to ring out in my ear, *"You call that a hit? Take him down! Are you planning to buy him a drink after this?"*

I get to the hotel just a few minutes away and head upstairs to my family's room.

Knock. Knock.

"Brady? Is that you?" my wife calls out from behind the door.

I walk in, "Yeah, it's me!"

Rebecca, who sits at the foot of the bed where Elijah lays, stands up to see me. Noticing I'm not eight years younger her smile fades. "Oh."

"What? It's me." I don't know how to win her over.

"I know, it's just... It's not you. You know?"

Elijah, who I'm sure would have normally jumped up to come give me a hug, gets up and disappears into the bathroom. Alone with Rebecca I tell her, "I don't think it's a good idea to talk about me like that in front of the boy."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't want him to think I'm anything less than his father. I'm working really hard to rejoin as a part of this family."

She looks to her feet. "You're just not the same person. You act... different." She always used to look me in the eyes, no matter what she had to say to me.

"I've spent the last eight years in hiding. What do you expect? Of course I'm going to be different." I try to hold it back but I feel myself getting annoyed with her lack of common sense.

"I know it's not your fault and you've been through a lot, but it's just tough for us. I don't feel like-"

"Tough for you?" When we did fight before I never would talk back but I find myself not able to hold my tongue nowadays.

"Yes! Look at all of this! We had to leave our home and come to this prison of a city! We are stuck here and we can't-"

"How dare you say this is tough for you!" I step toward her, "I'm here to save your life and the life of everyone you've ever known and you're going to complain about the town your staying at?"

"This is exactly what I'm talking about!" She steps backwards against the wall. "You never would have talked to me this way! You're yelling at me and making me feel scared instead of holding me and telling me everything is all right!" Her eyes glaze over. "How am I supposed to react to this?"

"You haven't let me in!" I step closer to her. "I've tried to hold you! I've tried to tell you everything is all right, but you still treat me like a stranger!" I grab onto her shoulders feeling her shake between my mangled fingers. "All I want to do is hold you!"

"Please," her whispering voice cracks with each word, "You're scaring me."

"I'm your husband! I'm Brady! If I never scared you before, how am I now?"

"Let her go!" my son's little voice pierces my ears from behind.

I turn my head to see him pointing a shaking broomstick between his hands at me. The lump in my throat returns to clog my speech as I try to ask him to put it down. I step away from the two of them letting them rush together in each other's arms. Elijah steps in front of her while she cries.

"Elijah? Don't act like this. It's me. I'm your father."

"You're not my dad!"

TIMELINE SIX

I've come so far to be here to finally hear him speak to me and now, now I finally see how he feels about me. How they both feel about me. I leave the room allowing them to cry alone.

GLIDER

CHAPTER 23

THE CAPTURE

TIMELINE SIX

TYRAN

AUGUST 1ST, 312 P.D.

0953

4 DAYS, 16 HOURS AND 20 MINUTES LATER

THE WAREHOUSE IS FALLING APART

but not too bad for the time being. Sam and I came across this place on our journey to Wymail where inside we found abandoned and burnt machinery used for I'm not sure what. Outside the warehouse is flat, open land with a few trees growing here and there.

"Try bending it," he advises.

"What do you think I've been doing?" I stare down at a half-meter energy shield placed on my hand trying to mold it with my mind. We've spent the past week trying to figure out more about our skills and abilities. So far he has discovered a grappling hook, an additional sniper gun, mini machine gun, four different types of grenades, three more missiles and about a dozen more blades. As for me – nothing new.

Maybe my father was lying about shaping them. I had never seen him do it and he wasn't above exaggerating the truth to his kids. Maybe it was one of those weird tricks parents like to pull on their kids like the magical man, Fruteena Hass, who comes from the trees and gives gifts to the good children during the celebration of Serveta's Resurrection and will kidnap the naughty ones. During one celebration supposedly Fruteena showed up with a full sparrow to eat, but I have a pretty good idea it was the bird that my brother had killed. They thought it was so fun to fool me like that and I never wanted to ruin their celebration by letting them know I knew the truth.

Because of me, they are alive again. And I'm here. I need to hurry up and get this flying man so I can get back home to them. I can bring them voice boxes and tell them about the outside world too. I will teach them to speak and communicate like I

can without the use of hands. My mother, my father, my brothers and sister... and Carleena. Carleena is alive again and I'm here.

I miss her so much and I guess she really hasn't done anything to me yet. Her whole family had been taken from her and she didn't know what she was doing in Roria. I'm sure she would never try cheating on me like that again if she was in her right mind. She loves me.

Me? There should be another one of me there too. Like a copy of me. I think that's how the machine worked. I came back and headed up here while there is another one of me still back in La Palomar. There are two of me on this planet now. One who is living in bliss back home and me, the one who has been cheated on, shot at, gone to war, thrown in jail and seen hundreds of people torn apart. Will I even fit in if I go back? Could I be accepted?

My plan was to leave Sam one these past nights while he was surveying the area but it's impossible to ever know for sure if he is watching me. There has been a few times he has left my side but it's always when we are out in flat terrain where he would be able to see me in any direction I ran.

"Try using your fingers to push it up on the sides," he suggests as I hold a small sheet of electricidad on my hand.

"It doesn't work that way," I tell him. I concentrate and think as hard as I can about the energy molding around my fingers or up into itself into a ball, but there is not even a budge.

"What if you try using your other hand with it?"

Annoyed of all the meaningless things he is saying I suggest, "Let's try something else." Sam follows me outside where we both stand in front of the warehouse. "How about we test who can jump higher?"

"How will a competition help us train?"

"You know, so we can plan accordingly and stuff. It's important to know who is better at what."

"I don't know if you've seen my legs," Sam condescendingly brags, "but I'm sure I can leap pretty high."

"Let's see it then." I've got this in the bag.

TIMELINE SIX

"Okay." He squats down into his jumping position.

I count. "One... Two.... Three!"

He leaps into the air well over the height of the warehouse and then a bit more, probably reaching twenty or thirty meters up but it doesn't matter. He lands hard in front of me forcing the ground to shake, nearly making me tremble to my knees.

"I thought you were jumping with me. How are we going to know who wins?" he asks.

I ready the electricity under my feet. "Trust me, we'll know." One after another I shoot the energy from under my toes launching me into the air well over the height of the warehouse then pass his peak. Leaving a trail of thin, electric walls below me I soar far into the sky as if I were a rocket leaving earth. This is something my siblings and I did as children to see how high we could get above the trees. So I already know I can jump much higher.

Being high enough to prove my point I stop launching the electricity from my feet and allow myself to begin falling back to Earth. If my siblings and I weren't quick enough we would crash into the ground and break our legs but luckily with practice I have been able to create a hovering effect as I get close to the ground. Only a few meters off the dirt I rapid shoot the electricity from my feet to slow me to a hover in front of Sam. At a safe height I stop the power and let my feet touch to the ground not letting Sam see how worn out I am.

I can't see his facial expression but I'm sure he is more than impressed. "What do you think?" I ask looking for some recognition.

"I don't know if I would classify that as a jump."

I'm sure that is his way of saying he's jealous. "Olena has given me some great skills."

"Yeah."

He turns to walk back into the warehouse completely blowing off my statement, like he does when I say anything about Olena. "Why do you reply like that?"

He doesn't turn around. "I don't think it's a good idea to get into it."

I rush to be in front of him. "I think it is. Why do you not believe in her?"

"Like I said before, it's barbaric. To try to answer the questions of life with a simple answer like 'God' is ignorant and slows human advancement. If you take away all of life's biggest questions then there is no desire or strive to answer them leading to a complete standstill of science."

"Science can still exist with Olena. She is just the cause for the science working the way it does. How do you explain that feeling of amazement you get when you see a sunrise or the happiness you feel when you are around your friend or love?"

"Kid, I don't want to go into it. You're too young to-"

"I'm not too young!" I yell interrupting him.

He faces me for a few seconds before replying, "I don't believe in love."

He is completely insane! "What are you talking about? Saying you don't believe in love is like saying you don't believe in trees or clouds." Definitely a robot.

"It all goes back to science. Love was created by evolution to continue reproduction. At first, instinct was strong enough to keep the animals repopulating as it is meant to do. Then as the brain got more intelligent we could overcome instinct so pleasure was added. Then we got even smarter making not even pleasure strong enough to convince us to take on the burden of children so the illusion of love was created. Now people desire to make *love* to other people and all for one reason, to keep the virus of life moving. It's all just tricks in the brain to make us believe what evolution wants us to believe."

I feel bad for his mind. "The virus of life? That's a dark way to look at it. But I guess that is what to expect from a robot."

"Okay, but I'm not a robot. There is a living person under this suit. I may be hurt or sick or completely mutilated and just not know it, but trust me, I'm organic. That's how I'm able to talk to you."

"You think so?" I want to quit talking for fear of his computing taking over and killing me for what I say, but I feel the need to get out my thoughts to him. "Then why do you lose control sometimes? What causes you to not do what you want to?"

TIMELINE SIX

How do you know you're not just a computer and it's playing tricks on you making you think you're real?"

"It's the suit. It moves my legs and arms for me sometimes. That's it."

"Is it the suit though? I doubt you even have a lick of human in there. You're just a bunch of wires and cables under that metal."

"I need to get to the next town." He turns away from the warehouse and walks away from me.

"Wait, we're attacking already? I thought we had a few more hours?"

"I need to investigate and create a clear plan of attack."

"Okay, let's go," I attempt to follow.

"Not the two of us. Just me. I can't risk them seeing either of us. They could have guards nearby and it will be easier for one to hide rather than the both of us. Besides, you should continue practicing your energy molding."

I didn't think a robot could have his feelings hurt but clearly he is upset. "Okay, I'll be here."

Sam jogs toward the city off on the horizon.

This is my chance to leave but I need to act quick!

I rush back into the warehouse to gather the berries and insects I had collected on our walk to bring them with me. The small canteen of water is basically empty so I chug what is left and leave it here. I scan the horizon outside the broken down warehouse walls to make sure the coast is clear.

What is that?

Oh no! The retaliation is coming this way! How did they find me?

Dropping my meal to the ground I attempt to sprint from the warehouse but they are too quick. Two red bandanas jump through the open warehouse wall and cut off me off before I can make my escape.

I stay calm as to not make me seem guilty for anything. "What do you want?" I innocently ask.

Crash!

What little warehouse wall is left behind me is blown to bits throwing burning wood and metal all around me. Turning around I see him.

The flying man!

He hovers up above smiling down at me. "Hello traitor."

I use my electricidad as fast as I can to shoot the flying man but one of the reds too quickly jumps in the air and takes the impact for him. The red almost falls back to the ground before his gravity defying boots save him by holding him in the air for a moment giving him a smooth landing. A green bandana with the extra strong spine jumps in through the crumbling warehouse hole and grabs a hold of me before I can react. I shoot him over and over again, which normally would knock someone on their back, but it doesn't affect him at all.

"Here." The flying man tosses down a chain to one of the reds.

"Let me go! Let me go!" I struggle to get free shooting my energy all over the room, but I can't break free of his grasp. The red runs to me and, before I can blink my eye, ties my arms and legs together behind my back.

"Make sure he can't face his palms or feet toward you." With the flying man's advice the red reties the chain with my palms stuck grasping one another. The green holds me in the air by the chain like I'm a piece of meat about to be served to the dogs.

"We'll just have to stay clear of his feet," the red says unable to get my feet to face each other.

"You got him?" the flying man asks the green holding me in the air.

He nods carrying me out of the warehouse as I kick and throw my body all around. It's no use. I can't break free! "Sam! Sam! Sam!" As a last resort I yell for the only person or robot or whatever that may come to help.

"Sam," the flying man comments, "good to know he has a name. Let's go."

"Sam!"

TIMELINE SIX

SAM

AUGUST 1ST, 312 P.D.

1108

1 HOUR LATER

//ANALYZING WYMAIL WILDS.

//Scanning...

I sit at the top of a hill spying down onto the intricately designed Wymail Wilds looking for any sign of a threat. For the first time since I've been conscious I don't have every thought scrolling over my eyes.

//Scanning...

I can ignore 'Scanning' for the most part, but I can't ignore myself asking the question, why is it telling me I'm scanning? I know I'm scanning the area so why put it in a visual word? This suit has to tell me exactly what I'm doing every second of every day but it's pointless. I don't need that. I can understand in other circumstances like while I'm fighting for the words to pop up and warn me of threats, but for them to create a suit that constantly tells me my thoughts seems like overkill to me.

Why am I even wearing this? Did I get hurt?

Missiles came straight from my stomach like there wasn't anything there. And these arm blades? How can they sit inside the suit around the size of my arms? I can feel my hands but not within the suit, only the metal fingers at the end. Was I in an accident of some sort? And who put it on me in the first place?

I vaguely remember a name. Gear? Glear? Greer?

Greer! He was my superior. He was the one who put me in this. But why? I don't remember getting hurt or ever being deployed. And Sam? That doesn't sound right. What was my name?

Xander? A. Xander?

//Disregarding Thought.

No! Don't disregard! I need to think about this! I need to figure this...

//Last 83 seconds erased.

//Scanning...

I sit at the top of a hill spying down onto the intricately designed Wymail Wilds looking for any sign of a threat. Wymail Wilds doesn't seem to have many people living in it. What's the population supposed to be?

//Wymail Population = ^Unknown.

What am I supposed to find here?

//Target = ^Provost Jose Majiah.

For the middle of the day this place seems to be completely deserted. No one walking the streets, no one in the windows, everything is empty. Where could they be?

//Searching for possible town defense...

There won't be any defenses if the town is entirely deserted. There isn't a lot of dirt or dust build up so there have been people here somewhat recently. Where did they go? Why would an entire town uproot and leave?

//Command center located.

My eyes lock in on a large building near the edge of town.

!! WARNING !! COVERT FAILED !!

Covert failed? How?

I'm shocked and thrown off guard as my eyes, without warning, zoom in on a flyer taped to a wall where I see a sketch of myself, "The Destroyer". Next to that is a flyer with a crude drawing of the kid, "The Traitor". What is going on? Do I still attack?

//Town Deserted = ^Accessing next objective.

//Next Objective = ^Perry.

//Heading North.

Without my consent, my legs start walking me further north away from the warehouse.

Suit, stop! I need to go back to Tyran.

^Negative.

He is my anti-species companion.

TIMELINE SIX

// Companion*Distraction= ^No longer applicable.

He needs me! He's just a kid!

Give me back control!

^BU Consciousness Access Denied.

BU consciousness denied? What the hell does that mean?

I hate this damn suit! I need to get out of this thing before it makes me kill anyone else. Let me out!

//Stress = ^78% .

No! I don't care that I'm stressed! Just let me-

^Releasing endorphins.

The kid shouldn't be out here alone but he is not an idiot. He'll survive out here on his own. And if he doesn't, at the end of the day he is still an anti-specie.

BRADY

AUGUST 1ST, 312 P.D.

1015

58 MINUTES EARLIER

“OKAY, TWIST IT ONCE MORE,”

I yell up to Gayle who is tweaking the booster’s power limiter while I sit below the glider gauging the limiter’s hold.

“Is that it?” she asks.

The gauge finally holds steady at the necessary eighty-two. “Got it! Keep it right there!”

Gayle shuts the limiter’s cover and steps away from the glider while I push myself onto my feet bringing my future self’s attention over to me. I had almost forgotten he was here with us for how quiet he has been. “Why do we need to make these into gloves?” Gayle asks me, “Can’t we make something that shoots at him with the hertz rate?”

“We could but it would take much longer to create,” I tell her, “The hertz rate to disengage the magnetic and electric fields of the graphene bonds is so exact to the millisecond that anything shot, like a bullet, would need a power source inside of it to keep it going. The bullets could take months to make and if we miss them all then we’re out of luck.” I look back to Glider who now looks away from me. Not wanting myself to be upset, present or future, I walk to him while he is fiddling with the glove’s design.

“What?” he barks.

For talking to himself he is rather harsh. “What’s going on? What’s wrong?”

“I’m fine.”

“You’re talking to yourself. Why lie?”

He places the gloves back on the table to give me his attention, “I’ve thought about seeing Rebecca and Elijah everyday for nearly a decade and now that I’m here, they want nothing to do with me.”

TIMELINE SIX

"They just don't understand." I pull a stool next to him and sit down, "How could I possibly explain to them this situation?"

"You want me to have nothing to do with them either. I see it."

The lump appears out of nowhere and fills my throat.

"I see the way you look at me when I try to get near Rebecca," he continues, "It's something you need to deal and be okay with. I didn't work this hard and come this far not to be with my wife."

"I-I, uhm-" no words make their way out of my mouth. I feel my cheeks turn to fire as I'm called out on the truth of how I feel about him with my wife. It's me though? Why do I care? I shouldn't. I should want him with her and her with him but I don't. I hate the thought of it. He may be me but he's not me. He is someone completely different. "I spoke to Mr. Majiah not too long ago about something you may find interesting," I tell him having to change the subject before I have a panic attack.

"Okay?" He turns away from me to continue work on the gloves.

"Apparently they are doing some pretty cool stuff here in Wymail as far as science experiments go." We both have common interests in this field so hopefully this will make him be a little more positive. "He told me they are working on the same thing the east is working on. They are making a time machine of their very own!"

"I knew the humans were dumb enough to meddle in forces they don't understand, but I thought the scientists of Wymail were a little smarter than that."

Was not the response I was hoping for. "Dumb? Why would you say it's dumb when you used the exact same technology to-"

"Don't you get it?" he interrupts me, "Time isn't something any of us should be running around on for any reason. I only used it to avoid torture from the humans. Even if I succeed in stopping the humans, we can't know what kind of effects our actions are going to have on the future. For all we know, me being here could be the reason life on earth is wiped out in a hundred years. There is no way to ever know."

"What's going on?" Gayle stands behind me sensing the tension.

“Nothing,” my future self quickly answers.

Although she believes me of who he is, she doesn’t trust my future self either. He is a strong and assertive man but it’s not the type of person I want to become. “Are you alright?” she whispers to me.

Before I can answer one of the black bandana superiors keeping watch outside runs through the front door. “Glider! Glider, come quick!”

Dropping the gloves my future self sprints out the front door followed by Gayle and myself. The other black bandana standing outside hands him the binoculars to see something on the horizon. Glider, in awe, stares off into the distance. “It’s the traitor!”

Glider hands me the binoculars so I can see the peculiar, blue energy being ejected from his feet launching him high into the air. “How does he produce so much energy?”

My future self ignores the question and steps back inside to grab his glider.

“I don’t think that blue stuff is very strong,” Gayle answers, “My guess is he uses the water and chemicals in the air to form the energy and eject it out. Probably just condensed air and nitrogen no stronger than drywall.”

My future self comes out of the room standing on the glider with a green bandana standing behind him and a couple reds on the ground. “Stay here and get a bed ready! I’m bringing that son of a bitch back with me.” He activates the boosters and launches off toward the traitor.

“A bed? He’s not just going to kill him?” Gayle asks.

“No. He just wants to know how he works.”

“How do you know that?”

There is no reason to respond. She is smarter than that.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 24

THE HAND

TYRAN

AUGUST 1ST, 312 P.D.

1148

1 HOUR AND 28 MINUTES LATER

GREEN BANDANA

carries me through the doorway of the makeshift science lab like I am just another one of his dumbbells. The flying man has been flying above me the entire time completely out of reach. I had tried shooting him with my energy but the green guy has done a good job at keeping my feet faced to the ground. Struggling to get free they force me onto a dirty table where the red bandanas untie me and chain me down faster than most people can tie their shoes.

The flying man jumps off his flying machine to stand over me, "What are you?"

"Let me out of here!" I know the demand is pointless.

"You had that chance once. After what I saw, you working with the destroyer, there is no way you're getting free."

"You're the destroyer!"

"What makes you say that?" He seems legitimately confused.

"I know what you did!" My blood boils under my skin thinking about walking on the ashes of my dead family. "You're a filthy murderer!"

"Then what are you?"

I turn my head away from him.

"No matter. We'll find out how you work soon. Brady," the flying man turns around to face a man who must be his younger brother or son, "grab the blades. We're going to cut this kid open to find out how he works."

Cut me open? These guys truly are monsters!

Please Olena! Get me out of here! Don't let them mutilate me like this! I beg you Olena to spare me!

TIMELINE SIX

"Is that necessary?" Brady asks, "There are better, more humane ways to do this."

"No!" the flying man yells, "This guy destroyed and killed hundreds of our people! He is helping the humans!"

Please Olena, hear my pray. "En nombre de Olena oramos. En nombre de Olena oramos. En nombre de Olena oramos."

The flying man faces the Brady guy as I continue to pray, "You see? He's not humane to us. He's speaking in tongues to cast a curse on us. If not for science then for the sake of sanity hand me that knife." He turns to face me. "That is, unless you can tell us exactly where the destroyer is and how to defeat him?"

I quiet my prayer and look him in the eyes. "Olena won't let you win. You can try and try but without Olena, you will fail."

"Have it your way." The Brady guy places a set of knives next to me on a table. "Verdant, would you mind holding down his hand for me. We'll start there."

One of the green bandanas holds my arm against the table, palm facing down.

The flying man lifts a long, sharp blade and places it on my wrist. "Last chance traitor. Where is the destroyer?"

I can't lose my arm! I'll be worthless! "Wymail Wilds! He's there now. If you hurry you can catch him."

"And to defeat him?"

"I have no idea! Honest! He's basically indestructible."

"Mhmm. Pity."

Cut!

The blade cuts deep through my skin with the pain of a trillion paper cuts all at once. I bite my lip until I can't hold it in anymore filling the room with my cries and screams for mercy. "Stop! Please! Stop!" Barely making a dent yet and I feel myself squirming uncontrollably in pain. Forward and back, forward and back. Each little movement sends more pain through my body as if I were being endlessly electrocuted. Each cut is worse than the last! The energy shoots from my palms but

just goes straight into the table and vibrates my arm up and down making the pain ten times worse.

Tap!

“We’ve hit bone everybody!”

My vision fades in and out as the pain turns from intense to unbearable.

“Can I get another verdant over here?” the flying man asks as I thrash my legs up and down in an attempt to free myself. “I may need a little help getting through the bone.”

“Come on!” The Brady guy tries to help as I pull relentlessly on my gruesome arm for freedom. “He’s just a kid! He didn’t know what he was doing.”

The woman in the corner of the room yells at him, “Glider, stop this! This isn’t funny!”

One of the superiors takes the blade from the flying man and looks to him for confirmation before continuing. Sweat pours off my face as the flying man replies with a nod. As the green bandana cuts hard into my hand I hear the sound of a dozen hard-shell nuts being cracked at once accompanied with a surprisingly cold numbness that is more than welcomed now. Hesitantly, I look to my half attached hand to see it swinging off the edge of the table, which destroys the short-lived numb feeling replacing it with the immense pain that spreads up my arm and through my entire spine. I watch until the green bandana makes the final cut forcing my hand to drop from my fading vision to the ground below. I uncontrollably shoot the electricidad walls from my removed hand, which no longer come from my palm, instead shoot from the giant gash in my wrist. Each blast rips more skin away from the wound forcing me to arch my back in pain as I bite completely through my bottom lip.

“Look out!” the flying man yells, dropping to the ground. The walls of electricity shoot in all directions, breaking windows and knocking the anti-species to the ground. Besides the constant pain I feel, something strange is happening. The electricity isn’t only flowing out of my arm, but now feels like it’s injecting back inside me. It vibrates my arm, then my chest, then flows through my entire body.

TIMELINE SIX

Like ice going through my veins it sends my entire body into a convulsing shiver sending the electricidad all over the room. What is happening to me?

“Will somebody knock him out?” I don’t know who yells it, but a fist coming toward my face from a green bandana follows it. I try to move out of the way but I can’t-

black

GLIDER

AUGUST 1ST, 312 P.D.

1152

MEANWHILE

“WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?”

Gayle yells at me like I’m a bad dog.

I’m not concerned. She hasn’t seen what I’ve seen but if she had she would know why this has to happen. I ignore her as I place the traitor’s hand in a vacuum-sealed, glass case that is supposed to be used for oxygen sensitive reactors but doubles as hand containment just fine.

Brady’s lump has obviously disappeared, as he screams, “He is just a kid! He didn’t deserve that!”

With the case sealed I turn to the two of them. “He’s not ‘just a kid!’ He’s a monster! He’s a cold-blooded killer and if he had it his way we would all be dead!”

“How do you know?” Gayle asks me, “Have you seen him kill someone?”

“What are you talking about? He’s the traitor! He’s working with the destroyer! He tries to kill everyone in the west!”

Gayle walks to his unconscious body, “I just don’t see how a kid could do that kind of damage. He looks harmless.”

I point to my past self. “Does he look like he could do any damage? Does he look like he could cut off a kid’s arm?” I step back to the traitor’s arm to look inside his wound. “You see that blue stuff in there? We need to figure out what that is and how it works.” I’m no expert on anatomy but what looks like dozens of extra veins seem to run through his arm and out his wrist. I lift his handless arm to get a better look in the light.

“Let him go Glider,” Brady demands.

Turning around I see Brady and Gayle standing next to each other trying to make a metaphorical separation between our views. “Guys, what the hell? Do you not even care about our race? About our families? If we can figure out how he works

TIMELINE SIX

we could turn it into the ultimate shield against the humans. The energy he produces, from what appears to be thin air, could be used to cover the entire shore to stop missiles, ships, drones, planes, even submarines. To leave this great power by the wayside is ignorant and irresponsible.”

“It’s a life you’re talking about!” My past self steps forward. “He is just a child!”

“Do you know where I found him when I went to Roria? A prison cell. He was such a threat to them that he had his hands and feet contained in metal boxes! And guess what? That couldn’t even contain him! Before I could get out of the city he and the destroyer were doing what they do best, destroying! In a situation when it’s us or them, I’m going to pick us every time.” I step over to the traitor’s leg and lift it. “Verdant, bring the knife over here.”

“You already have his hand!” Gayle yells to me, “Do you need his leg too?”

“He uses this to fly. We need to know if it’s different.”

“You’re sick!” Gayle yells at me as she turns away.

I ignore the complaints and have the superior put the knife to his ankle. “Go for it.”

Interrupting the surgery is one of the black bandanas running into the lab, “He’s coming! The destroyer is on his way!”

Everyone in the lab immediately forgets the argument regarding the kid and jumps to high alert. “Use the prototype hertz output. If he gets close you can stab him with the ends of the cables and still shut him down,” I holler to my past self while readying myself to head outside.

“It’s going to take a couple minutes to get that ready!”

I sprint outside and tare the binoculars away from the other black bandana keeping guard.

There he is. Three or four hundred meters away just casually walking. He’s headed toward Perry just as I thought.

Storming back in I grab my glider. “I’m going to slow him down and lead him here! Be ready!”

I fly out the front door.

GLIDER

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 25

THE SECOND ENCOUNTER

SAM

SAM

AUGUST 1ST, 312 P.D.

1154

MEANWHILE

{DESTINATION} = ^62 KILOMETERS.

Ever since the kid brought it up, I've had a hard time getting the images of what's going on in the east out of my head. The anti-species are true monsters and what I've seen proves it. How could they be so dark to the humans? We separated a long time ago back when we were still recovering and scared of where the world was headed. We're level headed now and know where we stand, therefor, there is no reason for an attack. We could even regain a friendship between our two kinds if they could get pass their greed for land. Apparently that's out of the question now. Hopefully whatever I'm doing here will help the humans win this war.

!! WARNING !! THREAT DETECTED !!

What in the hell is that flying thing headed toward me?

The flying man? Is that who Tyran was talking about?

!! MISSILE INCOMING !!

//Jump.

My suit takes over forcing me well into the air letting me watch a missile slam into the ground below.

^Blades Engaged.

!! BULLETS INCOMING !!

I land on the ground while simultaneously being hit dozens of times by small bullets.

{Damage} = ^0%.

He's turning away from me? I must of scared him.

{Threat} = ^Neutralize.

//Sprint.

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Small missiles shoot out from the back of his glider at me as I make my way toward him. With ease I am able to leap and duck around them letting them slam into the ground behind me. I run fast, but his flying machine is too quick for me to keep up.

//Sniper Engaged.

Like an alien in my head, the little gun I used on the provost in the last town ejects from my temple while zooming in my vision accompanied with crosshairs in the middle. I about shoot him in the back of the head, but a small shield comes up from the back of the flying machine blocking my shot.

//Sprint.

I chase him as bullets and missiles continue to fire at me allowing me to continue practice with my dodging skills. Coming up on us quick is an abandoned building that looks like it could have been used as an old greenhouse.

{Threat} = ^Possible Trap.

My legs slow to a stop as he goes into the entrance of the building a hundred meters away.

//Critical Decision Making = ^Activated.

Do I enter?

//Possible Adverse = ^Damage. - ^Straying from mission. - ^Waste Time.

//Possible Favorability = . . .

Avenge Tyran's family.

^Irrelevant.

//Possible Favorability = ^Threat to humans neutralized.

//Likelihood of success = ^98%.

//Enter.

I stroll toward the entrance, being ready for an attack from any direction as I can't imagine the flying man being dumb enough to trap himself inside a building with me. I haven't seen anything that can hurt me yet but I never know what the west holds for me. Plus, if this is the same flying man that forced me unconscious then he may be more powerful than expected.

Tink!

My head lunges back from a bullet bouncing off my forehead.

!! BULLETS INCOMING !!

I look around but see no one.

Tink! Tink!

Two more times I'm hit, both in the head.

Where is that coming from? It's not from the building.

//Heat Vision = ^Activated.

There is a black snapshot over my vision before everything is covered by an orange and red hue. There they are. Two men stand in plain sight, both of them pointing their gun barrels at me. Somehow they've made themselves invisible to my normal vision.

//Sniper Engaged.

The little gun comes back out of my head accompanied by the adjusted sniper vision. Seeing their facial expressions I can tell they don't know I can see them yet.

{Targets} = ^-9 degree - ^12.5 degree.

//Fire.

Quickly and quietly the men drop to the ground, both with a bullet stuck in their skull.

//Default Vision = ^Activated.

With another black flash my vision goes back to normal. I continue on my path toward the building.

!! WARNING !! SUPERIOR ANTI-SPECIES !!

Before I can get a few meters closer the doors of the building are thrown open followed by two more anti-species sprinting out nearly as fast as I can run, which I thought would be impossible for someone not in a metal suit.

//Blades Engaged.

As if the ground was made of rubber one leaps high in the air toward me. With my blade ready I stab forward where he'll land, but he doesn't land. He's still in the air just out of reach of my blade until he kicks me in the face with his over-sized boot. I'm knocked backwards as the other superior leaps into the air and drop kicks me to the ground.

TIMELINE SIX

{Damage} = ^0.03%

For the first time I'm encountered with the feeling of pain. It doesn't feel like the normal pain I vaguely remember but instead is a loud, high pitch mosquito noise in my ears along with a sharp pain of a hundred needle injections in my head. Almost as soon as the pain is there it's gone. At least I know I'm still somewhat human in here.

{Threat} = ^Neutralize.

Leaping to my feet, blades still out, I try to stab one of the superiors but he is able to dodge my jab with his impossibly quick speed.

{Threat} = ^162 degrees.

I throw my body around to catch the foot headed toward my face from the other red bandana jumping in the air at me. Somehow when I go to grab it he stops in mid-air and retreats without touching anything like he's a feather in the wind. He's quick but unfortunately for him, I am too. I sprint to him and before he can touch the ground I have my blade in his leg pulling him toward me. My other blade, going through his chest, shortens his scream in pain causing immediate death.

{Threat} = ^-173 degrees.

Pulling my blades from the dead anti-specie and throwing my body around I get one blade then the other to slice through the torso of the oncoming superior. His eyes widen as his body collapses to the ground in three pieces.

Getting to the building I throw the doors open and step inside to see the flying man standing with two lab coats who are frantically throwing around cables plugging and unplugging them from some odd power box. In the center of the room ready to attack are six superiors: two of which are wearing green bandanas with strange metal contraptions going from their backs down to their wrists, two are six-armed yellow bandanas holding swords and the last two are blue bandanas with some strange looking guns in their hands. Off to the side is something I wasn't expecting to see. Tyran lies unconscious chained to a metal table with his arm surgically cut off.

How did he get here? What have they done to him?

!! WARNING !! SUPERIOR ANTI-SPECIES !!

{Threat} = ^22%.

The blues aim their guns and fire strange, putty-like, silver liquid toward me. I try to dodge it but a small glob lands on my elbow where it quickly hardens forcing the joint inactive. As I try to free my arm by bending it either way the yellow bandanas run at me with their swords swinging all around. Electric sparks shoot off the swords and bounce off my body sending the high pitch mosquito noise back to my ears. One of the swords slam into my body like a leaf against a tree completely unable to pierce my metal shell, but still it sends a shivering vibration through my body forcing the paper cuts in my head to return.

{Damage} = ^0.12%

Crack!

I finally shatter the metal that was keeping my arm bent giving me the chance to grab onto the yellow bandana's top arms and throw him at the green bandana running toward me. Surprisingly, with the force of what must have been like getting hit with a bat to the face, he is oddly unfazed and keeps running at me.

With my blades out I stab one of the yellow bandanas in the face as he throws another swing at me. His blood splatters across the room but still I'm hit in the back by his electric sword.

{Damage} = ^0.19%.

Shaking out the mosquito in my head I grab the sword from the dead six-armed creature and chuck it toward the green bandana's face, but that annoying liquid metal shoots it down coming from the blue bandana standing nearby. The green bandana leaps in the air and comes down with a punch to my face knocking me to the ground, which is something I really wasn't expecting. Obviously given extra strength from the metal thing on his back he is able to throw my vision out of alignment for a few seconds. He jumps on top of me while I'm lying on my back trying to punch me again, but quickly I push my arm up and cut through his heart.

Still on my back and with one of the blues shooting the silver liquid at me, I'm able to throw the green bandana in front of the projectile attaching him to the ground next to me. Somehow, even with his heart cut open, the green is still alive and trying to get free from the ground.

TIMELINE SIX

//Sniper engaged.

Jumping to my feet I shoot both the blues in the head to stop the frustrating liquid from firing at me.

{Targets} = ^Missed.

What? I saw a direct hit to their heads, but looking passed them I see the bullet holes in the wall as if the bullets went straight through them. I've never once missed with my sniper.

With the other six-armed, sword swinger running toward me I escape by jumping off the green stuck to the ground, crushing his skull and putting him out of his misery. The lab coats and flying man continue to fiddle with cables and wires trying to avoid drawing attention to them. They are no threat so I'll save them for last.

As a blue tries pointing his gun at me again I zigzag toward him ripping the gun from his hands and shoving it down his throat. As I pull the trigger I'm grabbed and thrown against the wall by the other extremely strong superior with the metal spine, but he was too late for the blue already has his throat and face frozen solid by the hardening liquid.

The green tries to punch me while my back is against the wall but I duck and let him blow a giant hole to the outside. I grab onto his metal spine contraption and rip it off him, which was apparently attached to his actual spine because with it comes blood and veins all the way down his arms and back.

A scream in pain sends the lab coats' eyes over to us, but the green bandana is quickly silent as I see his arms and back heal over without even a scar. He has the power of regeneration but I doubt he has the strength anymore without his metal spine. I turn around just in time to see the other yellow bandana swinging one sword at my head and the other at my feet. Before they can hit me I grab the two arms holding the sword while he uses his other four arms to frantically punch me with zero damage done. I drive my head forward into his own forcing his skull in half dropping him dead to the ground.

As he falls a glob of liquid flies through the air and gets a direct hit at my chest covering my arms and shoulders. I force my arms back and forth trying to get

them free but I can't get the shredding metal to budge. I feel it cracking but it's too strong.

"It's ready!" the flying man yells handing two cables over to the younger male scientist who is clearly terrified of the situation. "Go!" the flying man demands.

The spineless, green bandana sprints up from behind me to grab the cables from the scared scientist. Rushing toward me I see the tips of the cables are vibrating while the tail end is attached to some sort of box they were fiddling with.

Crack!

The metal chunk breaks off my body freeing my arms and shoulders giving me the returned ability to stab through the green bandana's skull. Penetrating through his eyes and out the back of his head he is killed instantly with the somewhat threatening cables dropping to the ground in front of me. I chuck the hardened metal that sat over my chest at the last blue bandana who is reloading another liquid metal cartridge he had pulled from his baggy pants. Unable to dodge the projectile I threw at him, his face collapses in and he falls to the ground in a pool of blood.

Now just the lab coats.

"We're unarmed!" The female scientist begs for her life, "Please! Just let us go!"

The flying man knows that's not an option as he jumps on his flying machine while grabbing the female and lifting her to safety behind him.

//Shoulder Turret Activated.

One after another the bullets launch from my shoulder but his flying machine's shield quickly comes up and blocks each one.

"Brady! Come on!" the flying man yells to the last scientist below as he reaches down to get him.

The last lab coat jumps on and they fly toward the door, but unfortunately for him I grab his foot and pull him back down before they are able to escape. The flying man flips his glider around just in time to see me shove my blade through the scientist's chin and up out the top of his head.

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"No!" the woman screams while the flying man watches the drying scientist's blood run down my arm. The flying man is frozen solid and white as cotton listening to the lab coat gasp for his last few breaths of air.

"Huh?" Tyran is waking up. "Where am I?"

The woman's crying quiets as the flying man and scientist escape.

{Threat} = ^Averted.

{Target} = ^Neutralize.

No. I need to help Tyran!

//Negative.

//Sprint.

No! You are not in control of me!

My legs take a few steps without my consent but through deep concentration I'm able to stop their movement.

"Sam?" Tyran, in a daze looks to me, "What happened?"

//Continue Mission.

No.

Breathing deep and using every ounce of strength I can, I force my legs to move over to where Tyran lay. "Are you alright?" I ask, "Do you hurt?"

"No I..." Having obviously forgotten his recent medical procedure, he looks down at his dismembered arm and shakes in fear, "Ahhh! My hand!"

The bleeding continues to pour from his open wrist to the ground. "I'm going to have to fix this or you'll bleed out."

Fire?

//No fire available.

Heat of any kind?

//No heat.

Running outside I search the ground and find two good-sized rocks. Putting them together and shaking my hands back and forth as fast as possible the rocks start to heat up to the point that they are almost red hot. I run back inside. "Okay Tyran, this is going to hurt."

"No, no, no! I'm fine! I don't need that!"

I lift his arm. "We have to cauterize the wound or you'll bleed out. It has to be done."

"No!" The burning red rock just centimeters away is stopped by his electric force field, which has now covered his open wound perfectly as if it were a bandage.

"You still have control of it?" I ask.

"What?" He looks at his wrist unaware he had just covered it up. "I don't – I guess so."

"Look." The energy sears his wrist turning the bloody skin around the wound black then fades into his body as if his power has forced itself into the skin. "How did you do that?" I ask.

"I don't know. It feels cold. Ice cold. Owe!" he yells in pain having realized he has also bit through his bottom lip to accompany his broken nose.

I break the chains releasing him so he can sit up and examine his wrist and other wounds.

{Next objective} = ^Perry.

"Can you walk?"

I help Tyran to his feet. "Yeah, I can."

"Okay. I'll help you get somewhere safe so you can get healed up then I'll head on."

"No! I'm going to help you!"

I'm slightly thrown off guard as I wouldn't expect him to want any part of this journey after what has happened to him. "There is no way kid. You've gone through too much as is. You need to try to get back home to your village. Be with your family."

"I need to do this."

He fights through his pained facial expressions to give me a stern look to express his seriousness. "Okay, if you can handle it," I tell him.

We head out of the make shift lab on our way to Perry.

//Heading north.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 26

THE DEFEAT

GLIDER

AUGUST 2ND, 312 P.D.

0822

20 HOURS AND 34 MINUTES LATER

“HERE YOU GO SIR,”

one of the red bandanas brings me the traitor’s hand along with the half-completed gloves that I had left behind in the lab. If only I had worked faster on the gloves things would’ve been different.

“Brady,” Mr. Majiah calls for me while I sit on the curb of the official’s office. “What are you doing here? We’re preparing for the evacuating so we need everyone pulling their weight right now.”

“Mr. Majiah, how does time travel work?”

Not at all thrown off by my question he responds, “How would I know? You’re the one who’s actually gone through it.”

“Brady said you had told him Wymail was working on it here.”

Mr. Majiah sighs before having a seat on the curb next to me. “I had told him that in confidence, but I guess him telling you is technically not telling anyone else.”

“So, how does it work?”

“It’s a very complicated system, which is impossible to explain right now.”

“That answer doesn’t work for me. My mind has been racing about the fact that I am still here and not fading away. My past self died right in front of me.”

“I heard,” he tries his hardest to express sympathy but still speaks like a computer.

“How am I still here? Shouldn’t I have disappeared or never existed or something?”

“That would be a paradox, Mr. Eztuella. The universe is a very exact place and would not be here today if there was a single paradox. When you go back in time you will never affect the timeline you came from. Time continues to move normally

TIMELINE SIX

for you therefor everything you left stays the way you left it and everything you change here changes.”

“So you’re saying where I left, in my original timeline, my family is dead?”

“Yes.”

“No matter what I do, I can’t change that?”

“Time is everlasting. You can’t go back and change things in the past for yourself. You are merely changing the future of a timeline that has yet to happen in the third-dimension. Your family may be dead where you came from but they are here now, alive. And they will be alive for every timeline that follows the millisecond you came through that time machine. Now you can keep them alive even longer if you continue to work for the cause. I know this is a strange and difficult time for you but we need the gloves otherwise Brady will have died in vein.”

“We’re leaving!” Gayle furiously announces from behind me. I turn to see her standing with Rebecca and Elijah who are both crying. “I’m taking them back to Kresa.”

“What? You can’t!” I stand, not willing to lose my family again.

“We are not staying here with you!” Gayle continues to yell, “We will take the long way around Wymail back to Kresa to avoid the destroyer. They will be safe with me. Not you!”

I attempt to walk passed her to get to my family but she steps in front of my path. I speak passed her, “Rebecca, you can’t do this. I need you to evacuate with Mr. Majiah and-” I’m cut off by Rebecca reaching past Gayle to viciously slap me in the face.

“You got my husband killed!” she screams through her cries.

Holding my burning face I announce, “I am your husband! I’m Brady! A version of me may have died but I’m here with you right now!”

“You are not my husband! You’re not the man I married!”

Rebecca, wiping the tears from her eyes, grabs Elijah’s hand and walks away with him. I can’t let them go like this! I hurry to Elijah and wrap my arms around him to stop him from walking away. My first thought is to pick him up and pull him

back with me, but that would make her right. That is not the man she married. He would never do that.

With Rebecca's eyes peering down at me in fear of what I may do to our son I loosen my grip and hug him instead. I whisper in his ear, "You are so smart my little inventor. You are going to do great and amazing things someday. Never stop designing." After holding him for what feels like a few seconds, but is probably closer to a couple minutes, he thankfully decides to turn around to push his face into my chest and hug me back.

He still cries as I kiss him on the forehead and rise to face Rebecca. "No matter what you say, I love you and I am your husband. You don't have to be with me, but you need to be safe."

Elijah grabs my waist and hugs me tight as Rebecca looks down to him confused on how to feel. "I love you dad," Elijah's cry filled words forces the tight lump to fill my throat while at the same time causing water to build up around my eyes.

Having never had such a difficult time speaking before, I painfully force out the hoarse, barely distinguishable, "I love you too, son. Be good for your mother."

Rebecca's hand grabs my face again, but this time with a much smoother touch. "We still have to leave," she says sniffing some of the crying side effects away, "but for a moment there... I recognized the man I married."

I can't hold back the steady stream of tears rolling down my face as Rebecca, my wife, leans forward and kisses me on the lips once again. I close my eyes doing everything I can to perfectly sear this moment to memory, as this is the last memory I ever want to recall.

Rebecca and Elijah both pull away to reveal that all three of us are covered in snot and tears. I chuckle a bit as my wife throws me the subtlest smile while wiping away my tears. "We have to go now," she says ripping the smile from my face.

I grab her to force her into one last hug. "I love you so much Rebecca. After this is all over, I'm coming back to see you."

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She doesn't respond to my statement but instead pulls me in closer. She leans over to my ear, "You're doing truly amazing things here and we are all thankful you're putting yourself through this for us. Be safe and good luck, Brady."

Just like the lonely nights at the compound I begin to weep like a little baby as my family and best friend walk away. I can feel the small audience watching as I make a fool of myself but I don't care. I don't care about any of them. The only people I care about are leaving and I may never see them again.

"If you want that family to survive," Mr. Majiah sneaks up and whispers in my ear. Startled, I wipe the snot and tears from my face to man up. "You need to keep working on our secret weapon. If what you say is true, we must get those gloves done immediately."

I don't look away from my wife and child who are leaving me, as this could be the last time I see them. "Again, I can't imagine how hard this must be for you. Take a few minutes if you need to get some water and decompress, but we'll have your new work station ready for you as soon as you think you're ready. You can get several hours of work done before it is time for the evacuation."

He walks away as I pull from my pocket the pieced together, miniature glider my wife had carved for me. There are so many imperfections in it that I can't take my eyes off of. The paint is choppy, the dried glue bubbled out and, as a whole, it is completely unsymmetrical. There are so many imperfections in it that make this so perfect for me. She must've worked so hard on it. I bet Elijah even leant a hand. Absolutely perfect.

I'll see you both again.

"Get the blues around the base of the wall now!" Captain Hunter yells out from a few blocks away bringing me back to reality and the reason why I am here.

"Why is he prepping them?" I urgently ask Mr. Majiah.

"He's lining the parameter with the superiors. They are going to try to take the destroyer down here at Perry."

"They can't! They are just going to get themselves killed!"

I rush down the street to Captain Hunter where he stands in front of the marching superiors who place themselves in their positions aiming out toward the

direction of Wymail. He yells, "Get the black bandanas up top aiming straight down! That's where we'll stop him!"

"What the hell are you doing?" I yell standing next to him.

"Get out of here Eztuella. I've got this."

"No you don't!" With everything that's happened I can't let anyone else die under my watch. "The destroyer will kill all of them! They can't take him on without the gloves!"

"Then where the hell are the gloves? Huh? Where are these magical gloves at? Is your *past self* still working on them?"

"He's right, Brady." I turn to face Mr. Majiah. "No matter how inconsiderate he is being about your situation, the superiors are fully trained and can at least hold him back while you get prepared. The lab is waiting for you and we are waiting on those gloves."

Per Mr. Majiah's request I begrudgingly march down the street to the lab holding my half developed gloves and the traitor's hand in a glass case. I enter the dark, cramped lab and throw down the hand and gloves to prepare the glider for the output power.

Looking down at the pile of mangled wires and hertz output dots I realize that I am nowhere near finished with these gloves. It took me almost five years to complete these gloves before. Sure I have plenty of equipment and resources at my disposal now, but I don't have the step-by-step instructions on how to make them again. So much has happened and I've forgotten so much. Setting the miniature glider on the desk in front of me I look for the courage to continue.

I can't do this. I only want Rebecca and Elijah back here with me. I want us all to be safe and together. Please come back.

I can't do anything without you two.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 27

THE DESTRUCTION OF PERRY

TYRAN

AUGUST 3RD, 312 P.D.

0104

16 HOURS AND 33 MINUTES LATER

“DOES IT HURT?”

Sam asks me while I stare down at my handless wrist.

There is no pain and nearly no feeling besides the slight tingling of a phantom hand. “I feel like it’s still there.”

Tonight is brighter than most nights as the moon is able to show an appearance through the thick clouds lighting up the field of dead yellow grass surrounded by the debris of a fallen city that Sam and I sit in. We have taken a break from Sam’s mission so I can eat on what little bits of food we were able to scrounge up on our journey north. Sam, with his little knowledge of medicine, has painfully reset my nose and sewed up my lip with some stringy stuff he pulled off a tree.

“What can you do with it?” he asks me.

Like the barrel of a gun I aim my arm toward the open landscape. As if my hand was still there I try to force the energy out of me but nothing happens.

“Try concentrating. You had a hand that did that before, but now you’re using the energy itself to eject it. It may just take time.”

“Yeah, I know!” Like he knows anything about my powers.

I concentrate on the thought of pushing my innards out of my wrist hoping that could spark it, but again, nothing. I flex and toss my arm around and finally instead of ejecting like a sheet of electricity, little energy droplets fall from my wrist onto the ground like a spilled bag of marbles. Some of the drops are the size of my toe while some are like grains of sand that trickle around my feet.

Sam, thinking I’m upset, tries to comfort me, “At least the other hand still works.”

Unknown to him, I’m amazed and thrilled! I’ve never been able to make anything besides sheets of energy, but now a three-dimensional object emerged.

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There was no power for it's projection and the sizes were completely random but if I work at it and master this new found power, I believe my skills can really be the force that takes down the flying man!

"Tyran, look." Looking back to my wrist where Sam is pointing I see that the energy, which was covering just the hole of my dismembered hand, has now spread slightly down my forearm like a spider web.

I'm not sure if I should be worried or not. "What do you think that means?" I ask.

"I don't know. Maybe it's still part of the healing process."

"Can you check? Like with your computer mind, just run a test on me to see what's going on?"

"I don't have a computer mind. My brain is no different than yours, kid. We think and act the exact same. Which reminds me, why did you decide to come with me?"

"What do you mean?"

"After we left that freak science lab where you... had your operation, you could've left. I gave you an out. I know you don't want to travel with me anymore so why are you still coming with?"

I wasn't sure if he was going to ask or not but I've known exactly how I would answer. The only way to reply is with the truth. "I had a dream while I was lying there. Olena spoke to me and told me what I need to do."

"What did she tell you?"

"She said that I need to trust you. Us meeting was no coincidence. Olena brought us together so we could both finish our missions, which in a way, is the same mission. I need to get rid of the flying man to save my family and you need to get rid of him so he doesn't rise up against the humans."

"I guess that's a good-"

"I'm not finished," I interrupt him. "She also reminded me of the evil the anti-species will do if we fail. I had a vision of the anti-species taking over the east and killing all the humans. They tortured and enslaved the humans for fun like it was

some sort of game. And after seeing what the flying man did, I completely believe the rest of them wouldn't hesitate to be just as evil."

Sam looks to me with his usual expressionless face. He stays silent but I feel that he is waiting for the rest of the truth.

"And I have something else to tell you." My heart nearly beats from my chest as he's already tried to kill me once for almost no reason at all. If Olena hadn't demanded it, I would never take this risk. "I lied to you back when you saved me from the prison. I told you I would help you with your mission but I had no intentions of staying with you. I was going to wait until you weren't around, then I was going to leave you. It was wrong and insensitive but I was scared and needed your help to escape the cage the Rorians had put me in. When you left to check on Wymail I ran, which made me a liar and distrustful. Truly and evil person. But Olena has shown me my sin and has led me to believe that with you I will find her trust again. I now ask for your forgiveness so Olena may forgive me and welcome me back to her grace."

"Oh," is all he says. If he doesn't forgive me then I will have no choice but to be his servant to earn his forgiveness or until Olena decides that I am worthy to come back to her. "Sure. I forgive you kid."

Thank you! Thank you! "Thank you, Sam." You hear him Olena? He accepts!

"You know," he says, "I never would have made you come with me. You could've left whenever you wanted to. But speaking of the mission, we need to get going. I have to find Jose Majiah in Perry. Supposedly if Wymail was evacuated that is where he would be."

"Why did you come to the prison?" I blurt out.

"What?"

"In Roria. Why did you come to the prison? If your mission was the mayor, why did you stop by there?"

Sam hesitates to answer as if he is thinking about the reason himself. "I'm not sure. I just went in there to check it out I guess."

"It was Olena! She brought you to me so you could save me!"

"Sure."

TIMELINE SIX

"No really. Why else would you have gone in there if not led by Olena?"

"I've done that plenty of times. Like in Birad Hills I went into several buildings that I didn't have to go into for my mission. It's called 'analyzing your territory'."

"You believe what you want, but I know it was Olena that brought us back together."

"Okay kid. We need to get moving if we want to keep to the deadline."

"What about the flying man?" I still feel the need to push my own mission over his.

"We're still going to get him kid. If anything he may be in the town with Majiah. It's only eighty-two kilometers away so we can get there in an hour if we move quickly. Are you good to continue?"

"I am if you are."

After speaking to him like a real person I've come to realize that whether he is just a bunch of wires and cables in there, he is much more than that in his core. He can forgive and act somewhat sympathetic therefor there may be a place in Olena's heart for him.

"Sam, wait." I stop him from walking forward. Bending down to dig into the dirt I scour deep until I find the wet mud below the surface.

"What are you doing?"

I scoop up a good amount of mud and walk to him. "Turn around."

He faces away from me as I use the mud to write on his back. After a few seconds to recall how to spell, I am ready to take a step back and appreciate my work.

LA DESTROYER

Perfect. "If that is what they are going to call you, then let's own up to it. 'La Destroyer'."

"I like it," he replies.

TYRAN

"One more thing." I step in front of him and use the mud to draw angry eyebrows and a smile on his face. "Now you're starting to look a bit more human."

"Whatever makes you feel comfortable, kid. Now let's get going! We don't have much time."

0220

1 HOUR AND 12 MINUTES LATER

"What are they doing?" I ask.

A kilometer away from the city Sam is able to get a good view of Perry where as I am only able to see a speck of light on the dark horizon. "They are evacuating again," I imagine his words coming through his mud smile. "The flying man must have tipped them off. What did I tell you? I knew he would be here."

"He could be evacuating with them right now! We need to go get him!"

Standing up to run to the town he throws his hand up to stop me. "They aren't all evacuating. The retaliation is posted around the border of the city waiting for us."

"So what do we do then? Do you think you can take them?"

"There are a lot of them. It's best we try to stay unnoticed and only go for the people being evacuated."

"You want to kill the innocent people trying to flee?"

"Just the target. He is a leader so he is most likely going to be one of the people being evacuated if not the first."

"Is there a way to go unnoticed?"

"There was but not now. They see us."

From my short time in the ranks I learned that as soon as they see you, firepower is coming next. I throw up my shield with my good hand protecting Sam and I. "How do you know they see us?"

"Their formations are hurriedly being readied at the rooftops surrounding the city. We will need to go straight through the gates and, if we can, do it without killing anyone besides the target. Keep your shield ready and follow me."

TIMELINE SIX

Sam stands as I walk with my shield protecting the two of us. Only moving a couple steps forward is when the bullets begin launching toward us.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Each bullet hits and bounces off the electric shield like my energy is made of rubber and the bullets are small rocks being thrown at us.

“Let’s run!” Sam sprints forward as I use the energy from my feet to project myself ahead of him to keep him from being shot, even though he doesn’t seem too concerned about being hit by stray bullets.

Multiple guns are firing at us now from the city skyline but nothing can get pass my shield as we move forward. At only a few hundred meters away I get my first glimpse of the city through the blistering darkness. There is no entrance! Concrete and brick walls surround the city leaving us no way in. “Sam! Where are we going?” I yell to him over the non-stop exploding gunpowder.

“The main gates will have the heaviest guards. We go up and over!” Sam yells back.

A dozen meters away Sam leaps into the air away from my shield and lands half way up the wall where he sticks his blades in to get a good hold. I launch hundreds of electric pads from my feet to project myself into the air still holding the shield ahead of me with my good hand. Matching his height he climbs like a spider up the wall using his blades to pull himself higher and higher all while taking hundreds of bullets to the face.

Getting to the top of the wall I launch my shield forward from my hand knocking a dozen superiors to the ground below. Just as I’m getting a good footing atop the building, Sam jumps up and kills the black bandanas to the left of me shooting them with his shoulder turret while I block the bullets coming at us from the right. Once he clears the path behind me he leaps over my shield and kills the rest of them on the other side.

“Good work, Tyran!” he compliments me as if I need that to continue.

My shield is hit and weighed down by a glob of silver liquid that shoots up from down below inside the city limits. I have to release the shield and make

another one as Sam jumps to the ground to stop them from firing. I look down to see his blades slicing through the throat of superior after superior.

“Come on!” Sam yells to me as he continues to slaughter the anti-specie force.

Not able to just plow through them as easy as he can I jump into the air and use the energy off my feet to lunge forward and fly. I use the nearby buildings for projection as I hold the shield below me to keep from getting hit with bullets. Sam, with his blades out, is able to force his way through the dozens of superiors without being caught or slowed down. He is even able to stick to his word by not killing as many as I had thought he would. I blow out entire walls of windows with each blast of energy from the souls of my feet as I shoot down what energy I can to help Sam. Flying overhead another glob of metal attaches to my shield weighing it down forcing me to drop it to the ground, which luckily lands on the head of another superior just ahead of Sam.

Halfway through the town many of the bullets have stopped as most of the army is either dead, injured, or too slow to catch up. The center of the city is completely unprotected as I assume they probably didn’t think we would make it this far in. With the strain of flying becoming more and more tiresome I drop to the ground behind Sam where it only takes me a few seconds to catch up to him.

The sound of gunfire becomes quieter while the sounds of yells and screams ahead of us become louder as we approach the tail end of the evacuator. I look to Sam who still has his blades out. “Sam, what are we doing? How are we going to identify the Majiah guy?” I yell to him.

He doesn’t answer or even look over to me.

“Sam?”

TIMELINE SIX

SAM

AUGUST 2ND, 312 P.D.

0229

MEANWHILE

SLAUGHTER, DISMEMBERMENT, SLAVERY, TORTURE.

I sprint down the empty street toward the evacuators as images of what the anti-species are doing in the east keeps projecting over my vision.

Not just images but sounds and even the smells of the anti-species torturing the humans. And for what? Land? Money? Revenge? No matter the reason, it is too dark for anyone to endure.

{Target} = ^Majiah.

The words across my eyes tell me who to go for but why not everyone? They don't deserve to live. I don't remember the ranks saving any human that tried to evacuate.

{Target} = ^Majiah.

I know my target but I can't stop the blades on my arms even if I wanted to. I'm not sure if the suit has taken over or not but it all feels as one now. The suit isn't forcing my attacks but my mind isn't trying to stop it either.

"Sam?" Tyran yells to me. Poor kid. He doesn't deserve to see the massacre that is about to ensue.

But maybe he does? What makes him so different from all the scum ahead of me?

The screaming gets louder as I'm only meters away from the terrified evacuators trying to push themselves away from me. I see their tears but can only imagine what their brothers and sister have done to my people.

"Sam, stop!" I don't listen to him. Between the screams in front of me and the screams in my head I can barely hear him anyways. Centimeters away, blades out, I don't hesitate to slice through the slowest of the group. Their torsos separate from their legs spewing blood all over the people running ahead of them.

Tyran yells something else to me but it just becomes muffled over the cries. I get a little further and cut through four more people with another swing. Stepping on top of the mutilated bodies I cut through the skulls of three more people. Then two more. Then five more. Then six more. The ground I run on has become a pile of soft, bloody bodies.

I'm thrown off balance being hit by one of Tyran's electric shields.

I feel my mind clearing a bit as I come to a stop.

{Target} = ^Majiah.

"Sam! What are you doing? Stop!" Tears run down his face.

Looking in his eyes then back to the path of dead bodies behind me I feel no remorse or discomfort. They deserved each and every death. "Tyran, I think it's time you go home." The crowd grows further and further away, as does my target.

"So you can keep killing innocent people? No!"

"You said it yourself, the anti-species are evil. They are blood-sucking monsters. You saw them briefly in the ranks, but I can perfectly remember them torturing and destroying the humans. Who knows how many humans are suffering in the east right this second?"

"None! Because it hasn't happened yet. Don't you get it? You came back in time to stop this! Not to get revenge!"

"*Destroyer!*" A man walks against the direction of the crowd toward me. "Are you looking for me?"

{Target} = ^Identified.

//Neutralize.

"I hear you are taking out the leaders of all the towns," says the target. "Trying to take down any sense of order we anti-species hold. Then do that. Don't kill innocent people. I don't know if there is a human in there or if you're just a computer but either way, the innocent do not deserve to die and you must try to understand why."

{Possible Trap} = ^Negative.

//Walk.

"If you kill me, will you let my people live?"

TIMELINE SIX

They don't deserve to live, but I do respect his honor. I doubt I'll have time to finish them off since I'm pretty sure I will have another task to get to after this. There is only one way to be sure.

I hold my arm across my chest with my blade out.

"Make it quick." He closes his eyes ready for me to strike him down. I stand in front of him having the screaming and yelling quieted by the distance between the group and myself. He speaks again, "The humans will fail if we go to war. Tyranny and racism is not the way to-

//Slice.

His head rolls on the ground followed by his body dropping to its knees.

Tyran comes to stand next to me having calmed down a bit.

"Was that him?"

"Yes."

{Objective} = ^Fournmouth.

"Did they all really deserve to die?" Tyran asks me.

"I wouldn't have killed them if they didn't."

"I didn't see what you've seen, but I can't believe Olena would let this happen. She can't want this."

"Kid, it's time you forget about Olena. This is real life out here."

"I feel sorry for you, Sam."

I step over the decapitated body and slowly make my way in the direction of the evacuator. "If you've seen what I've seen, you'd want every single one dead." The sound of surviving superiors approaching from behind starts to grow. "Get out of here, kid. You shouldn't be here for this."

"I can't leave. I made a promise to stay with you until your mission is complete. Olena has punished me once for just thinking about betraying my word to you. Whether she wants the anti-specie dead or not, I cannot leave you."

I turn to face him. "Fine. We continue north."

I do my best to look passed what I've done and ignore what Tyran had said. Did they deserve to die? Am I just a monster running through murdering innocent

civilians? Why am I the decider of who lives and dies? I don't deserve that responsibility.

{Stress} = ^87%.

And what did Majiah mean, 'If we go to war'? They are in the east now killing my people. I've seen it.

Haven't I?

//Releasing endorphins.

TIMELINE SIX

GLIDER

AUGUST 3RD, 312 P.D.

0356

1 HOUR AND 17 MINUTES LATER

IT HAS QUIETED DOWN OUTSIDE

now that the only sound heard is the occasional superior walking by to pick up the dead bodies of their colleagues.

I could have helped. I could have went out there with my glider and shot at the destroyer but it wouldn't have done any good, not without the gloves finished anyways. I've been twisting copper wire around the glove inputs for about three hours now and have finished about two percent of the amount I have to do. The numbness I feel inside has made the tedious task desired. I don't want to think. I don't want to work. I just want to stare off and twist these wires until my fingers bleed.

"What the hell are you doing in here?" Hunter storms in the room throwing one of his normal toddler-tantrums. I don't turn to him. "Did you not here all that out there? People died and you just sat in here with your stupid science experiment!"

If I want to finish connecting these copper wires, I don't have time to talk.

"You have a flying war machine and you didn't even try to use it! You're not an admiral! You're the little frik that sat in here just so you wouldn't be killed. You're filthy coward!"

That's weird. This copper wire is dented in an unfavorable place. No matter, I'll just grab another one.

Before I know it the gloves and wires are being torn out my hands and thrown onto the floor. Hunter's voice nearly destroys my eardrum as he yells, "Look at me when I'm talking to you!" Grabbing my shoulder he spins me around to face him.

Damn, looking to the gloves on the floor it seems like a few of the wires came undone. I guess I'll just have to redo it.

"You got them killed! You screwed us Eztuella!"

Looking passed him out the door I see two of the six-armed superiors walking from where the destroyer headed last. The first one holding his two swords and a decapitated body while the second holds his swords and the head of... Mr. Majiah?

He can't- he evacuated. He was one of our smartest and he died? Running pass Hunter to investigate I get a closer look to see the closed eyes and calm demeanor of his bodiless face. He volunteered to die. He knew he had to. The yellow bandana superior holding the head stops for me to pay my respect.

"Are you happy?" My fists tremble by the sound of Hunter's voice. "You got one of the greatest assets of the anti-species killed."

Not thinking, I rip one of the swords away from the six-armed superior to swing it around to Hunter's neck. I see the fear, shock and confusion in his eyes right as the blade slices through his voice box and into his jugular. Gasping for air he frantically struggles to remove his gun from his holster. Unable to get ahold of it he spews blood all over me then drops face first into the dirt.

Turning around I see a large group of superiors forming a circle around me. "The last I checked I'm still the admiral here!" I yell out, "Captain Hunter has retired his position leaving me in full command! There will be no more half-assed attempts to protect a city with lacking defenses! No more sacrificing our team for no reason! And no more trying to take on the destroyer without the proper tools! We will travel north to the city of Glairefield gathering all other superiors in the neighboring cities! We will evacuate everyone we can from the towns on the way as we fix your weapons and your mindsets to truly take on the destroyer! He may have beaten us up to this point but he cannot take on the northeast! That is where we make our stand!" Fists from each and every one of them goes into the air one by one proving their dedication to the cause.

I see Elijah's face in the head of Mr. Majiah. If we fail in Glairefield he is as good as dead once again. I will not fail you Elijah.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 28

THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

0932

5 MONTHS, 9 DAYS, 5 HOURS AND 29 MINUTES LATER

IT'S BEEN A SHORT TIME

since my future self, General Greer, came through the doorway but since he's been here he's fixed Ft. Bildine, relocated the impoverished Krielm citizens and, not to mention, created the best damn military defense the east has ever seen! Sebastian Jim, the former general, has stepped down from his position to allow my future self to take full and complete control. Good thing too. That piss for brains can't hold a candle to the general I'll turn into.

"Ready these heat turrets with the omnion bullets for training!" General Greer yells out to the soldiers here at St. Srana, "Get the base of this P-476 waxed and ready to rotate! And will someone pick up these damn chains?" One after another my men follow General Greer's orders. I can't say that name enough.

"General Greer, can we talk?" It seems like I should be able to ask myself anything but since he's been here he has stayed rather distant from me. I'm guessing just because he has been fairly busy.

"What do you want?" My future self continues to walk away from me.

"I hate to ask now but I need to know. What is the future like? I've asked you more than once but you've never given me a straight answer. Obviously we run into some good fortune by becoming General, but are there some things I should watch out for? Some things I should avoid? If there are, I want to start preparing now."

General Greer stops, "You want to know about your future Cameron? You want to know what it's like?"

Well yeah, that's what I just said. "Yes."

"Well you can't handle it." He starts walking away from me again.

I grab his shoulder and flip him around. "You keep saying that but I obviously can! You're here and you handled it! So what does that mean?"

TIMELINE SIX

"It's hell Cameron! I handled the past ten years in pure depression with zero hope things would ever get better. You can't imagine what I've seen! Every time you go to sleep you're terrified you won't be waking up while at the same time hoping that that's true. Food is near impossible to get and when you do get the chance to eat you're almost guaranteed to get it stolen from you by one of your so-called 'friends'. And worse than anything, you wish that a stray bullet or a misplaced landmine would kill you just so the anti-scum won't enslave you. That's what the future holds for you. That is, unless I succeed here today. Now I can't do that if you're up my ass asking questions the entire time!" He speed walks away from me.

After debating what to do for a second I decide to hurry and catch him as I have thought of a follow up question that may raise his spirits. "It can't be all that bad. If we become General, there are obviously still some human structures and rules being upheld. Some sort of civilization to turn to."

He still speed walks just ahead of me. "You don't know what I had to go through to get this uniform."

I run in front of the General to stop him. "Then tell me! What do I do to get that uniform?"

"Like I said, you wouldn't be able to handle it." He attempts to weasel pass me but I don't let him.

"That's not true! I can handle any-"

"I know you wouldn't because I wouldn't!" he screams at me drawing the attention of the nearby soldiers. "If I were in your shoes knowing what I know about the future, I would put that pistol to my head right now! To think of what you could go through if we fail makes me want to put you out of your misery right now! And if we fail here, I assure you I will. You wasted the best years of our life doing nothing! You could have been happy but instead you got power hungry and didn't stop! You could have had a wife, the possibility of a family and a nice home, but you threw it all away for this!" He pushes me to the side to continue forward toward the ships.

Is this a motivational technique or is he trying to scare me straight? Or is the future really that bad?

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

He continues to yell out commands behind me while making his way to the shore, *"What are these chains still doing here? Pick them up!"*

Lab coats one and two responsible for the creation of the robot hurry to me as I'm turning back toward the command center. "Have you seen the general?" the one who can speak like a normal human asks. "We've got good news!"

"He just walked away. What's going on?"

"We'll just wait until he comes back."

"No, tell me! What is it?" They look to each other unsure whether or not to let me know the news, which is shrep because I am technically the general. Maybe not yet but I will be some day.

"Well, we've figured out the weakness of Sam," he tells me, "It took a lot of time and effort but we are now able to disassemble the magnetic and electrical bonds of the microscopic graphene pieces with a complicated hertz rate."

Well I thought he spoke normal. "What the hell is that supposed to mean to me?"

"We'll send out a specific wavelength at a hertz rate, which is the number of cycles per second, that is the exact opposite frequency the magnetic bonds operate at. The wavelength is easy to produce but the hertz rate has to fluctuate per point zero zero thirds of a second, which it turns out is strikingly difficult to hold."

I feel myself begin to boil as I know that brain-scum is just trying to confuse me with his stupid words.

He continues, "If given a good team we should be able to reproduce these wavelengths at this rate in a missile or bullet as long as each projectile has its own power source and oscillator held within it."

"Okay, let me see what I can get going for you."

I start walking away when he blurts out, "Actually, can we speak to the general about it first? I think he may be able to get us a team a little quicker. You know, with his rank."

"What the hell did I tell you? I am the general! Don't you dare forget it!" I'm sick and tired of these people around here forgetting who the hell I am! It doesn't

TIMELINE SIX

matter if he's ten years or fifty years older, that's me and I can do all the same stuff he can do! People around here are about to learn that real quick.

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

CHAPTER 29

THE BATTLE AT GLAIREFIELD

GLIDER

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

0945

MEANWHILE

WE'RE MORE THAN READY

here in Glairefield for the battle against the destroyer to begin.

He and the traitor destroyed eight more anti-specie cities in the past few months killing thousands of our people. We've been able to gather the retaliation from all the cities on the way here while keeping out of their path, yet the stories of the destroyer have nearly killed the moral of everyone here. If we can stop him and save the northeast defenses the humans won't stand a chance of taking the west. Here we have dozens of turrets, thirty missile launchers and dozens of wired land mines leading to the city wall, which had just finished being placed in the past month. Even more so than Wymail Wilds, Glairefield is leading the way in genetic warfare having created giant man-eating beasts ready for battle.

It took almost two centuries but the soil here has been made radiation free allowing plant life to thrive making it one of the most flourishing places east of the great river. There are no large trees near the city wall, but the grass directly outside has grown nearly a meter long bringing with it the insects and small animals that have been in hiding and near the brink of extinction since the Great War. They bring a sense of hope to Glairefield that the world is returning to the peaceful place it once was. However, my appearance along with the news I bring has since destroyed that thought.

After months of trial and error the gloves have finally been finished and a new electric spider has been installed in my glider, this one with magnetized legs. The glider itself has been upgraded with more bullets, missiles and blades along with the necessary hertz rate to take down the destroyer. Since regaining my position as admiral I've acquired the respect I need to take full control and prepare everyone for the war at hand. "Be sure to grease those turret pivots and clean the

barrels while you're at it!" I yell out making my way down Main Street leading to the wall, "Are the internal wire mines connected yet or are we still waiting?"

I have turned this once peaceful town into a terrifying battleground in the making. The community center, which once housed the city pool and gym, is now an extra-protected sanctuary for the woman and children while their husbands, brothers and sons prepare their weapons for the inevitable attack. Most of them want to just run and get out of town, but I know what that does. If we retreat now, the humans will succeed and the anti-specie race will die out.

"They're ready to go Admiral," Eric replies.

"Good!"

On top of turning Glairefield into the most powerful defense against the destroyer, I have also found my old friends, Bishop and Eric, and brought them here to keep them safe. I tried to explain to them how we met, but they are both too smart to believe my story, even though it's true. While tripling the population of Glairefield, I have also made sure Kresa is entirely protected in case we fail. No matter what, the only thing I truly care about is the well being of Rebecca and Elijah.

"Glider," Nikolay Ingram, the Glairefield taoiseach yells out to me, "you said this was going to happen by now! Where is he?" The taoiseach is just like the mayors and provosts of the old towns, but having the biggest and most protected city in the west he found it necessary to give himself a different title.

"He'll be here any day, sir. I promise."

"I still feel like this is too much of a measure to take. We had plenty enough defenses here to take him on."

"With all do respect Mr. Ingram, you have no idea what you are taking on here."

Annoyed, he turns and walks away from me. It was hard to convince him to let us build up Glairefield to give it the extra defenses it needs as I think he feels like it demeans his title instead of helping his citizens. When this is all said and done he will be more than thrilled that we showed up.

Marie Flatsford, Glairefield's lead biotechnologies expert, runs up to me. "Mr. Glider! We've lost another set of tentacles."

TIMELINE SIX

“Dammit. Alright, I’ll be right there.” Over the past months we’ve been able to harness the great powers of Glairefield’s bioresearch division by creating superior creatures meant for war through the process of horizontal gene transfer. Lining the city are hundreds of tentacle creatures that survive without brains or torsos as each arm works independently for itself. The nine to fourteen meter-long tentacles may not be able to stop the destroyer but they should be able to distract and slow him down enough for us to take him down. With the limited number of vehicles at our disposal, the biotechnologies division has altered the genes in the rare species of quadruped once called a ‘horse’ to make them both vehicles and weapons. This once peaceful creature now grows three times larger than its usual size making it far more vicious and agile on the battlefield. Luckily, the neuro-scientists have been able to hold onto the new bloodthirsty trait of the animal while also making them highly trainable. The speed of the quadruped maxes out around a hundred kilometers per hour making the retreat of the destroyer useless.

In addition to the great hooved monsters there are also giant creatures they call ‘wolves’ that can jump eight meters in the air and ‘hogs’ with tusks as long as the creature itself. These giants are not as easily tamable and won’t do much damage to the destroyer but are here in case we fail and need to hold off a human invasion. Glairefield citizens believe that the manufacture and use of machines for suitable living as well as warfare is harmful to the environment and life as a whole so the drive to make new organic creatures and workers is a constant here. Even my glider is somewhat unwelcomed, but no one dares to try to take it from me.

I walk with Marie into the bio lab. “And the hand?” I ask her.

“We’ve learned a lot over the past months.” We walk to the glass containment room where the traitor’s unique hand is kept. It has stayed in pristine condition since the day we placed it in the airtight case. “We have discovered that in the early days of the Retaliation when there were some unorthodox experiments in the south, they had a type of superior that was ‘supposedly’ unsuccessful. Apparently the experiment was a success but never documented as such.”

“You’re saying we gave the traitor his powers?”

"From what we can see, yes. It obviously developed much slower than they had thought it would when originally injecting it in patient zero. It looks like the powers have been passed down through the generations and possibly even amplified."

"Can we use it?"

"Unfortunately, we've not been able to harness it."

"Why not? You know what causes it, correct?"

"Yes we do, but this specific power uses a virus that overtakes the host body and converts some of the neurological systems into a pure power source. It takes years, possibly decades to advance to his level. There is no way to duplicate it in such a short time period."

I was hoping that in my last encounter with the traitor he would lie there and bleed out, but there has been undeniable evidence that he still travels with the destroyer. It's hard to believe information by just word of mouth, but apparently his powers have gotten stronger than the destroyer's. I'm not sure how much stronger, but enough that stories have spread about him. 'His death count is in the thousands!' they say, 'He could take down an entire army with just one blast!'

"There is something else you should know, sir." She points toward the inner workings within the hand. "His palms, and we're guessing his feet as well, are embedded with these holding cells, which if making contact with the electric fields will keep them from dissipating. Also if you'll see, there are new vein like structures that are formed within the hand that were created from the virus. This is the pathway for the virus to flow and carry the energy from the brain. This virus, without a proper carrying system, will attach to other biological systems that immediately surround the exit of the new veins."

"Okay? What does this mean?"

"This means that with the virus already attached neurologically, it should continue to spread from the wrist to the entirety of the body."

"So he will eventually be overtaken with this energy?"

"After his body is entirely taken over and his natural body is no longer touching the energy the virus will have nothing to hold onto and die out."

TIMELINE SIX

“So he will lose his power?”

“You don’t understand. With his body completely overtaken by the virus, he will dissipate, just as the virus does when it is expelled from his hands and feet. If you wait him out, he will fade away on his own.”

Marie is one of the smartest people I’ve met in her field so if she tells me something, I have no choice but to believe her. “Wait him out? How long could that take?”

“We have no idea. The more he uses his power the more his brain will spread the virus. Depending on how much he’s used it, he could already be dead.”

This is the first bit of good news I’ve heard in months.

“Sir,” one of the Glairefield citizens entering the lab yells to me, “The Atramentous lookouts have sent word the traitor and destroyer were last seen leaving Wingston. We can only assume he is on his way here.”

I exit the facility where a group of superiors, along with citizens, have gathered around me having already heard the news. They quietly murmur and whisper to one another feeling the anxiety of war at hand.

Jumping on my glider I hover in the air for all to see. “Listen up!” The crowd becomes silent. “I know you all are scared. I know you are fearful of war, but there is no need for that fear! We have the strongest forces ever seen since the Great War! The Atramentous Arsenal will be bordering the outskirts of the field completely invisible with rifles and pistols at the ready. They will be able to stop the bastards before they step foot in the grass! And if they do make it to the grass they will have to deal with the hundreds of landmines under their feet. With the unlikely possibility that they make it through the Arsenal’s blast zone the Fleet Rufescent will be kept at the wall base ready to sprint forward accompanied by the cavalry of monstrous quadrupeds to take them out. The Cerulean will be posted at the top of the wall with their liquid metal ready if they make it to the city border. This, along with the tentacle arms, will give them an impossible time getting pass the gates. And the *off-chance* they make it through the gates there will be the Scout Verdant and Anti-Pusillanimous to hold them back from getting any further! Along with the three dozen turret guns and twenty missile launchers manned and ready they will have no

GLIDER

luck making it to the bay where the rest of the defenses are. The bay is where the greatest defenses are in place to hold back the humans if and when they arrive. The destroyer is the humans' only true asset so when they arrive and see his appearance here in the west was useless they will try to retreat. But we won't let them! We will chase them down and take them to their watery grave! The west is ours! The west is our home! And after the humans have gone we will take back the east! The world is not for the humans alone! The world is not even for the anti-species! The world is all of ours! But if they aren't willing to share we will take it all! The world will be at peace once again!" Cheers erupt through the crowd as I fly overhead, "The destroyer is on his way! Superiors, you know where to go! Men, man your stations! Prepare for war!"

TIMELINE SIX

TYRAN

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

0956

MEANWHILE

I'VE NEVER FELT BETTER!

I wish I was concerned but I'm not.

The electric power has grown from my wrist, up my arm and now covers my chest, neck, waist and legs down to the knees. Wherever the energy has taken over I feel no pain, no sensations and no knowledge that part of my body even still exists. Not only that, now that it covers so much of my body I have been able to take more control of it than I've ever been able to. I can now stretch my electric arm nearly thirty meters without any damage or side effects, and possibly even further than that. The energy has always been see-through, therefore, I am able to see the organs inside of me, which now are blue and veiny like the energy itself. I was terrified at first but now that it has taken over my heart and lungs with no consequence, I do not fear it. I'm becoming invincible! I can't wait for it to spread to the rest of my body so I can find out what I can really do.

Sam and I continue north to our next destination of Glairefield having destroyed everything in our path. I replaced the mud title, 'La Destroyer', on his back with some heavy clay mixed with blood so it would stay permanent while his facial features have been changed to angry eyebrows and an expressionless mouth, at his request. I've been able to kill hundreds of the anti-species who, based on what Sam tells me, are not innocent. The more stories he tells me the more I believe this race needs to be extinguished. They are pure monsters, even the women and children. My village is different as they were raised in a different way, but everyone here in the north knows only one thing: torture humans.

After Perry Sam and I headed to Fournmouth, a small town filled with inbreds and introverts. Sam made it through the town in minutes with the leader's head at the end of his blade without even a fight. They were all so messed up in the

head while living in a giant bog that it was like they didn't even know what had happened. The homes were placed on small patches of land surrounded by thick, muddy water that the town used as a public restroom then preceded to use as their drinking water. Having worked at a water purification plant I may be somewhat biased, but that should be disgusting for anyone. They needed to be put out of their misery.

After that we headed to Garmsby, a spread out farming community that tried to fight back on our arrival but didn't stand a chance. My shield blocked their sticks and stones while Sam blew up the building where the mayor of the town was staying. The farmers wouldn't stop trying to attack so a blast from my electric shield knocked them to the ground letting Sam come in and finish them off. It was in this town that I figured out I could stretch my electric arm in all directions allowing me to shape shift my arm in several different ways.

It took a while longer but we arrived at Bellmare in the mountains where the entire city had already been evacuated. I didn't mind though. I had never seen the mountains before and the sights were worth the trip. We stayed there for a few days while we experimented more with my powers where I found out the more I use the energy the faster it spreads through my body.

We left there and made our way to Windrip, also in the mountains, where nearly everyone deserved to die as well as the top leaders had enslaved most of the population. The slaves didn't admit they were enslaved, but clearly there was a lot of work being done with zero payment to the workers. It was as if they were scared to admit they needed help. Sam and I gladly killed all the leaders on his list along with every slave owner we could find. We freed the slaves instead of killing them because we were running late for the next town, although I believe we should have saved the humans some time and gotten rid of them as they were rude and disrespectful. From all the dreams I've been having from Olena I realize removing the waste from the west is my true mission. Along with killing the flying man of course.

Getting out of the mountains we arrived at Athelney where the entire town was surrounding the border of a great man-made lake. It looked like a great place to live, but obviously they were a threat to the humans so we destroyed them too. Part

TIMELINE SIX

of Sam's mission wasn't just to kill the leaders there but to tare down every building in the town. It took us two days and plenty of patience as Sam was doing his best to save the rest of his grenades and ammo for when he may need it. Using as much force as possible I was able to knock down entire buildings with a single blast of my energy, which I was never able to do before. My handless arm is no longer able to create electricity that detaches from my body, but I can stretch it in all directions and push it through brick walls with a force greater than that of a tidal wave slamming into the beach.

Hankala was a great place for us to go as it begun to snow when we got there, which covered everything in sight. I had never seen the snow before and it was as amazing as I heard it was! I didn't even mind the cold for how much fun I was having in it. Sam said that it's supposed to come out of the sky white, but instead it covered the ground in a grey mess from all the dust and dirt stuck in the sky. I had only wished my energy spread to my feet by then so it wouldn't have been so cold to walk on. Everyone in the city stayed inside because of the cold weather so the assassination was quick and we were on our way to the next town.

Arriving at Norwich the snow had begun to melt turning the entire town into a giant, muddy messy. Here is where we got the largest fight from the townsfolk, as they were equipped with shotguns and pistols, which they too anxiously unloaded on us. Sam and I went through and killed every single person in the town letting me practice new tricks, such as spreading my arms across the ground forming it into a giant plane where everyone was forced to walk on. I was able send vibrations through my arm by simply shaking my body back and forth causing them all to lose their balance letting Sam easily take them down from there. Leaving the town we left their bodies to sink into the mud as their final resting place.

Finally, we moved onto the last town of Wingston where everyone had already evacuated again letting us know that we were getting closer to the flying man. Sam tells me he doesn't know how many cities are left on his mission list but we approach one of the biggest ones with an estimated population of three million people. We cross over a hill revealing the great city of Glairefield on the horizon.

The city is surrounded by plant life that stretches from where we stand to the city wall nearly a kilometer away. This is the most plant life I've seen since being back in Old Mexico. I have been thinking about home a lot and can't wait to get back, but I know I could never stay there without taking down the flying man first incase he ever returns.

"Stop," Sam puts his arm in front of my chest to halt my movements into the tall grass. "There shouldn't be a wall here. This isn't right," Sam says, "The Retaliation is here."

The two of us crouch down behind the tall grass. "How do you know?" I ask him.

"They have defenses scattered around the outskirts of the city. They must be preparing for us."

"What kind of defenses?"

"It looks like they have been experimenting with gene splicing and genetic advancements in animals. There are odd tentacle things around the wall of the city while giant creatures stand watch with them. I see a few hundred superiors keeping watch on top of the wall and a few dozen scattered with the animals."

"Anything we should be worried about?"

"I'm not sure. There is nothing in my memory about this. We're supposed to just come here and take out their defenses around the shoreline but I don't know if we'll make it there as easily as the humans planned we could."

I'm not concerned. Now that I have so much control of the energy that is consuming my body I know I am basically invincible. I do feel bad for Sam however. On our journey he has continuously attempted to get the suit off his body, but so far has been unsuccessful. At night I would hear him talking to himself wishing that he could go back home and be normal again. To be honest, I'm still not completely convinced he is human. I believe the humans sent him, but I'm nearly positive there is nothing but a computer in there. Either he is trying to trick me or he truly believes he is human. It's sad really.

"What are you thinking?" I ask him, "Should we try to go around?"

TIMELINE SIX

"No. The only way around is along the shoreline and that's where they have the heavy artillery. It's enough to hold back a human invasion so if we try to go that way they'll take us down for sure."

"So what's the plan?"

"On both sides of the field there are the black bandanas using their cloaking to blend in with their surroundings. They would've already opened fire on us if they knew I could see them."

"Wait, they know we're here?"

"Every single one of them has their binoculars up looking at us. They definitely see us."

"Then why don't they shoot us?"

"They want us to go into the field. My guess is that's where they'll be able to shoot us with whatever heavy weapons they have atop the wall. We are probably just out of range over here. Once we get in between both lines of the black bandanas they'll open fire on us for sure."

My face, left arm and feet are still exposed by normal skin so if they shoot me I may be done for. I don't know if I can shield us from all those directions.

Sam comes up with a quick plan. "What we'll do is walk right before their blast zone then you shield us from the left flank and I'll sprint towards the right. The right flanks' focus will be on me so you just need to worry about not getting shot by the ones on the left and the people at the wall. After I kill the right flank I'll sprint to the left and take them out too."

"You think you can take all that firepower?"

"Just worry about shielding yourself. I'll worry about taking them down. After they are dead we'll sprint straight to the wall. Avoid the front gate because that's where they'll have the highest security. Follow me two hundred meters to the left of the gate and we'll go over that way."

"Okay. And then?"

"We'll make our way to the defenses on the shore as quick as possible."

"Sounds like a plan. What's our escape?"

He ignores the question. I'm not sure if it's because he doesn't know yet or if he doesn't plan on getting out alive at all. "We move on the count of three," he says. "One... Two..."

"Sam?" I interrupt his count. I know I'm braver and more courageous than other people my age after all I've been through, but I've never tried anything like this. I hate to admit it, but I'm scared. "Do we have a way out?" I ask in a different way hoping he will answer honestly.

"The longer we wait here the longer they have to prepare. If we sit too long they'll open fire on us."

I've tried to hold my tongue but I am unable to anymore, "Will I be able to see my family again?"

Sam hesitates to answer. "Tyran," he goes against his own rule of keeping his eyes on the enemy to look over to me, "don't do this. I can handle this on my own. You've done far enough for my cause and helped out in more ways than I ever imagined you could have. You can leave now and be back home in La Palomar in a month or two. You can teach them everything you've learned and tell them about everything you've seen. Go to your family. I've got this."

I want to. I want to see my mom and dad again. And I don't want to say it but I want to see Carleena again. I've tried to forget her, but I love her. I love her more than anything. Even if she is evil, I love her. "Will you kill the flying man for me?"

"If I find him, I will. I promise."

I feel myself shaking. I want to see him dead, but I don't know if I'll even make it to the wall. I need to see my family again. Olena will understand. "Thank you Sam. I'll never forget-"

"Look out!" Sam yells pushing me far to the right while launching himself to the left.

Boom!

A missile explodes right in between us launching dirt and grass all around us.

"Get your shield up!" he yells to me.

Lying flat on the ground I throw up my handless arm emitting a shield that blocks the incoming bullets coming from the invisible flanks of the black bandanas.

TIMELINE SIX

“We have to move now!” Sam screams pushing himself to his feet and sprinting toward the bullets coming at us from the right. He ejects his blades while being knocked back and forth by the countless amounts of bullets slamming into him.

I still lie on the ground while my shield holds back the hundreds of bullets coming at me but I don’t know what to do next. He is following the plan he set forth, why can’t I? I’ve been with him this long so why stop at the end of our mission? Olena would want me to finish this. This is a sign.

Pushing myself to my feet I hold back the bullets coming at me from the left while throwing up another shield to block anything coming at me from the city wall. I keep moving forward through the tall grass trying to spot where the bullets are coming from but their cloaking is too perfect. Like time travel, I never thought it was possible to be as invisible as the air around us.

Turning my head I see Sam is slicing through the invisible enemies, but he is taking a beating and losing his balance by being tossed left and right. He is taking too many bullets! He’ll never make it to the wall! I can do more than just block. I can fight!

I stretch my arm forward at the invisible left flank and spread the energy as far as I can until the enemies are knocked down ceasing the endless barrage of bullets coming at me. I know they are still alive and if Sam were over here he could run through and cut them all down, but now I need to save him before he shuts down. He would do the same for me. It’s about time I save him for once. Give me the strength Olena!

Turning to help Sam I have just enough time to see a single bullet coming at me from the right flank.

Phth!

black.

SAMJANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

1000

SECONDS EARLIER

//SLICE.

With my blades out I'm able to cut through the torsos of every single black bandana I come in contact with. Bullets hit me one after another throwing me off balance nearly making me trip as I move down their line.

{Damage} = ^1.2%.

I try avoiding the bullets but it's nearly impossible as each black bandana has the aim of a veteran sniper. Arriving to the last soldier in this flank I see that he is the only one with his rifle not pointed at my head. Right before I cut through his chest he is able to get a single bullet out, which launches past me into the field over my shoulder. Slicing him down I turn my body to see Tyran shielding everything coming at him, everything except a single bullet.

"Tyran!" He drops to the ground releasing his shields as the bullet lodges in his skull.

Sprinting into the grass to check on him I'm hit with the next flank's bullets throwing my balance completely off.

!! RETURN TO MISSION !!

^Kill superiors.

I push through the increasingly strong urge to keep fighting so I can check on my friend.

!! RETURN TO MISSION !!

!! RETURN TO MISSION !!

{Damage} = ^2.1%.

Boom!

My feet are thrown out from underneath me as a small missile soaring from the city wall slams into my calves. Launching forward into the grass I have enough time to see a black box hidden under the dirt.

TIMELINE SIX

Boom!

My head is filled with a hundred mosquitos sending shivers through my entire body as the landmine launches me right back into the air. My vision flashes black and white forcing me temporarily blind.

{Damage} = ^3.1%

Still being knocked around by the thousands of bullets from every direction I slam hard into the ground flattening all the tall grass around me. I struggle to push myself to my knees as the artillery hitting me seems to be getting stronger. Without a plan to get away, the bullets peculiarly stop firing allowing me to get to my feet once again. The reason for the ceasing bullets becomes obvious as I'm kicked in the face by a red bandana's gravity defying boots.

I stumble back as I'm greeted by two-dozen more red bandanas, each one sprinting and jumping at me like some sort of circus act gone wrong. Far behind them comes stampeding four horse creatures at a towering eight to nine meters tall with razor sharp teeth and giant claws protruding from their hooves. I have my blades at the ready, but the reds move so quickly they can dodge nearly every swing I throw at them

//Slice.

//Slice.

//Slice.

With each swing and miss I'm kicked all around forcing me to my knees. The reds jump away as the horse monster throws its clawed hoof at me attempting to smash me into the ground. The horse foot comes down on top of me allowing my blade to pierce through the bottom and out the top of the hoof painting the ground with blood. With my arm stuck under the weight of the horse foot, the reds are free to kick me with their overpowered boots.

//Slice.

The reds back away from me as I throw my other bladed arm all around giving me time to slice out of the heel of the giant creature to free myself. Blood spews all over the ground as the monster cries out in pain. The horse collapses to its

knee while throwing its razor filled mouth toward me in an attempt to bite me in half.

With my blade ready I about stab through the horses face when a red bandana from behind kicks me into the mouth of the monster. Its teeth slam down on me over and over trying to bite through the metal skin.

{Damage} = ^4.6%.

!! RETREAT !!

I stab my blade through the roof of the mouth trying to get, out but its tongue quickly forces me off balance making me an easier pill to swallow. I run my blade down its esophagus while its tongue forces me further and further toward its gullet.

//Slice.

//Slice.

I cut and stab in all directions trying to free myself through the neck, but the thyroids force me down so fast that I am unable to create a full incision. I arrive at the stomach where I'm churned about in the rapidly moving acid in an attempt to digest me.

!! WARNING !! AIR VENTILATION INEFFICIENT !!

{Shoulder turret} = ^Activated.

//Fire.

Firing in all directions, including straight down, I attempt to wound the horse enough for it to drop dead so I can cut myself free. A stream of blood flows down the monster's throat to settle on the acid's surface.

!! WARNING !! AIR VENTILATION INEFFICIENT !!

Pressure builds in my head and begins weighing me down as though my skull were filled with concrete. Unable to concentrate, my vision sways back and forth in the dark abdomen of the beast.

!! WARNING !! FLUID FILTRATION SYSTEM FAILING !!

The sound of sloshing stomach acid quiets as my vision flickers like a light bulb about to burn out. I feel as though I'm still firing the turret but can't be sure. I can't hear it anymore. I can't hear anything!

TIMELINE SIX

GLIDER

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

0950

13 MINUTES EARLIER

“THEY’RE HERE!”

The traitor and destroyer are outside the wall!”

The blue bandana atop the wall yells down to us sending a quiet shiver of fear through the troops surrounding me. At ground level just inside the city gates stands the Anti-Pusillanimous with swords at the ready and the Scout Verdant flexing and massaging their massive muscles. Looking to me for reassurance I get on my glider and hover up to the top of the wall next to the missile launchers to get a better look. I grab the binoculars from one of the Cerulean to look into the field where I see the two of them crouched down trying to hide behind the grass.

“What are they doing, sir?” one of the blues whispers to me.

“They’re planning.”

“What do we do? They are about twenty or thirty meters away from our turret range.”

“Then we’ll get them to move.” I turn to the missile launch operator. “Fire a missile straight ahead! Turret gunners at the ready!”

Pschh!

I stare through the binoculars to see the traitor and destroyer separate from each other letting the missile crash in between them. The destroyer jumps to his feet spitting the blades from his forearms.

“They’re off! As soon as they enter the grass open fire!” Nearly the same time I say it the turret gunners unleash their fury into the field. I cringe as the obvious sounds of ricochets are heard bouncing off the destroyer assuring me he is taking little to no damage. I fly back to the ground where I ready my gloves for the destroyer’s entrance to the city. I told the troops he would die out on the field but

that is really just to slow him down. I know our bullets can't do the trick, but hopefully he'll take some damage on the way.

"Sir!" the communicator at my side speaks to me from outside the wall, "*The traitor just knocked down the left flank with some of that crazy energy you told us about!*"

I respond, "Keep firing! Let me know when the destroyer is pass the arsenal's line!"

I about yell out my planned motivational speech to the ground troops when the communicator yells out to me again, "*He's down! The traitor has been shot!*"

"What?" that easily? Flying back above the wall I see the traitor face down on the ground in the middle of the field. "What happened to him?" I ask the blue standing next to me.

"He just got shot and went down. Looked like a head shot."

Ha! 'Super powerful' my ass! The rumors may have been true, but we took him down pretty damn easily here. Looking to the other side of the field I see the destroyer sprinting across the tall grass to check on his partner.

Boom!

He hit it! He ran right into a landmine.

I grab my communicator and yell, "Second lines! Head out! Go! Go! Go!"

Before I can take my finger off the button the Red Rufescent and quadrupeds rush out into the field to greet him. The destroyer is barely to his feet when he is kicked and knocked around by the red's powerful boots. The traitor was no problem but I won't underestimate the destroyer. I fly out in front of the wall to look to the blue bandanas. "Men! The Arsenal and Rufescent have put a huge dent in the destroyer's path, but if he makes it to the wall you will be our best defense! Have all liquid metal loaded and ready to fire down below. If we can trap him here I'll finish him off! Be prepared!"

"Admiral!" one of the blues yells out pointing to the battlefield.

I turn just in time to see one of the horses swallowing the destroyer whole like he was just another oat. The arsenal members who are left have made themselves visible and are marching up toward the horse with their guns at the

TIMELINE SIX

ready. "You see that men! This final stand will end in victory! The humans don't stand a chance! Be ready if he escapes!" I know he'll escape. He should have no issue getting out of that stomach, but he can't get pass the city limits. I grab the communicator, "Reds pull back. Have all missiles and turrets ready for when he cuts himself free."

I soar down to the ground troops who have been overhearing our success and are feeling as though they will not be used at all. It's strange to want to go to battle, but the yellow and green bandanas, out of all the superiors, have been the most excited to go up against the destroyer. "Scout Verdant! Anti-Pusillanimous! You men are here as a final defense! I know you all want a piece of the destroyer, but if you don't get it that only means this was a sweet victory for the anti-species! He will not pass this wall! He will not get to our citizens! He will not take one more innocent life from us!"

Cheers erupt as my communicator speaks to me, *"Admiral! Something is happening out in the field!"*

I fly back to the top of the wall ripping the binoculars from the first blue bandana I see. Looking to the field I see the horse's legs buckling as bullets soar in all directions out of its midsection. "No worries men! We knew this would happen. It's just the destroyer trying-"

"Not that," he says pointing to the left where something glows blue right where the traitor had died. "Do you see it admiral? What could it be?"

He's not dead! "Aim all missiles and turrets at the traitor! Take him down now!" He's not that powerful. He's just a kid.

He cannot be a real threat.

TYRAN

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

1003

1 MINUTE EARLIER

“HELLO TYRAN,”

a light, ominous voice echoes out to me from all directions.

“Who’s there?” My body has returned to its original form as I float in the middle of a never-ending, light-blue expanse. With no ground below or sky above I feel my weightless body flipping around in the air giving me no indication of which direction I am facing.

“I’ve been watching you Tyran. You’ve done a good job keeping to your word and helping Sam with his mission, but it is more important now than ever that you stick with him.”

“Olena? Is that you?”

“Sam needs you now to complete his mission or he will fail.”

“What am I doing here? Am I dead? Did I die?”

“You are neither alive nor dead. You are with Olena and must decide your next move carefully as this will determine the rest of eternity for you.”

“What do you mean?”

“Do you choose to stay with me? Stay with no more pain, no worries, no remorse. Or do you go back to Earth and help Sam finish his mission? Help him eradicate the rest of the anti-species so the humans can prevail?”

I’ve never known if she approved of this battle or not, but now I can finally find out for sure. “Olena, is that what you want? Do you want the humans to prevail?”

“I do not want anything. I only monitor life on Earth and never intervene. The choice is up to you. Do you believe the anti-species deserve to fall to human rule?”

“I don’t know.” I’ve asked myself this question every day that I’ve been with Sam. “He tells me horror stories of what we do to the humans and I could never rest

TIMELINE SIX

easy if I could have done something to stop that destruction. Plus, I have seen how evil and disgusting the anti-species can be and I don't believe that is productive for the good of all life."

"But you are an anti-specie. Do you believe you should die too?"

"But I'm not evil like them. I'm just trying to avenge my family."

"So you believe you and your family alone should be the only anti-species left?"

My body slowly turns from weightless to aching heavy as the question fills my body with fear and disgust. "Once the humans find out what I did to help they will spare us."

"Will they?"

"Sam will help me! He wouldn't let the humans do anything to me and my family!"

"I believe you have your answer then."

To save my family, I need to keep Sam alive! "Olena, send me back!"

Without any reply from Olena, everything around me flashes from light-blue to a piercingly bright white followed by

black.

I have no sight and can hear nothing. Any sensation I would normally have in my body is completely absent as if I am just a mind floating in space. Did she not send me back?

As Olena always does she answers my question by giving me back my sight revealing that everything all around me is covered in a blue tint. Slowly fading into my vision I see the grass swaying back and forth above my head is not yellow like before, but a dark turquoise while the sky, which usually has a red or grey tint, now is completely blue. I attempt to use my hand to push myself up off the ground but it's hard to get my balance, as there is no sensation or feelings anywhere in my body. There is no cold or hot, no pressure of any sort. Everything is completely numb.

What am I doing here? Last I remember I was running with Sam. And then... I got shot! That's why I'm lying here! Expecting to feel a bullet hole as I bring my hand to my forehead I feel instead nothing. There is no skin and no wound to be felt. By

the way I feel I would think I was drifting into thin air, but my blue sight tells me otherwise. The tall grass blocks most of my view, but I can see the giant four-legged monsters stampeding through the swaying blades.

Pushing myself to my feet I unsuccessfully struggle to keep balance resulting with me falling face down to the ground. With an immeasurable amount of effort I am able to flip over on my back to look at my feet where I see that they have become nothing but the energy I had control of in my past life. Not just my feet, but everything. Looking to the ground I find my old voice box having been broken off my body.

I must still be dead but Olena has placed me here to witness what is about to happen. Strange memories of speaking with her are scattered in my mind giving me the feeling as though I'm supposed to be doing something. But what?

Hello? I try to speak, but hear nothing. I'm not sure if I can't speak or can't hear, but either way there is only silence. The warzone ahead of me stays as quiet as a sleeping bear even though clear stomping, yelling and shooting is going on all around me.

I try again to push myself back on my feet so I can get a good look around. It takes a while but I finally manage to regain my balance. The black and red bandanas are surrounding and watching a giant monster collapsing to its knees and spitting up blood. You will be with Olena soon you poor, suffering creature.

In my village we believed that if you wander the grounds after death it means there is something you have not completed. In order to move on you must complete your ultimate purpose. But how? If I can't touch anything I won't be able to do much. I see bullets spewing from the beast's midsection but still cannot hear a single shot being fired off. No screams or yelling either, only silence. My guess is Sam is inside there trying to get out.

Maybe he is my purpose. I've travelled so far with him, why wouldn't helping him be my final departure to Olena? Concentrating hard I attempt to stretch my arm like I used to in my past life and surprisingly with ease it stretches in length and width as if it were made of hard putty. Now that my legs are taken over by the energy they may do the same thing too. With the thought of trying to jump while

TIMELINE SIX

simultaneously keeping my feet on the ground I see the grass get shorter and shorter below me. Within seconds I'm as tall as the giant beast that holds Sam within it.

Crash!

Finally a noise! I hear an explosion that sounds as though it's coming from deep inside me. I'm unable to feel the sensation, but I watch as the world begins to tilt sideways giving me the only indication that my body is falling to the ground. Landing back in the grass I look to the city wall to see turrets shooting at me accompanied with the constant firing of small missiles. The sound of each bullet slamming into my body slowly becomes louder and louder as my full hearing returns.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

How can they see me? According to the book of Olena I'm supposed to be invisible and untouchable. This energy must've given me strange powers for the afterlife. That, or Olena is giving me the energy to fight back!

I try pushing myself back to my feet but it is nearly impossible with the heavy artillery hitting me mixed with the fact I have no sense of touch. I do have easy control of one thing though. As if trying to reach for something far away my giant arm stretch toward the wall and crashes into the top part launching several of the superiors to the ground. Throwing my arm left and right I easily clear the wall of all armed guards standing up top like they were little toy soldiers on a countertop.

I push myself to my knees then try to get my footing under control. Unfortunately, without feeling the sensation of my legs I can't even tell how long they are right now or even if one is the same size as the other. I feel as though I should be standing straight but I keep stumbling back down and losing my balance as if I were standing on pinpoint stilts.

Back on my knees again a group of, what I think are black bandanas but are just dark blue to me, run up and fire their machine guns at me. Getting pushed backwards by the exploding grenades hitting my chest I land flat on my back giving them the chance to surround me. I'm not sure if they are doing damage to my body or not, but I'm sure not in any pain.

I want to try something new. I concentrate hard trying to flex my back to stretch the energy from a part of my body that I've never been able to before. Looking to the side of my body I see a plane of energy spread across the ground cutting down the grass and forcing itself under each of the superior's feet. The ground they stand on is now no different from my body to which I have full control over. Closing my eyes the area around me becomes a darker blue yet still visible through my transparent eyelids like I'm looking into an aquarium. I tilt back and forth moving the plane of energy with me throwing the superiors high into the air and forcing them to slam back to the ground with deadly force.

All the firing at me has stopped so I attempt to bring my body back to its normal size, but again without any sensation and without being able to see my back I have no idea when to stop shrinking it. Hoping I look back to normal I get myself to my feet and prepare to get Sam from the monster's stomach. Just as I'm about run to him I'm lifted into the air by one of the giant beats that have snuck up behind me.

My upper body gets stuck in its mouth as I'm viciously shaken and thrown all around. Looking at the roof of the monster's mouth it unsuccessfully attempts to bite through my midsection and tare me in half. Like standing on my tiptoes and reaching for something high up in the air I stretch my torso deeper into the monster's throat forcing my head through the back of its skull. I realize now that in the afterlife I have much more strength with my power, enough even to break bones. Not just break bones, but completely shatter them! Using my hands I push myself from the new orifice of the horse's corpse to stand on its back with my body still stretched out like a giant statue. The retaliation continues to head toward me with their horses hesitating to gallop full speed as they see what I have just done to their friend.

Looking to my handless arm I concentrate as hard as I can as if I were pushing my fingers, that aren't there, into a point. Slowly I see the energy around my wrist round itself off then morph into a pointed spike. Reaching for the gnarling beast running toward me I stretch my arm with as much force as I can muster impaling the first one through the chest killing it instantly. With the beast stuck at

TIMELINE SIX

the end of my spear I throw my arm side-to-side knocking down all nearby monsters and superiors.

I pull the spiked arm from the monster's chest, which is covered in blue blood, and stab it through one of the other four-legged beast that's trying to push itself back onto its feet after being knocked down. With blood splattering every which way I continue to kill them hoping that by killing all the anti-species troops I will make my way to the afterlife with Olena.

I do this for you Olena!

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

1007

2 MINUTES EARLIER

WITH THE BEAST FINALLY DOWN

I cut myself from the gut ready to take down all surrounding superiors.

To my surprise there is no one around at all. Not a single bullet is firing at me.

!! WARNING !! SUPERIOR ANTI-SPECIES !!

What the hell is that thing?

Tyran?

{Threat} = ^95%.

!! RETREAT !!

I fight the urge to run while watching the fifteen-yearS kid burst through the skull of the beast that is biting down on him. His body has become nothing but the strange energy as though he has been completely taken over by it. I about sprint to help him as I see the galloping horses running toward him from the city wall, but he quickly spears the first one in the chest with a new perk I've never seen before.

{Threat} = ^Decreased.

//Continue Mission.

Tyran seems to have the field completely taken care of on his own. He has no need for me. With no one focused on me anymore I sprint to the wall where I see the blue bandanas up top trying to set back up their turrets and missile launchers.

Getting to the wall base I'm taken off guard when a giant tentacle creature emerges from the ground whipping around in an attempt to grab me. With my blade out I easily slice it in half, but as I do a second tentacle emerges next to the first and knocks me back to the ground. Returning to my feet I twist around and cut the other tentacle in half. My arm is thrown to the ground following my slice as it's being held down by the familiar hardening liquid metal shot down from the blue bandanas above.

TIMELINE SIX

Looking up I see a dozen blue bandanas all pointing their liquid metal guns at me.

//Sniper activated.

{Targets} = ^-12 degrees, ^-8.2 degrees, ^-6 degrees, ^-5 degrees, ^-2 degrees, ^-.4 degrees, ^1.2 degrees, ^2.2 degrees, ^4 degrees, ^7 degrees, ^8.1 degrees, ^9 degrees

//Fire.

Shooting so rapidly, sounding as though a single shot is fired, forces each one of the superiors above to retreat away from the bullets. I'm sure I hit at least one or two in the head, but somehow they are impervious to my bullets. The little sniper returns to somewhere behind my eye while I push and pull trying to get my arm free of the ground.

"The destroyer! He's at the base of the wall!" the voice echoes down to me from the other side of the wall.

Trying to eject and retract my blade I see the metal start to bend until finally it shatters off my arm allowing me to return to my feet and sprint down the length of the wall. While the troops are being scattered about in an unorganized fury I'm free to make it to an empty part of the wall where no one is watching me. As I am making my way tentacles burst from the ground in front and behind me trying to grab hold of my arms and legs giving me more practice with my blades. With one getting a lucky reach and grabbing tight onto my leg I trip and miss the next tentacle I was aiming for allowing that one to grab around my torso. A third tentacle coming from the ground holds my arms keeping me from slicing through the other two. With a quick yank I rip the tentacle from the ground where it still holds tight to my wrists. Number three flops all around me as I rip my hands free and cut through the torso holding tentacle immediately followed by the leg holder.

Free of the sticky octopus legs I quickly stab my blades into the wall and make my way toward the top where no one seems to be able to see me coming yet. One stab into the wall after another I make my way to the top toward the horribly annoying blue bandanas. Forcing myself over the barricade I bring all the attention back over to me.

GLIDER

"South side of the wall!"

//Low-Range Missile Activated.

As if an alien were ripping from my body my torso opens up shooting off a small missile toward the blue bandanas running at me. With them unable to get out of the way fast enough the missile blows apart a chunk of the wall while launching the superiors in all directions.

!! WARNING !! TARGET INCOMING !!

//Jump.

Out of my control my legs launch me into the air above the man who travels on the flying machine with his arms just out of reach to grab me.

He just doesn't learn.

{Target} = ^Neutralize.

I ready my blades to stab him as he flies straight down the city side of the wall toward the ground.

//Follow.

Jumping and falling for a few seconds I slam into the ground sending a tremor through the nearby street forcing all attention that wasn't on me in my direction.

!! WARNING !! SUPERIOR ANTI-SPECIES !!

A giant herd of yellow and green bandana superiors stand right in front of me as though they've been waiting for my arrival. The yellows swing their swords all about while the greens flex their metal spines ready to come grab me.

{Threat} = ^65%.

//Sprint.

The first yellow bandana with his multiple arms tries swinging his sword at my face, but with ease I duck while slicing halfway through his midsection bringing him to the ground. A green bandana attempts to grab me before I've stood up straight, but again I easily push myself away from him while cutting his hand entirely off. It quickly heals over as he runs after me with his good arm. I shove my blade through the chin of a six-armed freak behind me before spinning around and cutting off the head of the one-handed green bandana.

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{Target} = ^Neutralize.

With a lake of blood already covering the ground I continue through the group of superiors cutting and slicing off body parts trying to get closer to the flying man. Months of fighting and practice have made fighting these once powerful superiors somewhat of a breeze for me.

My cockiness is quickly diminished as an arm from behind grabs my shoulder. I turn to cut it off but my other arm is halted by another green bandana stopping my swing. Just as I about pull myself free two swords swing up both hitting me in the face.

{Damage} = ^5.9% .

The swarm of mosquitos fills my head as I stumble back being grabbed once again by two more green bandanas. I struggle to break free of their grasps but their metal spines have given them such intense strength I'm unable to get any leeway. One after another I'm grabbed and held down by the green superiors as the yellows continue swinging their electric swords at me.

{Damage} = ^6.1% .

The flying man hovers above the crowd watching with a smile on his face.

{Target} = ^Neutralize.

//Sniper Activated.

From behind my eye the little sniper gun ejects putting the crosshairs that now cover my vision right between his eyes. Time to take that stupid smile off your face.

//Fire.

The bullet doesn't proceed on its designated path as the hand of a green bandana is put over the sniper barrel blowing off three of his fingers.

!! WARNING !! SNIPER IN DNAGER !!

//Sniper retract.

With the green about to break the gun off my head with what little hand he has left it's saved by returning back somewhere inside my skull. Again I try to pull myself free but more of them are grabbing hold and keeping me from moving.

The flying man watches from above as I lose hope of escaping.

GLIDER

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

1012

2 MINUTES EARLIER

“THE DESTROYER! HE’S AT THE BASE OF THE WALL!”

the voice rings out over the communicator as I jump on my glider and fly to the top to get a better look.

Looking to the field I see what appears to be some sort of god-like creature standing nearly twelve meters tall ripping apart all the quadrupeds around him as if they’re made of paper. The Arsenal and Fleet Rufescent are completely extinguished having been flattened into the grass by the monster’s massive stomps. Even if they weren’t dead there is nothing they could do to stop him. The traitor’s powers have turned him into an invincible monster that is only matched by Mother Nature herself. If Marie is right he should be dead soon... hopefully.

“He’s making his way to the other end of the wall!”

Having a hard time getting any focus back on the destroyer I look over the edge of the wall to see him cutting his way through our tentacles. I knew they wouldn’t be much of a problem for him, but just as we planned, it is slowing him down. Cutting himself free of the tentacles he begins his ascension up the wall. There is nothing I can do to stop the traitor, but I can stop the destroyer’s rampage here and now.

Here we go. My gloves are ready, blades on my glider have been ejected and the electric spider is armed and ready to attack. I do this for Gayle and Mr. Majiah. For Rebecca and Elijah. I do this for every single anti-specie who has died in the destroyer’s path. I do this so we can kill every damn human on the face of the planet! My hands shake but not just from the immense energy coursing through them but because this will be the third time I’ve come in contact with him having the first two encounters ending drastically. With the first encounter ending in a nearly fatal stab

TIMELINE SIX

wound in my gut and the second having to watch myself die has made me fearful of how this could end. I shake my head throwing the rivers of sweat off my forehead while taking deep breaths in and out trying to get my heart rate in a normal rhythm.

Breath in...

Breathe out...

Okay.

Pushing my toes forward the boosters kick in launching me forward toward him as he gets to the top of the wall. With my arms out I reach for him but he is too quick and as usual, he jumps over me forcing me to fly underneath him. Expecting this, I flip around to face him while he stands on the wall with his blades out. He's gotten me with that serrated edge before and I do not plan on going through that again.

I fly down the wall's edge with him luckily taking the bait and jumping down after me. As planned, the Scout Verdant and Anti-Pusillanimous all stand ready in their designated spots. "Grab him!" I yell to them, "Grab the destroyer!"

Flying over the retaliation I look back to see that the destroyer doesn't even seem phased as he stabs and cuts his way through the crowd. He is able to take down the superiors much easier than the last time he encountered them months ago. I put the communicator to my mouth and order, "Rooftop turrets stay ready. As soon as you have a clean shot away from the superiors, take it!"

One after another the turret gunners along all the rooftops on Main Street aim the barrels of the turrets down to the ground in the middle of the retaliation where the destroyer is starting to slow down. Being grabbed and held back by the Verdant the destroyer, surprisingly, appears to be losing the battle. I hover above the group seeing two swords swing in and hit the destroyer in the face knocking him back. I can't help but smile as I watch him suffer.

I need to go in for the kill but can't risk it unless they have him completely subdued. "Do you have him?" I yell down to them.

One struggling to hold him tight hollers back, "Do it now!"

This is it. It's finally about to be over!

"I..."

Crash!

An eardrum-bursting explosion erupts behind me forcing me to duck down on my glider in fear for what may happen next. Bricks and stones are thrown all over the city crushing several of the superiors while forcing me to dodge even more careening toward me. The wall protecting the city bursts into a million pieces with the monster standing with a look of pride on the other side. Giant pieces of wall smash many of the superiors allowing the destroyer to break free of their grasps, while the traitor stands nearly twenty meters tall looking down on us as if we're ants running around an anthill that he just destroyed. He'll definitely want me dead, but if I die here there won't be anyone to stop the destroyer.

He'll fade away soon. I need to hide until he does.

Before he can see me through the dust and debris of the destroyed wall I soar through the street to hide behind the local grocer wall. Where is Marie? I need to know how long this guy is going to stick around because if he destroys the entire town along with the shore defenses then killing the destroyer won't matter at all.

Screams of fear and pain echo down the street from the retaliation as the ground violently vibrates from the traitor's heavy footsteps. Dismembered arms and heads are thrown down the street one by one landing all around me.

Crash!

The dust from the destroyed wall having just started to settle is doubled as the six-story city bank begins to crumble to the ground next to the grocer with the traitor slamming his body into it with the force of a falling mountain. Moving quickly, I fly away as the grocery store collapses under the weight of what used to be the west's largest banking system. Attempting to stay out of site I avoid the falling debris while sticking to the camouflage of the dust clouds filling the streets. Covering my mouth with my shirt I can't help but cough and gag from the smoke filling my lungs. The crashing rubble muffles the sound of my suffocation but it is nothing compared to the endless screams coming from the community center holding all our women and children inside.

I whip around the convenience store corner to come face-to-face with the silhouette of the destroyer staring me down through the thick cloud of smoke. His

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blades bounce the light from the burning buildings to my eyes while he stays perfectly still. Another building crashes to the ground in the distance as the traitor continues his rampage through the city. This is it. This is my last chance to take down the destroyer. It's just him and I. If I fail here he will surely succeed.

I don't know what forces the urge to speak to him but I yell out, "Why are you doing this?"

He replies by walking toward me slicing his blades back and forth in the air ahead of him. After ejecting the blades from my glider I unleash every missile in my arsenal.

Whizz!

Boom! Boom!

They explode off his body one after another tripping him up but it doesn't stop him. I engage my turret and use up every single last bullet I have while using my front boosters to slowly move backwards from him.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The bullets ricocheting off him nearly hit me as I'm backed up against a brick wall. Arriving right in front of me he grabs onto the blades protruding from my glider completely overpowering my thruster's potential to flee. I attempt to use my rear thrusters to push him forward but he plants his feet firmly to the ground keeping me from moving at all. With my gloves still powered up I reach for him but he releases the glider blades just in time to grab my wrists while intelligently keeping his hands away from the hertz output. Ripping me from the glider's footholds he slams me hard to the ground ripping my hands straight from the gloves.

Crack!

"Ahh!" I can't help but let out a scream as every pain I've ever felt is condensed into a single moment. Glass shards and razor blades run up my spine into the base of my skull turning my vision to a black and white jumble of stars. The volt of pain spews from my tailbone as many of my vertebrae are separated from one another cutting off any feeling to my legs. With my vision fading in and out I'm barely able to watch him slam my masterpiece of technology to the ground denting

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it, then lifting it again and smashing it into a dozen pieces. Over and over he smashes my glider until it is a useless pile of metal lying on the ground in front of me.

He looks to me and says the first words I've ever heard him say, "Where's the hand?"

I can truly say, I never thought that is what I would hear from the mouth of the destroyer. Is this why he's here? For a hand? "What are you talking about?" I force the words around my moans of pain.

"The hand!"

I don't know what to say. I'm speechless. All I know is if this has all been about some hand, he sure as hell won't get it.

TIMELINE SIX

SAM

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

1018

2 MINUTES EARLIER

CRASH!

The wall explodes in a cloud of dust sending rocks careening down on to the superiors all around me. I'm hit as well, but unlike the superiors attempting to hold me, I am able to stand through it. With the superiors smashed or distracted I am released from their holds.

{Mission} = ^Destroy Shore Defenses.

{Target} = ^Flying man.

//Return to Mission.

The retaliation attempts to get away from the collapsing wall, but more than that, to get away from Tyran who stands towering above us all. Standing well above the tallest building in the city he steps through the giant hole he created entering the city limits. A thick cloud of dust fills the street clouding my vision.

//Heat Vision Activated.

Looking down the street I see all the retaliation and other citizens of the city sprinting away while Tyran disappears completely from my new vision.

//Electro-Magnetic Vision Activated.

Activating the new sight Tyran becomes a glowing being through the cloud of dust. "Tyran!" I yell out to him.

His voice booms down with the rumble of an earthquake. "Sam? Are you okay? Where are you?"

"I'm here! What happened to you?"

"I'm going with Olena now! But I must finish the mission first. We need to avenge my family and save your race!"

"You're not dead Tyran! This power has just taken over your entire body!"

//Return to Mission.

"I am dead Sam. I got shot right in the head and spoke to Olena herself! She sent me back to Earth to help you finish your mission. There is no other explanation to why I am here."

"There is a scientific reason for all of this!" I try to convince him of the truth even though I know it is useless.

//Return to Mission.

"I can feel it! My spirit is about to leave this realm and go on with Olena!"

The bottom of Tyran's feet have begun to sink into the ground as if his body is losing solidity. "Tyran! You're fading away! Look!"

"I know I am! That is her plan!"

He's gone crazy!

What do I do?

//Critical Thinking Activated.

His body has been completely over taken by the energy, which before would fade away as soon as he let it go from his skin. The energy must have fed off the organic material of his body to keep the electricity from dissipating. Without the organic material there is nothing for it to feed off of. The only way to keep him alive is with his own organic material. But there is nothing left of him. His heart, lungs and even his brain have become nearly transparent from the energy.

He's just a kid. After how far we've come I need to help him. There must be...

//Memory recalled.

His hand! They may still have the hand they cut from him months ago. If they do still have it, there is one person I know of who will know its whereabouts.

{Target} = ^Flying man.

Tyran kicks down a large building next to me, which sends more material and debris covering the city. Still using the electro-magnetic vision I pick up on the fuel waste being thrown off of the flying man's glider as he speeds down the next street over. I race around the building to cut him off.

{Target} = ^Neutralize.

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Holding the building's edge I watch as he wraps around the corner coming to a speeding halt. Standing terrified and motionless on his flying machine a few meters ahead of me he yells out, "Why are you doing this?"

Ignoring his question I approach him.

//Default Vision Activated.

!! WARNING !! MISSILES INCOMING !!

With not enough time to get out of the way the missiles explode off my body throwing me slightly off balance.

{Damage} = ^6.4%.

Following the missiles comes a barrage of bullets that bounce off my outer shell without leaving a mark on me. Arriving at his flying machine he attempts to soar away, but I quickly grab the long blades protruding out and hold him still. Pinning him up against the wall he reaches for me again wearing his humming gloves, but per usual, he is far too slow. Grabbing onto his wrists I pull him off the flying machine and onto his back where I hear the bones crack in his tailbone forcing him to wiggle on the ground like a suffocating fish.

"Where is the hand?" I calmly ask him.

"What are you talking about?" his whining voice replies as he attempts to hold his composure.

"The hand!" I threaten him by pulling my blade out above his head.

He nearly cries while yelling back, "I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Tyran! You cut off his hand! Where is it?"

"The traitor? There is not a chance I would help him! He's going to fade away then it will just be you left. But the retaliation won't let you live either! You are both going to die here!"

"The retaliation is already dead! There is no one left. Now where is the hand?"

"You'll just have to kill me."

//Assessing Target Damage...

{Possibility for Walking} = ^2%.

{Target} = ^Neutralize.

I fight the internal urge to shove my blade through his throat. "I'm going to find that hand then save my friend. After that, I'll let him have you." I step over him in search for Tyran's hand. "Don't go anywhere."

{Target} = ^Neutralize.

{Target} = ^Neutralize.

My legs are stiffening up as I fight the suit's demands to kill with every step. He is not mine to kill. Tyran will finish him off.

//Irrelevant.

He's just a kid. I won't let him die. Now let me do this!

I need to find their science lab, as that will for sure be where they have kept the hand for examining. I make my way through the streets stepping over building rubble and burning debris trying to find my way around. The sound of screams echo down the alleyways mixed with buildings being smashed by the giant Tyran in the distance. I hope I have enough time.

!! WARNING !! UNKNOWN THREAT !!

With my blades out I turn around to immediately be knocked to the ground by a giant tusk slamming into my rib cage. Regaining my focus I see a fat, hairy creature with tusks ten meters long and legs no shorter than myself. The monster's snout sticks far out in front of its face with razor sharp teeth sticking out down below. Behind the creature are a dozen more identical beasts rampaging through the city. Two more come up from behind blowing smoke from their nostrils as if a steam engine roars in their stomachs.

Not wasting anymore time I jump in the air doing a backflip landing on the nape of one of the beasts behind me. While I stab through the back of its skull covering me in blood it lets out a squeal that would break glass. In a panic it sprints forward into a tall building ahead of us tearing it to the ground, which forces me to leap off to avoid the falling rocks.

I ready my blades for an attack when a new monster shows up from behind to help in the battle. This beast, however, is much slimmer and just as tall with a nose that sticks far out ahead and teeth nearly the size of my body. Surprisingly, it betrays its supposed comrades and bites into the side of the fat, tusked beast. With

TIMELINE SIX

another glass-cracking squeal, the fat monster hits the ground throwing its tusks left and right trying to free himself from the wolf-like creature's jaws.

Not distracted in the slightest by his brother being torn apart, the other fat beast charges me. Ducking, I sprint between the legs of the monster and spread my arms slicing through all four calves bringing it face first into the dirt. It struggles to stand up, but with each attempt it collapses over in pain. With a jump in the air I land hard on its throat with my blade slicing through its jugular turning the dusty street into a river of blood.

!! WARNING !! BEAST APPROACHING !!

The alert comes too late as the razor sharp teeth of the carnivorous monster picks me up by my legs and bites down on my torso leaving my feet to kick around on its tongue. Having had his fill of hog meat, the wolf-monster throws his head back and forth in an attempt to shake me to death while continuing to tighten its bite.

{Damage} = ^7.2.

!! REATREAT !!

Pushing and pulling on the mouth of the creature I'm unable free myself.

//Sniper Activated.

{Target} = ^1.2 degrees, ^2.4 degrees.

Afraid the skull may be too thick for my tiny sniper I aim for both its eyes.

//Fire.

The bullets explode out of the little gun sticking from my head spewing blinding eye juice all over the forehead of the beast. Howling in pain, I'm dropped from its jaws allowing me to get my footing on the blood-drenched ground below. Jumping up I stab through the monster's sternum penetrating the heart sending the monster into a rampaging tantrum. After a half minute of squirming on the ground in pain it becomes still and silent.

With a brief moment of peace I shake my arm back and forth to toss off as much blood as I can before reentering the blade into my arm. Peering through the smoky street I catch glimpse of a sign that reads:

"Glairefield Biotech Facility"

That must be where the hand is kept.

"Rrrrrrrrrrrr" growls another wolf-beast behind me. Turning I see not one but four of the monsters staring me down ready to pounce.

!! RETREAT !!

Not waiting around to fight, I sprint toward the facility with the monsters stampeding full speed on my tail. I take a left down a narrow alley where two of them try to enter at the same time forcing them to be wedged together while a third attempts to crawl over the two of them. With each of them too high strung and stubborn for the kill, they keep each other from getting through the alleyway entrance to me. Leaving them there to fight it out I exit the other end of the alley bringing me right in front of the biotech facility front door.

Dim blue lights flicker on and off barely illuminating the small windowless lobby as I enter. The abandoned receptionists area sits between two hallways with no signs noting where they lead.

Ah-choo!

A sneeze!

Sprinting down the right hallway where the sound came from I find a locked closet door that I easily rip from the hinges. Three scientists are huddled together on the ground in fear watching me toss the broken door to the ground. I grab the one nearest me and lift her to her feet.

"Let her go!" one of the men yells jumping up to face me.

"Where's the hand?" I ask her.

Tears pour from her eyes as she replies, "I don't know what you want!"

"The hand! Where is the hand that the flying man took from the kid?"

Her voice shakes, "W-w-what?"

I don't have time for this. "Point me in the direction of the hand and I won't kill you!"

A man, still in the fetal position, points down the hallway. "There! The hand is down there! Just don't kill us!"

Throwing the woman back into the closet I sprint down the hallway kicking each door open to locate the room where the hand would be kept.

//Bathroom.

TIMELINE SIX

//Utility Closet.

//Office.

//Genetics Division.

This has got to be it.

Entering the long, hallway-shaped room it appears that a pack of rats have been working here, as papers are thrown all about with empty vials and jars covering the ground. Genetic blueprints for the beasts I fought outside are posted up on the walls with CW written over them in paint. At the end of the hall I see a hand in a glass case matching both Tyran's old skin tone and finger length.

Grabbing the case I about break it open when a voice yells out interrupting me, "Hey! Destroyer!"

{Target} = ^Emilio Kent.

//Neutralize.

With my blade out I march toward him.

"You'll never win. Humans will fail and the anti-species will-"

Not caring what he says I slice through his throat to the back of his neck forcing his head to roll on the ground by my feet. I retract the blade back into my arm so I can get back to work and save Tyran. Hopefully I'm not too late.

Grabbing the glass case I smash it to the ground and pick up the hand.

!! WARNING !! THREAT DETECTED !!

//Blades en-

!! NERVES DISCONNECTED !!

The mosquitos and razor blades return full force in my head, as my vision goes completely black.

What the hell is going -

//Analytic reasoning failed.

//Spatial recognition failed.

//Image recognition failed.

//Reaction failed.

//Consciousness fai-

TYRAN

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

1020

10 MINUTES EARLIER

“I’M GOING TO BE WITH OLENA VERY SOON!”

My blue vision has started to become whiter and piercingly bright as I look down on the retaliation running from me through the thick dust cloud below.

Sam has sprinted off down the street away from me for some reason. He just doesn’t know about the power of Olena and where I’m going. He must be terrified to see that he is wrong about the afterlife.

But am I completely right? My mission here doesn’t feel complete.

Looking to the ground a group of terrifying, fat beasts have shown up to gnarl at my feet. One lunges at me to take me down, but a small kick into its ribs knocking it into a nearby building stops that. Unfortunately, having trouble with my transitional body’s balance I fall to my back allowing the monsters to jump atop me in an attempt to tare me to shreds. Looking to where they stand on my chest I notice their hooves are sticking through me a solid meter as I’m fading more and more away.

Was this Olena’s plan? Is this how she really intended me to leave Earth? With giant beats standing on top of me trying to kill something that is already dead?

Throwing my arm up to swipe them away my hand nearly goes through a beast a full meter and a half before the pressure is able to knock it to the ground. I jolt my body into the air trying to shake the other monsters off of me, but they merely lose their balance then return to unsuccessfully trying to bite through my fading exterior.

This is not how I can finish off my time on Earth! This is not what I want seared in my mind to remember for eternity!

TIMELINE SIX

“Get off of me!” I yell. The roar of my voice sends the monsters leaping off my chest and sprinting down the street in fear. My voice has become much lower and projects with the force of an earthquake like a true monster.

This doesn’t seem very ‘Olena-like.’ Really nothing about this does. If my soul is here I shouldn’t be seen or heard at all. I’m supposed to be one with all animals in the afterlife, but these beasts are trying to kill me.

Maybe I’m being punished. Olena isn’t bringing me to her at all! She is sending me to the dark zone for all the crimes I’ve committed! What have I done?

I need to find Sam! He’ll know what to do!

Pushing myself onto my feet I struggle to regain my balance as one foot is sinking into the ground more than the other and I’m still not sure if they are even the same size. I waddle my way through the city street collapsing and pushing myself back up with nearly every step. My vision is continually getting brighter forcing objects to blending together, but there is one figure I see clear as day being carried down the street.

The flying man. Even though he is entirely blue in my eyes and he doesn’t have his flying machine with him, I recognize him perfectly.

That must be it! I’ve let the flying man live too long and Olena knows he will hurt again. That is why I’m being punished. I need to kill him to make this right!

My entire foot is sunk into the road below forcing me to walk on my ankles as I continue to sink deeper and deeper into the ground. Losing my balance I fall forward on my face smashing a small, shack-like home to bits. Pushing myself back up I see the flying man enter a building a few streets down being carried by some other guy. I need to hurry! I stumble forward and collapse once again with my hand disappearing completely into the ground. By the time I get back to my ankles another wild beast sprints out of an alleyway tackling me to the ground.

“Not now!”

These are different beasts and aren’t as phased by my booming demand as the fat ones were. I flip around and throw my hand as hard as I can at the beast, but my hand goes completely through it and only makes the monster stumble a bit as if it were being hit by a strong gust of wind. Looking down I can see my elbow isn’t as

faded as the rest so I stretch my arm as much as possible until the beast is hit with the solid part of my joint. It is knocked to the ground, but I continue to stretch my arm pushing it along the dirt until it is impaled into the nearby building.

As I get myself back onto my knees one of the other monsters leaps at my arm, but simply goes through it to land behind me confused of what just happened. The last beast attempts to take me down by jumping on my chest, but I willingly fall forward onto it crushing it with the weight of my still solid midsection.

Being only a few hundred meters away from the building that the flying man entered I push myself up and continue to stumble toward it. Just like when I was drunk in Roria I slam back and forth on the nearby buildings lining the street trying to get my footing under control. Becoming lightheaded, I trip and fall into the building the flying man is in completely tearing down part of the wall and a good chunk of the ceiling sending rocks and debris flying in all directions. I push myself back up trying to balance on my knees as the rest of my legs are fading away underground. Inside the building lies Sam unconscious on the ground right next to the flying man who grips Sam's leg. This is the last thing I can see inside the building before their bodies blend together with my vision completely taken over by the blue light leaving only contrasting dark and bright blues visible.

Knowing I'm about to move on I say what I've wanted to say for a long time, "I've been chasing you for a long time flying man! My name is Tyran and you killed my family. They were a peaceful people yet you still felt it necessary for them to die. They wanted nothing more than to make the world a better place and did everything in their power to make sure it was, but you stopped that. The retaliation came in long ago and tried to stop us but failed and so did you. Olena is with La Palomar and will always watch out for us. Therefore, you will never succeed in your mission to wipe us out and any other attempt to do so will be pointless. You have once and for all proved that the anti-specie race is an evil burden on this land and the humans deserve the world. He is yours now Olena!"

I stretch my arm forward to smash him, but I hear no scream in pain. My hearing has faded a great deal but I should still be able to hear him die. I throw my

TIMELINE SIX

other arm into him but again, nothing. I've faded away too much! I can't hurt him! I punch over and over again trying to squash him but I don't hear him die.

He must die!

GLIDER

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

1023

6 MINUTES EARLIER

IT'S OVER.

I'm done. With my glider and back both broken there is nothing left to do but lie here and wait to die.

The screaming across town reminds me of the day the humans arrived in Kresa, the day I found my family dead under my collapsed home. I hope they are safe. I hope they take my warnings seriously for when the humans do show up. They're with Gayle. I'm sure she will take care of them.

"What are you doing?" a voice whispers out to me.

I lie flat on my back unable to look at him. "Mr. Kent? Is that you?"

"You need to get up Brady! We've almost got him!"

He must be delirious. "What are you still doing here? I didn't even know you had made it to Glairefield with us."

"Of course I did. You've just been so busy with the retaliation we haven't been able to talk. What are you doing lying on the ground?"

"The destroyer broke my back. I can't move."

"Here, let me help you."

He reaches for me but I throw my hand up to stop him, which sends an electric shock through my entire body. "Owe! No! Don't. Just leave me here. It's all over. The destroyer will do what he does best and destroy the town then in a few months the humans will be here to take everything over."

"What are you talking about? It's not done yet. We need to fight!"

"He destroyed my glider! There is no weapon to stop him now."

Digging in the pile of rubble Mr. Kent finds the gloves. "They still look like they're in one piece. Why can't we use them?"

TIMELINE SIX

"You don't understand. The glider was the power source and now it's destroyed! There is nothing to send energy through the gloves now."

He hands me the hertz output box that was connected to the underside of the glider along with the two gloves. "Why can't we find a new power source? All of this seems to be just fine."

I can't help but to sigh at his unintelligible remark. "Even if we find a new power source it would have to be mobile to be able to catch the destroyer. It's not like we can get him in a single spot at one time."

"That's all we have to do? Get him in one spot? We can do that."

The thought of the traitor's hand comes to mind. "The button at the front of the glider. Press that."

Mr. Kent clicks the button releasing the electric spider, which starts crawling around on the ground in search for an electric meal to eat. Mr. Kent jumps back in fear. "What the hell is that?"

I put out my arm and allow the spider to crawl into my hand and shut itself down having touched organic material. "This is what truly shuts down the destroyer."

"Wait? Then why in the hell do we need the gloves?"

"Help me up." While biting my tongue in an attempt to hold back my screams, Mr. Kent grabs me and helps me to my feet. Trying to get my footing I realize I am completely paralyzed from the waste down. "The gloves were made to weaken the bonds of the outer metal, ugh, shell of the destroyer," I say trying to keep my moans of pain at a minimum, "Once weakened, err, the spider will be able to crawl in with ease and get to the main computer and destroy him from the inside."

Mr. Kent carries me forward down the street. "Where are we going?" he asks.

"To the biotech facility. That's where we'll find the destroyer."

With two blocks to go, Mr. Kent struggles to hold my gloves and hertz output box all while dragging me beside him. I bite down on my shirt to keep from screaming with each step he takes.

"Brady, look." Mr. Kent points to our far left where the giant hogs from the genetic division are fighting with the destroyer. They kick and toss him around as if he's a rag doll. "We're going to beat him there!" he exclaims.

Rushing inside the building we find three of the genetic engineers standing huddled together by the reception area. "What's going on?" one asks, "What's happening out there?"

Hanging over Mr. Kent I yell out, "What are you all still doing here? Ah, the destroyer is going to be here soon! You all need to hide, now!"

Mr. Kent holds onto me while leading the engineers to a janitor's closet. "Stay in there," he tells them, "no matter what you hear."

"What are you going to do?" another asks.

"Lock the door and stay quiet," I tell them, "We're going to put an end to this!"

They step inside and wedge the door shut as Mr. Kent and I continue down the hallway. We arrive to the hand room where everyone has left in a panic spewing papers and equipment all over the lab. Mr. Kent lies me down on the ground next to the hand's studying table and drops the gloves next to me. "What do I need to do?" he asks.

I open up the hertz output box and begin stripping the wires attached to the power source input. "Go over to the fuse box on the wall and find the power output for the data computer. Pull out the wires and strip off the plastic ends." He does what I tell him and runs over to the box to throw open the cover. "Be sure to shut it off first!" I remind him.

He flips the switch off and rips the plastic coverings off the copper innards then stretches the wires from the fuse box to me. "Okay. Now what?"

I hand him the hertz output box. "Use these wires sticking out and twist them together."

"Where's the hand!" the destroyer's voice rings out down the hallway.

He's here. "Quick!" I whisper to Mr. Kent. "Get the power back on!"

I slip the gloves on as the hertz output box begins a light hum.

"There! The hand is down there! Just don't kill us!"

Mr. Kent bends down to me. "He's going to see you as soon as he walks in."

TIMELINE SIX

"Push me under the table. This is the only chance we've got."

I bite my bottom lip as Mr. Kent pushes my weak body under the table, barely out of site from the front door.

"Okay. Now get out of here," I tell him.

"No. If this is our only chance, I'm going to help."

"You've done enough. He's going to be here any second!"

"Listen Brady. I've done a lot in my life, but never anything heroic. You're the true hero. I'm just a coward who sends others to do the heroic acts for me then I take all the credit. Thanks to you my wife and son are safe in the community center along with hundreds of others that are safe because of you. It's about time that I do my duty and return the favor to our race."

Mr. Kent runs to the other side of the room and hides behind a bookshelf. "Emilio! Emilio!" I loudly whisper but he gives no response.

I cover my mouth to not let him hear me breathe as the destroyer kicks open the door. He walks toward me scanning the room for the hand sending little jolts of pain through my back with each step he takes. The destroyer takes his time looking at all the papers on the walls examining the research we've done. He's probably relaying it all to memory to bring back to the humans. For all I know he may have already seen me and is just toying with me now. He continues his walk toward me while acting as though he doesn't know I'm here. He is too smart and too high tech. He must know I'm down here.

The destroyer is only a few meters away when Mr. Kent speaks up from behind the bookshelf, "Hey! Destroyer!"

Mr. Kent! No! You don't have to do this!

Mr. Kent sidesteps over to the table that I hide under keeping the destroyer's attention toward him and away from me. He arrives to the edge of the table where the destroyer's face is out of sight from me meaning I am out of sight to him. "You'll never win," he continues, "The humans will fail and the anti-species will-"

First blood splashes down in front of me followed by the rolling of Mr. Kent's head on the floor. I've seen a lot of pain in my life but can't help but look away after locking eyes with Mr. Kent's rolling head.

Why didn't he get out of here when he still could?

With the destroyer's foot right in front of me I reach out as quickly as I can and grab his ankle. Unable to hold it back any longer I let out an ear-piercing scream of pain as the destroyer jolts like he is about to attack me. His blade comes out, but his body seizes up and stops moving entirely. Slowly, he tips forward then bounces off the table crashing face first to the ground with his joints frozen solid and the traitor's dismembered hand dropping on the floor next to him. I keep the energy flowing through him as I use my other hand to grab the electric spider from my pocket. Being attracted to the inner workings of the destroyer's body the spider crawls along the floor toward him.

It's finally going to be over! It's finally-

Crash!

The roof and wall come crumbling down around me luckily with the table blocking much of the debris from hitting me. Outside the wall is the towering, stumbling traitor who is now almost completely transparent. I keep ahold of the destroyer's leg while watching the electric spider tapping around on his foot to find the softest spot to enter. As if he were blowing an extremely low-pitched horn, the traitor begins his attempt to speak to me, but everything he says is muffled and completely incomprehensible.

The room shakes with the boom of the traitor's roar as his mouth fades entirely into his face. After a few seconds of failing to communicate he lifts his arm ready to come down on me with a force strong enough to tare down an entire building. Looking back to the electric spider I watch as it successfully crawls through the destroyer's foot and disappears into his leg.

That's it. It's over. I've won.

I can die now.

The arm comes down, but instead of smashing me it goes through me and into the ground as if I were hit by a fierce blowing wind. With his other hand he attempts to smash me but again does no more damage than a strong fan.

He can't hurt me. He's dying too!

TIMELINE SIX

It hurts my back so much but I can't help but laugh. He's going to fade away and the destroyer will die! I'm going to be able to see my family again!

The traitor shrinks down to normal human size but his arms and legs are all different lengths from each other causing him to stumble and fall through the broken down wall of the building. Watching him sink deeper in the ground and moving as if travelling through jelly forces an intense pain in my back as I continue to laugh.

It's not until I see where he is headed that I find myself able to stop laughing. At first it looked like he was making his way to the destroyer, but now I see he is headed toward his dismembered hand. Will it really work? Will the holding cells in the hand keep him alive without the hand even attached to him?

I can't risk it.

Using every bit of strength I have left I pull myself along the frozen destroyer making my way to the hand on the ground while the traitor struggles to make his way through the ground. His face is nearly gone by the time he makes his way through the destroyer's dead body.

With each reach I take I hear the bones chip apart more and more through my back sending unbearable pain through my entire body, but I can't stop. With us both almost touching the hand I make one quick grab bringing it to my body. Before he can touch it, I face away from him and wrap it securely in my arms.

It's over! He won't live!

Crack!

The ground vibrates around me accompanied by a searing pain in my chest. Looking down I see the traitor's handless arm touching the hand wrapped in my grasp. The handless arm is now fully lit and visible back to its bright electric power like before. My organs and the skin on my chest are wrapped around the traitor's thick arm with blood oozing out all around it. He has stuck his arm completely through my body and touched the hand solidifying his body while ripping my insides apart.

GLIDER

I was going to live. I was going to see my family, but now my blood pools around my body forcing everything inside me cold as ice. Shaking, I look up to see the lifeless destroyer still lying on the ground next to me.

He's dead. At least there is that. The rest is up to the anti-species who are left alive. Be good for your mother Elijah. I love you both so-
black.

TYRAN

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

1032

MEANWHILE

I SLOWLY PULL MY DISMEMBERED HAND

from the flying man's chest having finally completed my mission.

My family is avenged and I'm back to my physical form! I'm still nothing but the blue energy, but I don't find my body sinking into the ground any longer. Olena must be giving me a second chance! Finally he's dead. Thank you Olena for blindly leading me to my completed mission and giving me back my body. A true miracle.

However, I don't feel any better. His bloody corpse lies on the ground while I reclaim the hand he took from me, yet it doesn't give me peace. I feel nothing.

Numb.

Not just physically but emotionally numb. This is what I've been working towards for nearly a year and now, I have nothing.

Sam! Bending over him I push and shake trying to wake him up but nothing. "Sam! Sam!" Grabbing ahold of him, his body limps over as my hand goes straight through his metal skin like he was no more solid than water. With my hand effortlessly going through the putty-like skin of his chest I finally get to see what is underneath the silver suit. Not surprising, yet oddly disappointing, I realize there is nothing but wires and cables underneath.

I knew it! He is no man. This is why he did not believe in Olena. Running around in his chest cavity is a strange, spider-looking, metal bug that I try to pull out for him. It attempts to latch onto the inner workings of Sam, but I force it off of him and toss it to the ground on the other side of the room. It must have been something the flying man put inside of him to make him unconscious.

I grab Sam by the feet and drag him outside into the desolate, burning city street hoping he will wake up from the noise or fresh air. But nothing.

Getting him away from the flying man's gloves returns his body to an impenetrable solid form, but still he doesn't move. He's dead. Now who will save my family from the humans when they invade? I'm doomed.

I need to get out of here, but first I must help Sam. This isn't where he'll stay. If it weren't for him I would still be locked up in a jail cell or just downright dead. Man or machine, he deserves a proper burial. Looking down the street I see the shore where the large turrets, missile launchers and ships are kept facing toward the east to keep the humans out. He deserves for his mission to be complete too.

I hold him and my dismembered hand as I stretch my entire body becoming as tall as the tallest building still standing. I place Sam on my shoulder as I stride down the street toward the giant weapons they have placed in the sand. Looking down I notice hundreds of little anti-species hiding out in buildings and behind street signs on the ground. There has been enough killing here for one day. The humans can handle them when they get here.

Making it to the shore I grab the largest turret gun and knock it over into the ocean with ease. Taking a single stride through the shallow water I arrive at the next turret gun and lift it from its base to chuck it at one of the battleships floating right off shore. I continue with this one after another until every missile launcher and turret gun is destroyed along with all the ships in the ocean. Turning around I see a large group of anti-species trying to hide from me while at the same time keeping watch on what I do.

"Go!" I boom my voice down to them.

All at once they stampede away toward the gaping hole in the city wall on the other side of the city.

I place Sam on the sand and shrink down to his size to sit next to him while I stare off into the ocean. I try to imagine a large tree line behind me with my village only a few kilometers away. Carleena runs up to me while I'm in deep thought to playfully cover my eyes while my brothers shoot the electricidad at one another. My mother bangs her rod against the metal sphere letting us know its dinnertime, while my father sets the roasted vegetables on the table.

I miss them so much. I will see you soon... if you still accept me.

TIMELINE SIX

SAM

JANUARY 12TH, 313 P.D.

1944

9 HOURS AND 8 MINUTES LATER

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Hello?

What the hell is going on?

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The sun is setting. I'm near an ocean.

What ocean? Where am I?

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Help. Help! I can't move!

"Sam?"

Who the hell is that? I can't turn my head.

Hey! Hey, can you hear me?

"Sam? Are you alive?"

My name isn't Sam. It's Alex. Can you hear me?

"Sam! You're alive!"

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How did I get here? The last thing I remember is... what? I was lying on a bed with people around me. Not a bed, a table. An operating table. There were a few people. Who were they? I knew them. I just can't remember their faces.

I had reached up to grab something from my head.

Wires.

I had wires and cables connected to me. Why? They were all over my head. What were they testing? Did I have a mental illness? Was I dying? Was...

Wait. I remember.

'We will spend a few weeks mapping your brain from top to bottom, decode your neurological synapsis and convert them to ones and zeros in a computer chip. Once this is placed into the warrior it will have all of your skills with the advantage of super strength, speed and indestructability... We will use Sam, or in other words you, to take back the west.'

My God... They did it.

I said 'no' but they did it anyway! "Son of a bitch!"

"I hear you Sam!" Who the hell is this guy? "What do you need?" he asks.

//R&econn{}}ect98ing (t)o n{TARGernves...

//Co^Nne2Hcted.

My hands. I can feel them! My feet too!

"Here," the mystery man speaks again, "let me help you up."

Turning my head I finally get to see the person, but it's no person at all! It is transparent and waves like some sort of strange energy. It holds a dismembered, oddly colored hand! "What the hell?" I attempt to push myself back but he grabs ahold of me.

"Whoa! Calm down, Sam. You went down for a little bit but I got you. You're safe."

I kick him away from me. "My name is Alex! Not Sam! What's going on?"

"Okay, Alex? You've just been in a bit of a situation. The flying man was able to take you down somehow but-"

"The flying man? What the hell are you talking about?"

"Don't worry. I killed him. It's over, see. I took down all the defenses of the anti-species like you wanted."

I struggle to push myself to my feet but have a difficult time finding my balance. As I'm tipping over the monster grabs a hold of me to keep me from falling.

TIMELINE SIX

"Hey, slow down. Obviously he had some super weapon that wiped your memory or something. I think it was this spider thing that was in you. But don't worry, I destroyed that too."

What on earth is this thing talking to me?

"Oh, and sorry about the new words I put on your chest."

Looking down I read the sloppily written phrase:

Duerma Bien La Destroyer

"I thought you were gone for good. It means, sleep well destroyer. It's written in paint I found in the city so I don't know if it's going to come off very easily."

I pull away from him again. "Are you a weapon? Are you some piece of Greer's work?"

"You don't remember me?" he asks concerned, "We've spent nearly half a year travelling with each other."

Half a year? "Tell me everything that's happened! What day is this and where are we?"

"Well, we're in Glairefield and-"

"Glairefield? I don't know what that is. Where are we?"

"Uhm, the northeast."

"Old Asia?"

"What? No. We're in the northeast of the west," he says sending me further into shock, "We've spent the past several months travelling across the anti-species land killing their leaders and destroying their defenses to make way for the humans to come through and fix everything. You really don't remember any of this?"

They really went through with it. All of it!

"You know," I attempt to push my racing thoughts aside so I can hear him, "I can't tell you how happy I am that you're alive. If you were gone, I'd be as good as dead as soon as the humans got here and so would my family. As long as you can tell your people what a help I've been then-"

"How many people have we killed?" I blurt out as the guilt builds up inside me.

"I don't know. It's almost impossible to add up--"

"Guess! How many?"

He thinks for a moment. "A few thousand. Maybe ten."

"Ten thousand?"

"Or fifty. Maybe more. I don't know! It has been a lot though."

What have they done? They used me against my will and destroyed an entire race of people and for what? Land? Money? Weapons? "Listen. Everything that we've done has been for a lie. No one was supposed to die here."

"But you told me that the anti-species were evil. You said you saw it with your own eyes. They would rape and murder the humans. They tortured and enslaved them without so much as a second thought. I've seen how evil they can be. I believe you."

"There are evil people in every society! I had never seen what I told you I've seen. That never happened. There are some really evil humans who kidnapped me, put my consciousness into this machine and forced me to fight. They must have put those memories in my head so I would be more willing to kill the anti-species for them."

"How do you know that these aren't false memories you're having now? What if the old you was the real you and the flying man did something to your computing to force you to feel something different? To feel empathy for the anti-species?"

It can't be possible. I remember so much of my past life. My best friend Chase, my old home where I grew up, my mom and dad, me being at the top of my class. Everything is so real. "No. There is no way. I need to get back to the east."

"To the east? Why?"

"Because I need to find the people who did this to me. I need to find Sergeant Major Greer, and you do too. You could have been tricked by them just like I was."

"I've never met Sergeant Major Greer."

"Aren't you a weapon made by the humans?"

TIMELINE SIX

“No. I’m an anti-specie.”

There is no way. “You’re a weapon made by the anti-species? Then why are you helping me?”

“I’m not a weapon. I’m a guy.”

I don’t have time to try to figure this out. Looking out to the water I see plenty of half sunk ships barely floating above the surface. “What’s the best way to get across the ocean?”

“I can take you.” Without my consent he picks me up with one arm.

“Hey! Hey! What the hell are you doing?”

The *guy* ignores my question and begins to stretch his legs to grow high up into the air placing me on his towering shoulder. He reaches at least a hundred meters tall before stopping his growth. Speaking down to me his voice booms like an earthquake, “Let’s go.” He steps out into the ocean and walks off toward the darkness.

Next mission: Kill Greer.

SAM

CHAPTER 30

THE STORY OF GENERAL GREER

TIMELINE FIVE
GENERAL GREER

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

JANUARY 16TH, 313 P.D.

2246

4 DAYS, 3 HOURS AND 2 MINUTES LATER

WE'RE JUST A FEW MONTHS AWAY

from heading to the west and nearly everything is prepared for the brutal attack. The sky is dark while I show General Sebastian Jim around our base, presenting to him what we've done here at St. Srana.

"You see general, we have a top notch defense here as well as the strongest possible offense ready to ship out at a moments notice."

"As it should be."

Ungrateful ass. "And if you come with me this way you'll be able to see our intel station." I walk him into a small control room where we have several men listening and watching to our spy buoys several kilometers from land. "Here we are able to use radar to detect any coming attacks from air, ocean and under the surface. By using our new sensors and detectors we can determine the distance, size and speed of an object before it's anywhere near us."

"Uhm, Sergeant," radar-head speaks up, "there seems to be something coming toward us."

I bend down to look at the radar screen. "What are we looking at, private?"

"It appears to be just one object moving about the speed of a ship. Maybe a little faster."

Nothing will put me closer to ranking up than for the general to see me in action. "Alright general, time for you to see what our men can do."

Heading outside to send out a few of our ships I'm stopped by the same radar-head. "Sir, there is something else you need to know. It appears to go deep into the water. Really deep."

The general steps on my toes and speaks to my recruit. "Deep? Like a submarine?"

TIMELINE FIVE

"No. It's rising above the surface, but it also stretches deep through the Atlantic. Deeper than our radars can see."

"What do you mean 'deeper than our radars can see'?" I ask irritated. I can't help but be furious! This technology was guaranteed to work perfectly. "We can't see it? These radars are supposed to be able to see down to the ocean floor!"

"Yes they can. It seems as though this... thing is travelling across the bedrock."

General Jim rushes out of the room to head toward the birds coop a few blocks away. I hurry to follow him while he yells back to me, "How far out are those buoys?"

"Maybe five or six kilometers off shore, sir. Why?"

He doesn't answer.

Running up the winding staircase and entering the coop Jim startles the slackers inside who instead of working are tossing a ball back and forth making us look like a damn playground. The fraks quickly drop the game and get back to watching their stations not knowing they definitely won't be sitting there tomorrow. "How far out can we see up hee?" Jim asks them.

"How far?" dumbnuts number one asks.

"Into the ocean! How far into the ocean can we see from here?"

"Oh, uhm... on a good day, a few kilometers, but with this darkness you won't be able to see much."

Jim forcibly pulls the viewfinder away from dumbnuts number two. He looks through the periscope, which sticks out from the top of the building facing out to the ocean. "What the hell is that?"

"Sir? What is it?" It's not often I see Jim surprised by anything.

He throws the periscope away and runs out of the building ignoring my question once again.

Looking through the viewfinder myself I see a giant light making its way toward us. "What the hell is that?"

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

"Get all hands to the ships!" Jim runs around my base barking orders to my men, *"Fighter pilots, prepare for take off! This is not a drill! Enemy ships approaching! This is not a drill!"*

What is he doing? I will not let him steal my glory and take credit for holding off this attack! I sprint back down the winding staircase. "Okay everyone! Let's get these-"

"Get these missiles loaded on the battleships immediately!" the power hungry prick interrupts me, "Prep the heat cannons and get turret gunners at the ready!"

"Sir, these are my men! I can't let you-"

"This is a real attack with real consequences, Greer!" he yells at me like I'm not the one in charge of this base. "Acting like a dumbass right now can cause the downfall of St. Srana! I'm not willing to gamble our survival on your ability to lead! Now get out of my way and let me do my job!"

Have I just been sitting on my thumb for the past year? Ever since the robot showed up I've been turning this place into a real military base! Without me, this place would be doomed! I'll never rank up if I can't even get the opportunity to lead correctly.

With the planes taking off and the ships heading out I grab my binoculars to peer out over the ocean on the incoming threat. The lights on the planes disappear on the horizon as they get close to the anti-species while the threat continues to illuminate the water's surface, informing me of the massive size of the ship. I run to the closet-sized command center where I find Jim taking charge of more of my men.

"How are we doing?" he asks one of the computer geeks.

"The planes are less than a kilometer away from the threat." The room is silent as geek one continues the updates. "Six hundred meters. Five hundred meters. Four hundred meters. Wings four eighty-two hit." The general closes his eyes in frustration. Drama queen. Like he's the one whose going to be punished for any of these planes going down. "Four eighty-two down. Others at two hundred meters. Three ninety-eight down. Three zero four hit. Three zero four down."

TIMELINE FIVE

The general unplugs the geek's headphones sending one of the pilot's voices out over the loud speakers. *"We're getting destroyed out here! This thing isn't taking any damage! It's no use!"*

General Jim grabs the mic to speak back, "What is it? What are we fighting?"

"I don't know, sir! It looks like some sort of glowing being! Like a giant man walking through the ocean!"

They must have created a robot themselves, but a giant one large enough to walk across the ocean? It's impossible!

"Sir!" the command operator speaks up, "the anti-species have just crossed the buoys. They're officially within our borders."

Jim grabs the man's shoulder. "It's a weapon and just like everything else we need to find its weakness. We just need to find a way to destroy it!"

Computer geek speaks again, "We've just lost the battleship, sir."

Running outside with my binoculars I can now make out the being through the fire of the battleship sinking in the water. Its arms sway back and forth as though striding through the ocean like a person, not a robot.

"Sergeant Major Greer!" one of the boat hands runs up to me, "I just heard we lost two more ships. Is this true?"

What would a leader do in this position?

I run back in the command center. "General Jim!"

He puts his finger up to silence me as he speaks into the microphone, "Say again, pilot."

"It's destroying everything! Nothing can even make a dent! It's not a machine! It's alive! Ah! I'm hit! I'm hit! I'm going d-" the communicator goes silent.

"Pilot, report... Pilot! Report!"

"We've lost contact," computer geek tells us.

"We need to evacuate the base," Jim demands marching out of the building.

We can't evacuate! I have spent too much time making this an impenetrable force. "We will not, sir."

He stops, "That was not a request, sergeant."

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

"Sergeant major. And with all due respect general, once it gets to shore it will stand no chance. Our defenses have been built up with no weaknesses. Our base has the most-"

"Sergeant Greer!" he screams, "I will not let you be the cause of everyone here dying! We will retreat to Griever, regroup and continue to defend from there once we have a better idea of what we're up against."

He tries to walk away again but I won't let him steal my one chance to take his job. "General! If we retreat they will destroy St. Srana! We must stop them here at the frontlines!"

"Give the order sergeant or I will have you locked up at Storm Cape for national defense negligence! This is your base, take care of it. Take care of your men." Jim gets into his vehicle and drives away from the base.

Walking back into the command center I grab the microphone that feeds to the base PA system. "Attention troops." Do I dare stop them? This is what they have planned for. This is what they have trained to do. No. They need this as much as I do. "All hands to the frontlines! Prep the turrets and low range missiles. Snipers take your watch! We will not let them get pass our holds!" No one is remembered for making the easy decision.

Getting back outside I realize the binoculars are no longer needed as the being's bright light reflects off the ocean's surface as well as illuminates the dark water below. The ships and planes that had been sent out have found themselves sinking into the Atlantic while several more wait nearby to intercept. "Fire the missiles!" I yell, hoping he is close enough to be hit.

A dozen missiles fly overhead out into the ocean.

Direct hit!

No damage. Not even a budge. What the hell? "Fire again!"

Several more missiles fly through the air.

Direct hit again!

But still no damage.

"Sir! It doesn't look like it's getting hurt!" a voice yells out to me.

TIMELINE FIVE

"I know!" The being is getting taller as he makes his way through shallow water. "Fire the turrets!" A barrage of large, glowing bullets rage through the air toward the monster from multiple turrets all around me. Each one hits the target, but again, there is no effect. We are too weak. "Men at the ready! Go for the legs! That is its weak spot!" I have no idea if that is its weak spot but I know if it can't walk it can't fight.

A line of men form in front of me each unloading their clips into the knees of the beast as it approaches dry land. It's like there is no weakness for it! "The ankles! Aim for the ankles!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Nothing.

"It's not working, sir!"

We can't take it! It's too powerful. "Retreat! Retreat! Head to the city of Griever!" Everyone scatters around me in a panic but it's too late. The monster towers hundreds of meters above us with a light blue glow accompanied with odd, shimmering electric veins running through its skin. It moves as though it's alive but clearly is nothing that God put here on Earth. From atop the monster's shoulder drops another being, this one human sized. Someone I had not seen for months.

The robot.

He has turned against us! He was sent over there to stop this from happening now he's working with them! He has his blades emerged from his arms, the same ones I had seen slice a dozen of my men in half so many months ago.

I need to leave.

I get to my motorbike as quickly as possible and drive away as the blue giant smashes and kicks down all major weapon systems we had.

St. Srana is gone.

JANUARY 18TH, 313 P.D.

0722

1 DAY, 8 HOURS AND 27 MINUTES LATER

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

I had to pass the city of Griever and make it back to Krielmopolis as the monster and robot travelled passed me on my journey. I wish I could've stopped and warned the people of Griever, but the speed of the blue giant and robot is far greater than my vehicle.

Back at Krielmopolis I find that most have already evacuated and taken hiding thanks to General Jim beating me here. I meet up with him inside Ft. Bildine.

"Sergeant! Why are you not in Griever?" he barks.

"I couldn't make it. The monster was headed there next."

"Dammit. Where are the survivors?"

"Survivors from Griever?" I ask.

"No, the survivors from St. Srana. Did they not travel with you?"

I hesitate, "I'm sorry, sir. In the evacuation we had all gotten separated."

General Jim turns away from me in disappointment. "Did you not have a set in stone exit strategy?"

"Eluding a giant monster wasn't really in my contingency plan."

Jim steps up to me, "Are you being sarcastic sergeant?"

"No, sir I-"

"People are dying out there and you want to make frakking jokes!"

"I didn't mean it as a joke, sir." I clasp my grip hard into a fist attempting not to scream back at him.

Jim reaches out and rips my military stars from my jacket. "Get the hell out of here. You're done Greer!"

What? This can't be happening! After everything I've done! Everything I've sacrificed! "Sir, please. I didn't mean..."

"Go!" he pushes me outside the fort and slams the door shut.

No! No! No! No! What just happened?

When I think it can't get worse I hear the first scream from the citizens in the city. "*They're here!*"

I need a way out! I need a way to stop this from happening.

Wait.

TIMELINE FIVE

The doorway is right here at Bildine! I can use it to go back and stop this from ever happening! I can stop the robot as soon as he comes out! The time machine hasn't been used since that one day for fear of what may happen, but I think now is a good time to test the waters!

Running back inside the fort to get to the time machine I'm stopped by one of the general's bodyguards. "I'm sorry sir, but I've been told to not let you back in here." I watch as the general turns a corner at the end of the corridor.

"Let me through private!" I order.

"I'm sorry, but you are no longer my superior. You have to leave. I will not refrain from using force."

"People are dying out there you ignorant shick! If you want to just stand here smelling your own ass that's fine, but I'm here to save this city and to save lives. Now move!"

As I attempt to push through him my arm is thrown behind me and my hand pushed up to the nape of my neck. I quickly reach for my gun where I find his hand is already placed keeping it held in my holster. He whispers in my ear, "Don't even think about it."

Crash!

The guard continues to hold me where I stand but the destruction of a building in the distance moves his attention to outside the open door. General Jim sprints back up the hallway to step outside and take a look at what is going on. I rip myself free of the guard's hold and begin running down the hallway toward the machine.

"Hey!"

"Let him go!" the general orders, *"Gather all the troops on the north side and bring them to support the east. Have every available recruit..."* his voice fades as I turn the corner to arrive at the room where the time machine is being kept.

I pull open the rusty door to find the machine still sitting there, surrounded by Eitman 'Do not touch' tape. I rip it off and prepare the power source while the crashing of buildings outside gets closer. I look to the computer on the side of the

machine to find nothing but hieroglyphics. I don't understand any of this. How the hell do I just send myself back in time?

Crash!

The front of the base has been broken down by the time the generators start to hum. I have only seconds before the blue monster breaks down the entire base and makes this worthless. I won't be able to figure out where to send myself, so hopefully the machine knows. I stand in the machine holding the switch.

1...2...

Crash!

3!

Switch.

Nothing happened?

Switch! Switch! Switch! Switch!

The power has been completely disconnected from the base. Either Bildine has just been shut off or worse, Eitman Power Supply has been destroyed making Krielmopolis no more than a desert town. It's still possible the doorway could be used. I just need to find a power source!

That thought is quickly shot down as a giant rock flies through the ceiling. I have just enough time to jump out of the room before the roof caves in smashing the doorway under two tons of rubble. Any chance of reversing this horrible catastrophe is completely ruined forcing us stuck with the murderous monster and robot.

Running out of the broken down base I see the horrific destruction, which has taken place in just a matter of minutes. Thick dust fills the streets as buildings fall to their side with each step the blue monster takes.

"Greer!" I turn to see General Jim driving his vehicle up to me. He has several others in the car with him including Thomas, who looks to be nearly in tears. "We need to get out of here!" Even after demoting me, he is willing to save my life. I'm thankful but what a piss-poor leader.

I jump in and we drive straight to Storm Cape Correctional Facility outside the town. "What are we doing here?" I ask.

TIMELINE FIVE

“There is a hidden base below the prison. We can hide out there until this blows over.” General Jim answers jumping out of the vehicle. Without the Eitman Power keeping the cell doors closed, dozens of prisoners walk and stumble from the prison unaware they are leaving one of the safest places this side of the Mediterranean. The prisoners having been drugged up in their cells to keep them sane forces them to leave the prison like a pack of confused drunkards.

Rushing inside I bump shoulders with one of the lab coats that had created the doorway. “Hey!” I grab his arm to stop him, “Come with me!”

“What? Uh, no!” he attempts to reply in his drugged up state.

General Jim opens a secret, barely noticeable door on the ground. “Get in, quick!” he yells.

Once lab coat sees the secret door he precedes to stop his fellow scientist friends who are wandering around the entrance of the prison disoriented. A few of the scientists who can walk without falling over follows us into the hold where we take our hiding.

This is where we will recreate the doorway.

JULY 2ND, 313 P.D.

0244

5 MONTHS, 13 DAYS, 19 HOURS AND 22 MINUTES LATER

There are a couple dozen survivors from Krielmopolis hidden under the prison floor with Jim, Thomas and a few of the lab coats included. We stay in the old interrogation rooms, which were once meant to house the anti-species before the great divide. Pretty ironic now. We occasionally take trips back to the surface, but every once in a while the monster returns so we try not to stay out for too long. For some reason we haven’t spotted any anti-species from the west yet, but I know they are out there ready to kill us at first sight. Most the people here think the anti-species just don’t want to settle in Krielmopolis, which I think is ridiculous. Even with most of the city destroyed it is prime real estate for a growing civilization.

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

In the meantime, we have been able to recover plenty of the tools and pieces that the lab coats think they need to recreate the doorway, but they say they still have years of work to go.

"Greer!" I'm tired of hearing that every thirty seconds. General Jim still holds his rank here to keep society in check forcing everyone to fall under his lead. "We're running low on water. Take someone with you for another run."

I'm not your little errand boy! "Yes, sir."

I grab one of the enlisted that had hitched a ride with us to the prison and head up to the surface with him. I use my binoculars to look through the debris toward Krielmopolis. There I see the robot walking through the town. "Get back down!" I yell to the cadet below me.

Why is he still here in Krielmopolis? It's like he's looking for something, but what? I get back underneath and lock the hatch above.

"What the hell did you do?" Jim hollers to me.

I whisper back, "Stay quiet! The robot is out there again."

"Why in the frik does he keep coming back?"

"I don't know, just stay qu-"

Boom!

A loud eruption from the surface shakes our hideout while moving around the debris of the broken down prison above our heads. I have barely enough time to get out of the way as the cement ceiling of our shelter crumbles then drops to the ground around us. I force myself against the wall watching the cement smash several of the people hidden with us, killing them instantly. What little progress we had on the doorway is destroyed immediately making the last five months completely meaningless. The lab coat assistant runs to save one of the half-made tachyon generator things, but is hit in the head by a large rock that comes loose from the ceiling. His nerves twitch as a pool of blood forms around his head.

"Ocean!" doctor lab coat yells to his science friend on the ground.

All the work we've done is gone! How will we ever get this time machine finished with one scientist left?

TIMELINE FIVE

I look to see General Jim against the wall standing below a crack that is growing in the cement above his head. He has time to get away before the rocks falls on him.

I silently watch.

Crash!

The cement gives way giving him no time to escape. He tries to run but his foot is caught mid stride, bringing him to the ground. Two large rocks come down smashing his legs up to his waste forcing his back to collapse into his chest. "Greer! Greer help!" he garbles to me through the blood spouting from his mouth. I've seen enough people die to know he has no hope.

Only myself, doctor lab coat, a woman and two enlisted survive the cave in. Pulling my pistol from its holster I walk to Jim's dying upper half. "Greer-" he tries asking for help again, but he knows what this is. "Wait," he stops me from putting him out of his misery, "I have something to tell you."

I put my pistol at my side and crouch down to be closer to him.

With blood pouring from his mouth he says, "I didn't deserve to be General. It happened by accident. I had a secret girlfriend in my late twenties who was married to Mr. Hagerfield, my predecessor. He was the general when I was where you are now," he painfully gasps for air after each sentence, "One night his wife and I got drunk and started fighting with each other. She wanted to come clean to her husband about her affair but I knew he would kill me if she did. I only meant to hit her to knock her straight but I didn't realize how hard I did. She fell to the ground and cracked her neck," he holds his confession for a moment to cough and spit up blood. "I buried her in my old backyard behind the well. When Hagerfield couldn't find his wife for a month he left to join the triple R initiative... leaving his seat open. Having never happened before, the officials weren't sure what to do. I quickly showed off my skills and got the chair. That's how I became General. That's why I'm your boss."

Unable to believe it myself, I have to ask him, "Why are you telling me this?"

"It was my biggest secret. I couldn't take it to my grave. I need to leave this world with a clean conscience."

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

“Very noble of you, sir.” Startling everyone left in the hideout, I put the barrel of my pistol to his head and pull the trigger.

Bang!

Jim’s gasping becomes silent.

The woman cries as the others stare at the ground in disbelief. These people need a leader now. They need a leader who isn’t a senseless murderer like this freak. I remove my jacket and trade it out for Jim’s bloodstained general uniform. “Okay people, we will stay here for a few hours to make sure the coast is clear. Be sure to stay no where near where the cracks in the ceiling are. After we get the green light we will find a new place to hide, a better place. Somewhere we can recreate the doorway.”

“Recreate the doorway?” doctor lab coat complains, “Even with the supplies we had, success was not guaranteed. Now there is no chance of it being completed! Everything has been destroyed!”

“I don’t care if you want to give up on our race, but I refuse. The doorway is being created and we will succeed! Gather what supplies you can and be ready to move.”

TIMELINE FIVE

GENERAL GREER

AUGUST 12TH, 314 P.D.

2337

1 YEAR, 1 MONTH, 9 DAYS, 21 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES LATER

I AM THE NEW LEADER

of this society as I am the obvious choice. I have gathered as many survivors as I could from the nearby cities and transported us all to North Africa in a small settlement called Greer City.

With a population of about four hundred and fifty citizens I have started a new police force completely equipped with a full arsenal ready to defend our new home. We haven't had many threats as of yet, but we are all prepared for when the blue monster shows back up. Lookouts have been scattered all around the outskirts of the city as well as scouts looking for new people and more equipment to build up the growing metropolis.

I was walking to city central when a welcomed voice hollers out to me. "Hey baby," Pia Salima, my girlfriend of the past five months, excitedly says while running up to kiss me on the cheek having just gotten off her shift at the food pantry. "How are you today?"

City central is a hot spot for foot traffic so it is no surprise that I would run into her here. With just about every shop within eye shot of the governing building it is no wonder why nearly a quarter of the town is here walking around. On top of the shops, the science lab where the time machine is being rebuilt is next door to the governing building so I can keep a close eye on its progress.

"Not bad," I reply grabbing ahold of her hips so I can force my lips into hers. She likes it when I keep it short and sweet.

The two of us met eight months ago when my followers and I welcomed her and her twenty-two family members into the group. After assessing the entire family it was clear she was the obvious choice for a mate as her breast and backside are much more impressive than any of her cousins. She's not the worse person to

have a conversation with either. Being the leader of this new society, I didn't have to work hard to claim her as my own.

"What are you doing way over here?" she asks me.

"Does it matter?" As if she needs to know everything I do with my day.

She walks forward and grabs ahold of my waste. "You know, eventually you'll have to stop being so mysterious with me and just let me in."

"Why don't you go back to the house and wait for me. I'll be home in an hour or two."

"I just got off work, baby. I don't want to go straight home and just wait for you."

"*He's dead!*" a scout runs up to me holding something strange in his hand. "The monster has been defeated!"

"What the hell are you talking about? How do you know?"

"Someone had seen him approaching. He was struggling to walk then he collapsed on the ground and dropped this." He hands me a decomposing, dismembered hand.

"He had this with him?"

Pia chimes in, "What is that?"

I bark back at her, "Get home Pia. This is none of your concern."

Pia, begrudgingly, walks away from us.

The scout picks up where he left off, "What do you think it means?"

"I'm not sure. Where is the body at now?" I ask.

"Uhm... that's the strange part. It's gone. He just kind of faded away into the air."

"You're saying he vanished?"

"Yeah."

This guy must be dehydrated or something. "Go get some water, cadet." If the monster is truly gone we can finally focus on making this city great again.

I toss the rotted hand on the ground when lab coat, who is supposed to be working on the doorway, picks it up. "Don't you think we should take a look at this? He was obviously holding it for some reason."

TIMELINE FIVE

I knock the hand out of his grasp. "It doesn't matter! He's dead. We need to focus on the doorway and that is it. With that said, why the hell aren't you in the lab working?"

"I heard the commotion and wanted to see what was going on."

"Well now you know. Now get back to work!" I turn around to see many of the Greerians looking to me. "Everyone back to work! We have to get the new roof on capitol building!"

Lazy bastards.

SEPTEMBER 2ND, 314 P.D.

1255

20 DAYS, 12 HOURS AND 52 MINUTES LATER

"This is frekking ridiculous Cameron!" Pia yells at me while furiously having a seat on our triple sized bed sitting at the far end of our bedroom.

"What do you want me to do Pia?" I don't submit to anyone and that includes her, "I have a city to run! I think that is a little more important than a stupid date."

Pia and I moved in with each other a week ago having our mansion finally completed. Unfortunately, with the low population in our society it is very difficult to find good construction workers. Already we have had a collapsed roof in the guest room, a valve break in the basement and, on top of that, our furniture was donated by some of the filthy Greerians trying to suck up to me causing our entire home to be infested with bed bugs. If that weren't enough, now I have to listen to this woman run her mouth to me for stupid nonsense!

"A stupid date?" here she goes, "This is the fourth time you've cancelled with my family and I promised them that you were going to be there tonight."

Knock! Knock! Knock!

A loud banging on the front door downstairs distracts me from this pointless fight. I about go answer it when she yells at me again, "No! Do not answer that door right now! We are having a conversation."

GENERAL GREER

"No we're not!" I face her while standing in the doorway. "You're just yelling at me over the same stupid shrep as always."

"Exactly!" I'm surprised her shrill voice didn't shatter the bedroom window, "You keep doing the same stuff over and over again but you never change!"

Knock! Knock! Knock! "General Greer! It's Dr. Muvato."

I don't know who I could tolerate less right now.

Pia stands and grabs her coat from the back of the bedroom door. "Just go talk to him. You're not going to listen to me anyways." She storms out of the room

I love her but damn I hate her.

"General Greer!" lab coat yells running up to me having entered my home as Pia left. "We figured it-"

I cut him off, "What the hell do you think you're doing just walking into my house?"

"This is extremely important! We finally figured it out!"

"You've finished it? Is the doorway done?" the great news completely erases any annoyance from my girlfriend's outburst.

"No. The hand from the anti-specie monster." And just like that I'm more annoyed than ever. "After analyzing it we've-"

"What the hell are you doing Muvato? I told you to leave the hand alone and get this doorway done! What were you thinking wasting your time on this?"

"Listen. The hand is what gave the monster its power. There are cells inside the dead hand that hold onto energy that would normally fade away into the air. Not just that, but there are veins inside the hand that carry power from the rest of the body to make contact with the holding cells. What we've noticed is-"

"Shut up! I told you we need the doorway done to save the human race. We've lost too many people and will be taken over any day by the anti-species! If this doesn't get done we're all screwed! Don't you get that?"

"You're not understanding me, Greer! When we do get the doorway done and go back in time we'll have a way to kill him! We'll know how to defeat him. All we have to do is destroy this hand or at least get it away from him and he'll die immediately."

TIMELINE FIVE

“And how in the hell do you think we do that?”

“If we can’t get it away from him then we’ll burn it. Light it on fire and destroy all organic material inside. This is how we save the human race!”

“Okay? Now get back to work!”

“What was your plan? Huh? Just go back in time and hope you can beat him the next time? You have no idea what you’re going to do when you go back! I’m giving you options. Hell, I’m giving you answers! If it weren’t for me, you’d have nothing!”

Without a second thought I swing my fist across his face knocking him to the ground. “Listen here lab bitch! You don’t talk to me like that!” Pia’s visiting family, eavesdropping as always, creeps around the corner to listen more closely. “You would have nothing if it weren’t for *me*! If it weren’t for me you would have sprinted out of that prison and gotten yourself killed! I saved your life! I am the reason you are still here to even attempt making this doorway!” He pushes himself up as I look around at the jaw dropped, future in-laws. “That goes for every one of you! If I weren’t here you would all be dead! I saved you! I am the reason you are alive today! You owe me everything you have! Now get out of my house!”

FEBRUARY 9TH, 322 P.D.

0912

7 YEARS, 5 MONTHS, 6 DAYS, 20 HOURS AND 17 MINUTES LATER

It’s been nearly a decade since the St. Srana attack and life has begun to feel normal once again.

Here at Greer City we have a population nearing six thousand now and the city is booming! We have a fully equipped power generation plant where we run energy in from the tidal stream turbines along with eight hundred bikes that are constantly being powered by the Greerians. Part of our police force’s responsibilities is keeping the bikes full, so whenever there is an empty seat at the plant the first person seen out on the sidewalk is brought in to fill the space. This causes most

people to stay away from the facility but it just helps our force stay out on the streets doing their job.

"Is she down there?" I ask one of the officers keeping watch inside the power generation plant.

"Yup. There she is," he points down through the one-sided mirror of our monitoring box to the bikes below where I see Pia exhaustingly generating energy. "She's been there for nearly six hours. Every time she finishes and leaves, we make sure we find her again to bring her back. I don't think she has gone a full week this year without pedaling."

"And what about him?"

"Oh yeah. He's here too." Pointing to the bike with the sandpaper seat I see Ward Gareth, Pia's husband. "If he even tries to talk to her in here we add another hour to his time. After three years, I think he's finally figured out it's not worth it."

"They are doing a great deed for this city by providing power to all the needy citizens."

"Plus, I bet after a full day of riding neither of them have the energy get it on at night."

"What did you just say?" Did this little shrep-nosed bastard forget who he is talking to?

He faces me and cowers down. "I'm sorry sir, I didn't mean anything by it. I just thought-"

"Thought that you would bring up my ex-fiancé's sex life to me and then we would be buddy-buddy? What? Do you think you and I are going to get a drink and hang out after this?"

"No, sir. I only meant-"

"General Greer, you have a communicator contact from a Henny Muvato," the static voice from my side announces.

I hold hard eye contact with the shaking officer as I come to the pity-filled decision to let him off with a warning. I lift the communicator to my mouth as I walk toward the exit of the generation plant, "What is it Muvato?"

TIMELINE FIVE

"Get down here. You're going to want to see this." The past years have been difficult for myself and the selfish Muvato, as he doesn't respect that I am the one in charge, not him. I've gone out of my way to make this clear to him as he is forced to report to one of the stupidest people I've ever met, Dr. Thomas, formally Lieutenant Thomas.

"It's finished."

I attempt to keep walking but my legs halt my movement forcing myself into a numbing, shocked state. My voice embarrassingly shakes during my reply, "Don't lie to me."

The other end of the communicator violently rustles as Thomas takes over, *"He's not lying, sir! We didn't want to tell you until we were sure but it's been tested. It works for sure!"*

"And," I stop to clear my cracking voice, "can it go back to the original doorway? Can it go back a full decade?"

The communicator switches back to Muvato, *"Just get down here, Greer. I think you'll be extremely happy with the results."*

FEBRUARY 9TH, 322 P.D.

1032

1 HOUR AND 14 MINUTES LATER

I stand motionless twelve meters underground in Dr. Thomas's lab as I'm literally drooling over the machine I've dreamt about for years. Every bolt and weld is nearly identical to the one I watched get destroyed so long ago and now here it is again.

"I have the weapon in back ready to distribute to St. Srana as soon as I get there. All I need is-" Muvato tries to explain before I interrupt him.

"What are you mumbling about?" As always, Muvato has to ruin an emotionally intense moment with his damn voice. "You're not going back in time."

"Technically it's not going back in time. It moving across the fourth dimensional plane to a time period that-"

GENERAL GREER

"Shut up!" I've punched this guy more than once in my life and for reasons much less than him being a condescending know-it-all.

"I made Emergence 702.811 and therefore I have full right over who uses it. You even told me that."

"I never once said anything close to that and you know it!" If there is one thing I can't stand it is when words are put in my mouth and Muvato has a great habit of that.

"Two years ago you said verbatim, 'if you finish the machine, it is legally yours. With that said you will have-'"

Knowing he is lying I grab ahold of his shirt and slam him against the nearby concrete wall. "You find your place lab coat! If there is one thing you can take from me it's my word. When I say I never said something, you better take that as a guarantee! Do you understand me?"

To power the machine we have a separate generation plant underground that conducts enough energy to turn the machine on and send someone back. This generation plant is visible through the Plexiglas window, which I just slammed Muvato into. Through the glass there are eight-dozen Greerians staring at me as I threaten the scientist who I'm sure they have all grown to hate as they spend so much time down here with him.

I look to a nearby intern as I slowly release Muvato's shirt from my grasp. "Is there a way to open this window?"

He pushes the bottom of the window open so the bikers can hear me. "My loyal Greerians! In case you have yet to hear, today we have created history! Again! With this time machine I will go back in time and stop the evil monster-"

Pow!

Completely blindsided, I'm knocked to the ground having had the fist of Muvato plow into my chin. More surprised than mad I wipe the blood from my lip and stand to face him.

"You're not using my machine." He stares deep into my eyes in a pathetic attempt to scare me.

TIMELINE FIVE

I lean forward to whisper in his ear, "You have no idea how much you're going to regret that punch." Pulling away I yell, "Officers! Arrest this man."

Being quickly detained by four of my officers I continue my speech to the Greerians. "I will go back and save the human race! In just a few minutes I will travel back in time to save all of your families! You won't see me until I'm ten years older than I am now and-"

"You stupid imbecile! It doesn't work that way!" Muvato somehow breaks out of the grasp of the officers to run back to me, "You're not going anywhere!"

I laugh to try to save face in front of my people. "Ha, ha, ha. Oh Muvato, you still think you're going to be the one to use it. How cute."

"No you power hungry son of a bitch!" He is grabbed up again by the officers and drug back towards the exit. "Even if you use it, it's not a transporter! You're not truly getting away from anything!" He is silenced by a baton bashing him in the temple.

"Okay men!" I yell as I step onto the platform, "Start pedaling!"

The countless legs on the other side of the wall frantically move up and down powering the generators.

"Dr. Thomas, is it ready?"

Like a kid having just seen Santa Clause for the first time he hurries over to gain my approval, "Yes, sir. Just say the word."

"Thomas, flip the switch."

Switch.

The generator's hum becomes a roar overpowering the sound of the cheering crowd.

Get ready anti-scum. I'm coming for you.

Flash!

GENERAL GREER

CHAPTER 31

THE BATTLE AT ST. SRANA

TIMELINE SIX
ALEX

GENERAL GREER

JANUARY 16TH, 313 P.D.

2155

9 YEARS, 23 DAYS, 12 HOURS AND 17 MINUTES EARLIER

“GET THE HEAT LASERS PREPPED!”

I yell to the fighter pilots, “What you will see out there is unlike anything you’ve ever seen before! Stay calm and keep your distance. Remember, it will be holding something that is not like the rest of its body. Aim for that and he will go down?”

“Not like the rest of his body, sir?” my past self annoyingly asks.

“Yes.”

“With heat lasers?” I don’t have time to answer all his stupid questions right now. Time to show this world who I really am.

“General Greer,” the communicator at my side speaks from the command center, “*we’re getting readings of something out in the distance.*”

“What’s its size?”

“*It’s big, sir. It’s going deeper than our radar’s can read. It’s moving about-*”

No need to hear the rest. “Okay pilots! Get out there!” I yell out as loud as I can while walking along the plane tails.

The pilots jump into their cockpits, power up the engines and fly off the multiple runways toward the dark ocean. The flashing wing lights slowly fade away into the night sky as we get a head start on the attack.

“General,” my past self eagerly tries to get my attention, “what are we expecting out there?”

“There is a monstrous threat coming our way,” I reply with intensity in my voice as an attempt to get him to man up and leave me alone. “A giant, near invincible monster that has the ability to take down our entire civilization. He succeeded once before and there isn’t a guarantee we’ll be able to stop him now and if that happens, if we fail tonight and let him get to shore, us and every other human is doomed.”

TIMELINE SIX

“He’? What are you talking about? I thought we were just heading over to the west after the robot clears the way.” The sweat of fear drips down his face. Hopefully after this he’ll just sit and think about what I’ve told him and leave me alone.

“We will head to the west after this threat is dealt with. Now, leave me be so I can keep an eye on this.”

I enter the command center to watch the attack unfold leaving my past self waiting outside. I look back to see him stupidly staring into the darkness trying to envision what’s coming this way. I know for a fact that he cannot.

SAM

JANUARY 16TH, 313 P.D.

2156

MEANWHILE

I SEE BLOOD

A lot of blood.

Small flashes of what I'm assuming are memories return occasionally as my robotic mind tries to make sense of what's happening. Blades from my arms have slit throats and stabbed through bodies while bullets and missile from deep inside me have mowed down civilians all over the west. I've burnt down homes while killing those who have tried to flee for no more reason than my robot mind had taken over and decided they deserved to die.

I sit on the giant's shoulder as he wades through the ocean toward the east. He has made his entire body proportional to the size of his legs, making his head about ten times larger than my entire body. He holds tightly to the dismembered hand from his old body to keep himself from fading away, or so he says. I don't understand it at all but he knows more about this strange world than I do. If my location pinpoint is correct, we should be coming up to St. Srana where I'll find the Sergeant Major Greer and when I do, I'm going to kill him.

On our long, four-day journey I've practiced ejecting my weapons and using them to be ready for any humans who try to stop me from getting to Greer. So far my blades seem to be the easiest to get out and use versus the guns and missiles that the giant swears I have in abundance. He tells me I have a full arsenal but I can't seem to use them very well as it takes a lot of concentration to even see the availability of them in the readings over my vision. I've gotten a turret to pop out of my shoulder and shoot a few times but trying to do it quickly, like I'll need to, has become more of a hassle than I thought it would.

"I see light Alex. Is that where we're going?" he asks with his deep, booming voice breaking the long silence.

TIMELINE SIX

"Yup. That's it," I answer

"What are you going to do when we get there?"

"I'm going to find the people who did this to me and make them pay. No human should have the right to completely take over another person's mind like this. It isn't right."

"With the humans wanting to attack more and more it will just be a matter of time before they make it to my village. Right?"

Tyran had told me some of his back story, about his time in the war and what had happened to his family, which makes me ask, "Why are you still out here Tyran? Don't you think it's time to go home and be with your family again?"

"How could I? They aren't safe yet. I need to make sure that when I return that nothing like this will ever happen again. That is the whole reason I used the doorway in the first place."

"But why you? Why do *you* need to be the hero?"

"It's not that I need to be a hero. I just don't want to see my family die again. Which if only I could have killed the flying man as soon as I came through the doorway then none of this would have happened. His gloves never would have shut you down and my family would never be in harms way."

"Is it just that though?" Tyran slows his stride. "Is that really the only reason for you helping me? Your family is safe now. You could have just gone home to be with them and left me to find my own way to the east."

"No way. This isn't what I want to do. This is what I have to do."

"Are you afraid to go home or something?"

The giant stops completely. "Why would you say that?"

"Look at you. It's not like you can go home and just fit back in. If you've changed as much as you say I can see why you wouldn't want to go home."

"Not at all. I need to save my people. I need to prove myself to Olena. She has given me a second chance to help and I can't let her down."

He's mentioned this Olena a few times but it all sounds like old and outdated gibberish. "In my opinion, I think you would be better off rejoining your family and

protecting them from there. With the power you have now, you could save them from any incoming attack.”

Tyran stays silent for a moment. “It’s not just that. There is someone in La Palomar that I don’t really look forward to seeing again.”

“You hate this one person enough to not see your family again?” I ask.

“Her name is Carleena. She was my girlfriend. We were supposed to get married until... until she did something.”

For an electric monster with the power to flatten an entire city with a single kick he seems surprisingly sensitive. “Before I was put in this metal body, back when I was still human, I had a similar problem. When I was a teenager I had a group of friends that I always hung out with. Then one day a certain *friend* came over and decided to steal from my family. His crime didn’t affect the others in the group so they decided to continue hanging out with him. I lost contact with all of them because of that one specific person. I could’ve hung out with them separately without him there, but because I was too stubborn and selfish I refused to hang out with any of them. It wasn’t until my friend Chase came to his senses and cut the bad fruit from the tree that I had a friend back. Even though it all worked out in the end, I still regret not hanging out with a single one of them while they were friends with the thief. The point is, don’t let the negatives in your life keep you from the positives.”

He doesn’t speak for a moment as he thinks about what I said. “Alex,” he speaks lightly, “You’re a lot better to talk to than Sam.”

“Sam was a computer. I’m a person.”

“No, there was bits of you in there. I know that. But there was something much colder about you as Sam. Now I feel like we’re talking. As people, you know.”

“From an outside perspective, I’m sure the two of us are the furthest thing from ‘people’ that you can find.”

“Hey, what’s that?” Tyran asks.

Looking up I see a few lights flying toward us in the distance. “They must know we’re here,” I reply, “but they probably don’t know what they are coming up against. We will be fine.”

TIMELINE SIX

"What are they?"

"Those are AFG fighter jets. I practiced with them when I was in the military. They are equipped with missiles but don't worry, they have nothing that can penetrate you if you are as strong as you say."

As I finish my statement a dozen red lasers shoot through the water and aim at Tyran's lower body. "What are those?" he worriedly asks.

Heat lasers? Why would they equip those on this kind of defense? Normally heat lasers are used for lighting large areas on fire or burning through a small point at a deep range. They use up far too much energy for this kind of trip. "Tyran, that hand you have. Does it work if it's just ash?"

"I, uh, I don't know. I'm as confused about it as you are."

The lasers shoot directly at the dismembered hand of Tyran deep below the water. "Get down! They are trying to destroy the hand!"

"They can't hurt me. Right?" The red lights turn brighter and thicker as the heat pours from them at a staggering two hundred and ninety-three degrees Celsius.

"Tyran, Get down now!" I yell.

Tyran shrinks his legs dropping the two of us under the surface of the water making it hard for the heat lasers to find their target. The lasers boil the water above our heads while frantically searching for the hand that the giant is keeping safe. I hold on tight as he continues to sink while still moving forward through the water toward St. Srana. Like the eyes of a giant sea monster, two bright red lights from under the surface shine toward us. St. Srana submarines. Tyran is too busy looking at the lasers above us and doesn't notice the ones ahead. I try hitting and pushing him to get his attention but with him having no sense of touch I might as well be sitting still. I jump on his face and stand above his eyes waving my arms back and forth in the dark water. Finally, noticing the dangers ahead of us he begins to stretch his legs back out to their giant length to get away from the submarine's heat lasers. The sounds of jet engines roar as we emerge from the water with a dozen AFGs circling overhead.

"Tyran! Take them down!"

Tyran's giant arm soars from the water, swiping down one of the jets forcing it to erupt into a ball of flame on the water's surface. Throwing his other arm behind him trying to knock down another jet is a failure as the pilot quickly maneuvers the wings to dodge the blow. While the lasers struggle to keep their aim on the hand below the water surface, bullets bounce off Tyran's body while slamming hard into me.

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Leaping off Tyran's shoulder I grab onto the bottom of one of the jets where the burning hot turret gun is held. Ripping the turret barrel from the bulkhead throws the jet's trajectory off forcing the pilot to teeter in the air. He is able to level out just in time for me to climb up to the cockpit window and punch my way through to him. He tries shooting at me with his pistol but only succeeds in sending ricochets back toward his seat. I grab the yoke of the jet and aim it toward the ocean where it explodes into an eruption of smoke and bullets on the water's surface.

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Leaping away from the floating fireball I land on Tyran's arm, which he is swinging again at another jet. I run up the forearm to the bend of the elbow and leap to the nose of a jet headed toward Tyran's face. Looking in the cockpit window I recognize the pilot as my old friend Chase Thompson. He doesn't recognize me. He doesn't know the pain that he is helping to cause. My best friend is forcing my hand against him.

"Chase! Chase, can you hear me?" I try yelling through the glass but with the firing bullets and raging engines it's impossible for him to make out my words. Even if he could, I doubt it would change anything. The training he has gone through has made him blind to any sense of reason or original thought out on the battlefield. He pulls the jet hard to the left attempting a barrel roll in the air to throw me off. I run around the nose of the jet to grab onto the heat laser attached to the underside of the aircraft, which fires off in all directions as the pilot has lost control of his aim and trajectory. The laser burns my metal suit for a few second before I'm able to crush the point of the barrel forcing the immense energy to build up in the chamber of the

TIMELINE SIX

weapon. I attempt to get to the cockpit to rescue Chase before the energy becomes too much but he arms and fires one of his missiles at me.

Boom!

The eruption on my chest launches me deep into the water where even the lights on the jets begin to fade into darkness. I attempt swimming to the surface but my left arm won't budge from its stiffened position.

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A bright light begins to grow above my head as the energy from the heat laser in my friend's jet is building up from the crushed barrel. With heat lasers being a new add-on to the jets I doubt they would've been able to wire a warning system into the cockpit for over heating. He doesn't know it's about to blow!

Forcibly I throw my hand back and forth trying to arrive at the surface but still I stay stagnant in the water.

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Finally! I get the use of my other arm back to move forward toward the surface. I'm going to get to him! I'm going to save-

Boom!

I'm too late!

I emerge from the water as Chase's jet, in a ball of flame, slams into the ocean. Being extinguished in the water the now useless, mangled jet sinks toward the bedrock below for my friend to find his final resting place.

The stress I remember from my old life returns to my shoulders. The stress I feel when someone messes with me. The stress I get when I'm so infuriated that I can't stand it anymore! His death wasn't my fault. It wasn't me! It was Greer! I'm going to find him and slit his throat!

"Sam! Sam!"

He took my entire life away from me! I can't stand it anymore. I need to get to shore and find him.

"Alex!"

"Tyran?" I reply to the voice yelling for me, "What's wrong?"

"The hand! I dropped it! It fell into the ocean!" he yells over the roaring jet engines.

I swim quickly over to him dodging what bullets I can. "Hang on!" I swim hard and fast into the ocean depths scanning for a hand. Does a hand float or sink?

I follow Tyran's glowing legs thinking it must be around his body somewhere. The ocean violently shakes as missiles from up above slam into Tyran and the water's surface. His legs stumble back pulling him away from where he dropped the hand while the light piercing the ocean surface becomes nonexistent. Realizing my efforts are useless I swim back to the surface to find every jet still aiming their heat lasers at Tyran while simultaneously bombarding him with missiles and bullets knocking him left and right.

"Alex! Alex, help me!"

"I'm coming!" I grab onto Tyran's arm so I can leap up to the jet's height but as I grab him my hands sink deep inside his electric skin before I'm able to feel the pressure of his body. Using him as a platform, I run to his shoulder and project off him to a jet flying nearby.

With the jet turret continuing to fire and switching its aim from Tyran to me I'm pushed backwards in the air not able to get to the jet engine. I plummet back into the water with the bullets continuing to fly through the surface at me.

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Under the cover of the dark waters I'm able to swim out of the bullets line of fire back over to Tyran whose body is now becoming less and less opaque. I reach out for him but now am unable to feel his body at all. Like travelling through thick jam I make my way through his entire body to the other side.

The sounds above the surface start to fade away until becoming as silent as the ocean depths below. I arrive to the water's surface to see all the jets have turned around to head back to St. Srana. Noticing their missiles and bullets were just going through him they must be aware they completed their mission.

"Alex," Tyran's voice is now deep and muffled, "everything is becoming all white and fuzzy again."

"It's going to be okay. Let's get you back to land and we can-"

TIMELINE SIX

"What am I doing here?" his deep, booming voice is nearly inaudible but the sound of distress is clear. "I'm supposed to be with my family back in the village! I saved them! The flying man is dead! Why am I here?" he continues to talk but his voice has become so low pitch it sounds no different from an earthquake rumble.

"Tyran listen to me. I can help you. We just need to move to land." I can't help him. He is too far gone. Even if he wasn't, I don't know what I would do to save him.

The rumble of his crying words continues to become more and more silent as the sky behind him is clearly seen through his fading body. Finally, he fades entirely away into the air leaving only the empty void of the open ocean. The settled waves lightly crash together reminding me I'm finally alone.

Although my memories of the last few months are still unclear, I remember plenty of the kid. He wasn't a bad kid, just confused and filled with rage. He didn't deserve to die. He spoke about fading away to rejoin his deity Olena, but I didn't think it would actually happen. I didn't think he would really die. I really only knew him for a few days, but I feel as though I've known him all my life. It's strange, but I can't believe he's gone. He was just a kid.

"Ahh," a voice yells out somewhere over the splashing waters.

"Hello? Who's there?"

No answer.

"Hello?" I spot him. A human is swimming away from me. He's in pain. "Hey, wait up." I swim toward him much quicker than he can get away.

"Leave me alone!" It's Chase! He's alive!

"Chase! Chase wait! I can help you!"

"I don't need your help anti-scum!"

I get to him and grab onto his arm seeing the blood pooling around him.

He squirms and struggles to get free. "Let go of me!"

"Chase, stop! You're hurt!"

"Yeah! Because of you!" he slows his struggle realizing he can't break free of my grasp. "How do you know my name?"

"It's me. It's Alex."

"Alex who?"

"Alex Van Hayes. Your best friend."

He tries to look through my suit to find my eyes that aren't there. "Bull. I just saw Alex a few hours ago."

"About a year ago we had the national defense tests where we ran the hundred meter dash and we both finished before everyone else. I came in first and you came in second. About five years ago we-"

"I knew you were lying! The tests were last November. Not even close to a year ago."

It's impossible. "What day is this?"

"Just let me go anti-scum."

"Chase, the date!"

"It's January 16th!"

There is no way. "314 p.d.?"

"No? 313."

I have clear memories of being in the west for almost a year. It couldn't have only been a few months. Unless the kid was telling the truth. "Chase. Have you heard anything about time travel from the higher ups?"

"I don't know what your plan is, but it's not working."

Could they have really created a time machine? If Chase is right about the date, there is no other way. They did it! They sent me back in time! Tyran was right about everything. "You need to listen to me. Sergeant Major Greer scanned my brain and put it into this... this machine! He sent me to the west to attack the anti-species and make room for the humans to move in. I killed a lot of anti-species but I didn't want to. I just wasn't able to go against my computing."

"You're not Alex?"

"In a way, no, but my consciousness is seriously in here. I felt sad when I saw your jet go down. I have the need for revenge for the sergeant. I feel desires and pain. I may just be a computer but I'm really in here. I feel everything! It's really me!"

He doesn't buy it. Why would he? "It doesn't work that way robot. You're not going to trick me. You're just something made by the anti-species to try and fool me. You're not going to get in my head! Now leave me here to die."

TIMELINE SIX

“Listen, you’re bleeding bad. Let me get you to shore. I can save you.”

“I don’t need your help!”

“I don’t really care if you want my help or not.”

He stays quiet as I pull him along in the water headed to shore leaving a trail of blood behind us. I want him to believe me but if I were in his shoes, I wouldn’t.

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

JANUARY 16TH, 313 P.D.

2212

8 MINUTES EARLIER

“THE TARGET HAS BEEN TERMINATED.”

“Good. Return back to base and prepare for the robot to arrive,” my future self replies.

“It happened just as you said it would!” the communicator chimes in again, *“He just faded away into the ocean. How did you know general?”*

General Greer drops the communicator and yells, “Sergeant!”

Still standing next to him, I answer, “Yes, sir?”

“Send out four squads to the north to patrol Judsey, Drane, Vladswell and Hinas while three more to the south to watch Vlosa, Verneck and Wolfbend. If anything washes ashore I want to know immediately!”

“We seem to be separating the troops fairly thin here. Don’t you think sending them so far out is kind of overkill?”

“Listen, you don’t know how much danger we’re in. If he gets to this base we’re going to lose a lot of men!” He turns around and starts barking orders to the other troops without elaborating what is going on. “Keep these turrets armed at all times! Work in three-hour shifts! Snipers, keep your eyes to the water!”

I need more answers than he’s giving me.

I walk into the decompression room where I find the lab coats that created the robot both asleep on their high-class, over priced couches with their half-eaten fish and empty wine glasses sitting next to them. “Hey! Lab coats!”

The two of them bolt awake.

“Hehe shenme?” foreign lab coat mutters.

Jabaar looks to me, “What’s going on?”

“I need you to tell me about the robot.”

TIMELINE SIX

"The general has sworn us to secrecy regarding Sam." Lab coat one must have forgotten my rank.

"I am the general you twit!"

"No," the brain scum is trying to find a loophole, "you are Sergeant Major Greer. General Greer isn't here."

"I'm going to be the general in a few years so it's time you tell me what we're up against! I'm sick of all these secrets being kept from me!"

The general speaks up from behind me, "You want to know about the robot?" We all turn to face his silhouette in the doorway. "He was a great idea. He was going to be the perfect soldier loaded with weapons and a near impenetrable defense to destroy the anti-specie. Somehow while on his mission he malfunctioned and turned against us siding with the anti-species. He, with his horrific companion, came here and destroyed the base, destroyed Krielmopolis and destroyed the doorway. It took almost ten years to recreate but finally we finished it and I was able to come back to stop that from happening." I have a seat while the general aggressively walks toward me into the light. "I've seen a lot of people die and I'm sick of it! Now, I told you to drop it and do as I say, but instead you are causing issues with the scientists who are trying to sleep and taking up the only person's time that knows what's coming for us. If you are done playing twenty frekking questions, it's time for you to put out the orders I told you to put out. Do you understand me now sergeant major?"

He's walking away before I can give a response when I remember he's me. He won't hurt me. He won't demote me. Why would he do that to himself? I stand up, "Hey, Cameron."

He stops but doesn't face me.

"I'm here to help you, not to be put under this kind of abuse. You need to remember that I'm going to become you someday and maybe it's time you start treating me with some damn respect."

He walks back to me. "Okay, Sergeant Major Greer. If you're going to be the general someday, then it's about time you learn to talk when you're supposed to and keep your mouth shut when you're not!"

SERGEANT MAJOR GREER

"Talk when I'm supposed to? I am you! I'm a younger version of you and you're trying to-"

Slap!

A sharp pain erupts on my cheek as the back of his hand comes sliding across my face knocking me backwards into the nearby chair.

"I know exactly who you are! You are the coward who let everyone walk all over him! You're the one who let Krielmopolis fall into anarchy! It was your chance to take lead and you messed it up! She was your life and you let her go because you were too power hungry to realize everything you needed in life was already right in front of you!"

I don't know if it was the fierce slap in the face but it seems like he's lost his train of thought. "Who are you talking about?"

The general screams back, "What did I just say about your goddamn questions?" Having again asked me something else and not waiting for my reply he walks out of the room. "*Send out the damn orders, Cameron!*"

I push myself back to my feet as lab coats one and two stay near the wall staring at me. "What the hell are you looking at?" I scream at them trying to not be outdone by my future self.

The two of them weasel pass me out the door.

How dare he demean me like that in front of the lab coats? What the hell is his problem? I can't become that sour douche in a few years. I respect my leading capabilities, but to be such a frak about it isn't right! At least now I know I'm going to get a sweet-ass girlfriend in a few years.

I head outside the door where I find the rat-faced Thomas standing nearby. "Is everything okay, sir?" he asks me.

"Gather the lookouts and snipers. We need four platoons to the north and three to the south to look out for the robot."

"Yes sir!" Thomas... what a tool.

TIMELINE SIX

GENERAL GREER

JANUARY 17TH, 313 P.D.

1933

21 HOURS AND 19 MINUTES LATER

“I THINK WE HAVE SOMETHING COMING THIS WAY.”

the communicator speaks to me from the shores of Drane twelve kilometers away.

The sun is setting on the first full day of searching for the robot. “What do you see?”

“It looks like a man wearing a metal suit.”

Finally. “Do you see a glowing being with him? He may be transparent or oddly sized.”

“Uhm, no. Just the metal man.”

“Okay, I’m sending some men that way.”

“Do you want me to fire on him?” he asks.

“Negative. You will not be able to take him down on your own. Wait for back up to arrive.”

“Copy.”

I turn off the communicator and stand in front of the couple hundred-men platoon waiting for my orders. “Okay troops, this is it. This is where you show your worth! The enemy is entering from the north shores of Drane and will be here within the hour. We will not let him into this base! Today is when you prove to your comrades and your country that this is our land and we will not lose it to anyone! Especially the anti-scum!”

Cheers erupt amongst my men as I walk away from them to the command center. The sergeant major creeps at a safe distance behind me trying to eavesdrop on every step I take. Entering the command center I walk to be behind the three enlisted who sit at the computers waiting to hear from me. “Okay sir,” one begins, “all the communicators are working and the sensor system is operational. We just need to wait for the action to start.”

SAM

Looking out the door to see the vehicles driving away toward Drane I lift the communicator to my mouth, "Drane lookout, do we still have eyes on the target?"

I wait.

No reply.

"I repeat, Drane lookout, do we still have eyes on the target?"

"Yes. He's coming your way now."

I place the communicator down. "Okay troops! Stay on high alert and be ready. Keep the turrets armed in case he makes it through the front lines!"

The sergeant major sneaks his way into the doorway staying quiet, as he should be. We all wait by the communicators for first contact.

2047

1 HOUR AND 10 MINUTES LATER

"We are approaching Vladswell now. It appears the lookouts have left their post."

"Don't investigate," I say back into the communicator, "find the target and neutralize." The sergeant major and I stand outside the command center listening to the play by play in Drane.

"I don't see anyone out here. It's like a ghost town."

The sniper on the roof above me yells out to us, *"General, there is something approaching our border and it's moving quick!"*

Damn! "Take him down! Do not let him enter the base!"

What the hell were the lookouts doing on his path here?

Single shots are heard firing from the rooftops toward the outskirts of St. Srana.

"He's quick, sir. He is either dodging our bullets or taking no damage from them."

"Turrets, open fire!" I look to my past self, "Sergeant major." He straightens his back and looks alert as I tell him, "Get those lab coats out here now!"

Sergeant major runs away from the command center to do as he's told.

TIMELINE SIX

"Turrets, keep me posted! What's happening out there?"

"The bullets are hitting him but they aren't doing damage! Oh God, he's-"

The communicator goes silent.

The two lab coats are marched to me by my past self. "What the hell is going on? You said these bullets were supposed to take him down!"

"No, we didn't," brain scum replies, "The bullets weaken the molecular bonds of his outer armor but if you don't shoot something strong enough to destroy his inner workings then there is nothing that will stop him."

"Then what the hell do we hit him with?"

"You need to light him up with the turrets then get him with one of the specialized electric bullets or missiles we've designed for you."

"He's taken out three of the turrets and doesn't appear to be going down, sir!"

I run outside to see the robot taking bullet after bullet to the face and body yet isn't falling down. He's stumbling around but keeps on his feet. "Where are these specialized missiles at?"

"We installed them in the planes," lab coat one says, "there are also a few handheld launchers up in the coop."

While sprinting up to the birds coop to find these launchers the sergeant major follows close on my ass. Thomas runs up behind him as if he's going to be able to do anything to help. Kicking open the door I enter the small room that towers over the rest of the base where the two men waiting inside act like they were keeping watch through the dirt-covered glass window, but were clearly tossing a damn ball back and forth. Grabbing the missile launcher from the closet-sized armory terrifies the two burnouts keeping watch forcing them to scurry to the wall away from me. "Sergeant, blow out this window."

"I'm sorry, sir?"

Oh my god! Ripping the pistol from the sergeant major's hip I aim and fire at the glass ahead of me shattering it to the floor and the ground below. Setting the missile launcher on the ledge of the window seal I look through the viewfinder to the far end of the base. "Where is he?"

No one answers.

"Look outs!" the two men, whose one job is to watch, scurry back to their posts to stare out the window through binoculars.

"Uhm... I don't see him."

"There!" the second yells out, "A man in a metal suit at the sixteenth quadrant!"

Shifting my aim I spot the quick moving feet of the robot trying to make his way through the base. I place the crosshairs on the enemy who is taking a bombardment of bullets from the turrets firing at him, but who surprisingly isn't crumbling to his knees. Strange letters and symbols cover the robot as if at some point in the west he found his creativity and decided to tattoo himself. Probably the signs of the anti-species. Filthy traitor. With him being stalled by a nearby cadet I pull the trigger forcing the small projectile soaring through the air landing right behind the robot, launching him forward onto his stomach.

"Another!" I yell. Thomas quickly hands me another missile from the closet. I load the missile into the compartment saying to my past self, "Come on sergeant. Don't let Thomas show you up."

"Get the hell out of here, Thomas!" my past self whines as the lieutenant steps to the corner of the room.

I put the robot in my crosshairs once again.

"Wait!" the lookout speaks up, "the walkers are moving in on him."

Oh good! I want to see this.

TIMELINE SIX

SAM

JANUARY 17TH, 313 P.D.

2052

2 MINUTES EARLIER

BLOOD DRIPS FROM BLADE

as I rip it from the turret operator's gut.

There are well over a dozen other turrets firing at me to which I'm able to dodge about half. Right on the edge of St. Srana the turret gunners and snipers surround me as I attempt to make my way to the sergeant major that hopefully is at this base and not at Krielm central. Hundreds of military members run around the base trying to figure out how to fight a one manned army as I continue to stand. Back in the west I have vague memories of being able to take bombardments of bullets with no damage, but here in the east they seem to be effecting how I move.

{Da0m)age/} = 17..3*%

These bullets are different. My knees buckle with each step I take but my momentum keeps me moving forward. Jumping to the nearest turret firing at me I tear apart the ammunition intake as the gunner leaps from the weapon to get away from me. I'm hit several more times by another turret, causing me to collapse to the ground landing on my knees. Quickly pushing myself to my feet I dodge another line of bullets coming at me. I sprint to the nearest turret and grab onto the barrel swinging it in a circle.

Boom!

A missile flies through the air slamming into the ground behind me with the force of a tidal wave blowing me forward off the turret barrel and onto the ground ahead. Trying to push myself to my feet I'm hit by a relentless reign of bullets slamming into my back keeping me to the ground.

{DPPam<age;} = ^ 19.9%%

With the bullets letting up for a moment I'm able to push myself to my feet only to be greeted by four large, juiced up walkers standing in front of me.

Walkers are one of the greatest defenses made by the Krielm with a full arsenal of weapons, nearly impenetrable skin and with the best feature, no loss of human life. With two thick robotic legs and two over-powered arms able to catch a missile in midair they are ready to attack at all times. Its face is equipped with a full three-sixty camera with over nine different types of vision. Each walker is controlled and operated in a remote area from computer monitors by people who want to fight but have the bodies of pre-teens.

“Missiles activate!”

//Al&l s23ysteJms f/}ailin?g..

Dammit.

I ready my bladed arms as the first three walkers sprint toward me. Attempting to leap in the air over one of them I’m grabbed by the ankle and thrown back to the ground. My metal skin luckily protects me from the hard landing, as I’m able to quickly get back to my feet to swing my foot around under the walker’s left leg bringing it to one knee. Going to punch through the visual sensory sector my arm is grabbed by a second walker behind me. With my arm held up in the air it punches me multiple times in the stomach.

{dDaaamag6e} = ^ 2\$0..2%

Attempting to pull free I am unable to rip from the walkers grasp forcing me to place both feet on the walker’s face and kicking off bringing its arm off with me. Before I can land on the ground I’m grabbed by another walker, which holds both of my arms behind my back keeping myself open for the fire blast of the one-armed walker. The fire of the missile ignites from the walker’s chest and soars toward me giving me just enough time to flip over the head of the walker keeping hold of me. The missile slams into the walker destroying its front cover bringing it to the ground in pieces. I jump over the dismantled robotic warrior to the one-armed walker where I shove my blade through its face that leads straight into its computing. Twitching uncontrollably the robotic monster falls face first onto the ground.

With only a millisecond breather, an unbroken stream of turret fire from the other two walker’s right arms slams into my back knocking me to the ground. With

TIMELINE SIX

both of their right arms up they walk toward me with the bullets firing from their fingertips.

Pushing my way through the pressure of the firepower I'm able to get to my feet and arrive at a nearby turret that was abandoned when the walkers showed up. Still being bombarded, I engage the turret and open fire at the walkers, one of which I'm able to blow into pieces before the other walker is able to tear apart the turret. I'm thrown into the air as the turret explodes in a firework display of bullets.

{DAAAAAmagYe}] =i %23.3%

Forcing my way through the relentless firepower I let the bullets of the last walker ricochet off me while I attempt to get face to face with it. Unable to take me down I cut through the walker's arm dropping its turret to the ground. Now off balance I grab the good arm of the walker and toss the entire contraption down on its side. While it's on the ground I punch through its computer completely destroying any chance of it getting back up freeing myself for a moment from any attacks. Standing on the robots body I scan the area for the sergeant, looking passed all the enlisted who try and stay away from my view.

Whizz!

!;! WAggRNIN5G !?? INCvvmOMoING !!

What did that say?

Crash!

My leg! My leg is blown apart!

{DamREa66ge}} *= %42.3%

!!=! WARlkNI^NG !! CRuITi7CAL DA&^MAGE !

!! RyETRE5AT !*!

One of those damn missiles blew apart my leg!

"Open fire!"

Turrets from all directions begin firing at me. My chest is denting down into my body as I find my leg two meters away sparking and twitching around on the ground. Dragging myself through the bullets I'm able to grab what pieces of my leg I can while getting myself near the closest building for shelter. Pulling myself around the corner I get away from half the turrets firing at me, but several others are still

attacking me from the front. I grab onto the building with my fingertips going deep into the concrete so I can pull myself up to the roof. Pulling myself up hand over hand I feel my body shutting down.

{^Da&mage}{ k= 42.3@%

My suit's skin isn't holding its durability. Each bullet that hits me sends a shockwave through my entire body accompanied with a flash of light over my vision and a high pitch squeal in my ears or whatever the hell I have to listen with. If this is my last stand, I have no choice but to go straight for Greer.

With my one good leg still attached, I pull myself onto the roof of the building away from all the bullets firing at me. Finally, a moment of peace.

!! WAtfRN6ING !!

It just doesn't stop!

A drone flies over the building and aims its turret barrel straight at me.

So much for trying to get my leg reattached.

I grab what's left of the mangled leg and chuck it into the air at the nose of the drone completely crushing its front end. Without being able to get off a single bullet it dives into the ground blowing up one of the turrets down below.

Pushing myself up on my one good foot I wobble my arms back and forth struggling to find my balance.

Bang!

My left eye vision has become nothing but static as I collapse off the rooftop slamming into the ground below. A sniper must have gotten me from a rooftop somewhere else at the base. I try to focus through the static but nothing is coming in clear. The vision in my right eye flashes black every few seconds while my left is completely out of commission. While on the ground a line of bullets move up my one good leg to my stomach then to my chest sending shockwaves through my entire body. Using my arms, I pull myself as quick as some people can run trying to get out of the line of fire. Unfortunately, it is much easier to aim a turret than to get away from one.

Bang!

{Da!ma^^ge} = rr68.19%

TIMELINE SIX

!-!! R3TttREAT ??!

Another sniper bullet hits me in the back of the head forcing all audio around me mute. As I push myself off the ground I see another missile flying toward me.

I'm too slow. I can't avoid it!

Boom!

My arm erupts in an explosion of cables and metal that scatter all around me. The blade I've used to kill so many targets flies into the air and sticks into the dirt ahead.

{Dam5agDY!Ye} = 82.50(%

!!! RRETreaT44 !!*-

! RE!!T5EE3T !!!

The turrets continue to weaken my back as I attempt to drag myself across the ground away from their bullets. My shoulder twitches and shakes turning me into a flopping fish on the ground. With everything silent around me the memories from the west flash in my left eye's blinded vision bringing me back to my travels with Tyran. I've killed so many people. So many who didn't deserve it. Screams of innocent anti-species ring out through my head filling what's left of my body with an uncomfortable stress that I can't relieve.

Shaking and shivering I push myself up onto my good leg and clumsily jump away while still being bombarded by bullets. With each step my knee buckles backward forcing me to drop to the ground turning me into an easy target. I use my arm as another leg to hurry away like some sort of monster on the ground that can't walk right.

//Aud5io rerRRouted t2o_Sseco7ndary iHnp&ut

My hearing, although almost complete radio static and nearly inaudible, returns with the booming sound of crashing bullets and burning rubble.

"Fire in the hole!" over the unbearably loud static in my head, Greer's voice rings out clear as day.

Whizz!

Without looking up I push myself as hard as I can into the air allowing the missile to explode in a fiery mess below me launching me into a front flip where I

slam hard onto the ground having cables and wires launched from my inner workings. It came from the coop only a hundred meters away. I need to get there! Like a deranged monster, I use my one arm and one leg to push myself toward him. He notices I'm coming after him as he frantically pushes another missile into the barrel of the launcher in a panic. I might die right after, but I will get to him first!

Unable to get away from the turrets I'm pushed side to side, but each time I am thrown off balance I quickly regain my footing to continue pushing forward.

Bang!

A sniper bullet hits me right in the elbow forcing me to collapse for just a moment.

Whizz!

I'm only a few meters away when the sound of another missile is heard barreling toward me. I try pulling myself out of the way, but the missile hits its target.

{DaDm%%age} = 9>8.78^%

I only feel the affects of the blast for a moment as all nerves throughout my body are disconnected. Everything from my waste down is scattered around me in a sparking, twisted mess of cables and weapons. I'm not sure how many are shooting at me now, but I'm thrown left and right across the ground by the constant turret fire. Everything sounds like it's projected under water while my vision struggles to stick to one type of vision. Flickering from heat vision to radioactive vision I don't even attempt to recognize the clouds above my head.

A man walks to me staring down with a sense of confusion or dread or pity. Who knows? I can't make out his face much less his facial expression.

Next to him another man holds a pistol, which is handed over to the one standing above me.

He puts the barrel of the gun to my head. Although it's difficult to hear I am able to make out his words, "You were supposed to be our savior. You were nothing more than a mistake."

Bang!

TIMELINE SIX

January 18th, 313 p.d.

0453

6 hours and 49 minutes later

//P83wer;ng ooooo

//Coonnn^nexc[t[ng to nwrves.....

!! W%RRR&NG !! CR@22TCAL DF>MAGE !!

// A**ll s43ys>tems f/aiiili..ng

Am I still alive?

Part of my vision fades in and out just enough for me to identify that I'm in some sort of lab being worked on. In the corner of the room are Sergeant Major Greer and someone who looks a lot like him wearing a general's uniform. Above me stand the two scientists who had kidnapped and worked on me so long ago.

"Wh-what's going on?" I try and mutter out.

My vision fades black then returns.

The unfamiliar general hurries over to me. "Wha- he doin- -wake?" his voice sounds as though he is speaking through a damaged communicator cutting in and out and full of static, "He- supposed - be deac-ivated."

"This -ormal," the scientist above me replies, "-til we g- -ide the skull we wo- -ble to dea- the -puter entirely. Wait a -ond. -at is this?"

"P-p-p-p-ple-e-e-ease" I attempt to speak but the words won't relay out properly.

The silent scientist is pulling a bowling ball-sized device from my open chest cavity.

"Would you -ook at that?" Greer says walking up to me, "What the he- is that -ing."

"It looks -ike a bomb to m-." The unfamiliar general says.

"We neve- plant- that in ere."

"Could it -e a trick fr- the anti-spe-?"

"No. This mat-ial is def- -om our lab."

"Perf-! We'll u- it on them"

Oh god, what are they planning? "N-n-no. D-d-d-do..."

"Can we shu- -im up?" the general barks walking away with the device they ripped from my chest.

The silent scientist steps behind me. Unable to feel anything, I assume he is about to access the computer inside my head. With an accent I hear his first words, "I'm so sorry, Alex."

Click.

black.

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 32
THE WEST TAKEOVER

GENERAL GREER

FEBRUARY 8TH, 313 P.D.

1822

21 DAYS, 13 HOURS AND 29 MINUTES LATER

“THEY’RE OVER THE NORTHEAST CITY NOW,”

computer nerd one says to me.

I stand in the command center waiting to give the order to drop the bomb that we found planted inside the robot accompanied by the other eighty we have flying over the west.

“Ready to drop, sir?”

I nod.

“Bombs away.”

I wish I could see them run. See the fear in their eyes as they realize all hope is lost and that every evil and ungodly tradition they have is being washed away by the quick and painful sting of a human attack. We truly are doing this world a great service by getting rid of their disgusting kind.

“Okay. That’s it!” I say walking outside to my past self who is ordering the men to report to their stations on the ship. “Their defenses are completely destroyed! Time to head over. Gather the troops!”

“You heard him men!” the newly appointed Captain Greer hollers, “Gather around for your general!”

Several hundred men hurry themselves over to me as Thomas places a large box on the ground for me to step up on. “Men!” I yell out getting their attention. “We have been given a great opportunity to take out the anti-scum from this earth. You’ve seen the irrational madness and rage they have against us! They thought they could defeat us with a giant electric man walking through the ocean, but guess what? We killed him like it was nothing!” The group cheers as Thomas and my past self attempt to quiet them again. “They thought a robot could defeat us! But guess what? We killed him too!” I yell over their screams of joy, “Now get out there today

TIMELINE SIX

and show them we don't give a piss what they send at us, because you know what? We'll send every damn defense they have to hell along with them!"

Captain Greer steps up and tries to speak over their yells of excitement, "Okay men! We ship out at nineteen hundred! Gather your things and get to your designated ships!"

"You heard him men!" Thomas steps up right after, "Move out!" It's adorable the two of them working so hard for my approval.

The two-dozen ships, each loaded to the brim with ammunition and war machines, sit at the shore of St. Srana waiting to be boarded and sent over.

Good luck taking this on anti-scum.

MARCH 12TH, 313 P.D.

1950

1 MONTH, 4 DAYS, 1 HOUR AND 28 MINUTES LATER

"Get my boots boy!"

My eight years anti-specie boy hurries across the room to grab my new boots found in the destruction of Glairefield, now New Greertopia. He stays chained up at all times while his stupid voice box stays in my back pocket. He slides and laces the boots on my feet, something he wasn't so good at in the beginning, but with practice he's gotten much better.

"Alright. Now get out of here." He runs back to his corner where he sits and reads one of the human books I've given to him so he can learn to act proper.

Upon our arrival at New Greertopia we found many anti-species hiding out and trying to rebuild after some sort of destructive force had come through pummeling their city. Before their voice boxes were destroyed I had heard rumors it was the robot who did it, but I can't imagine him destroying so much so easily, especially with how easily we took him down. But I guess it just goes to show how worthless and weak the anti-scum truly are.

For about two weeks we celebrated and feasted on the giant beasts the anti-species had at our disposal, which cooked up nicely. For the first time many of our

GENERAL GREER

people had the opportunity to taste real bacon along with steak and ham. Foreign lab coat and his boss were able to identify that the bullets littering many of the giant beats were from the robot telling us that he stuck to his goal much longer than we had originally thought. We have a full team of brain heads working in the anti-species biotech facility, now known as the Greer Initiative, working to bring many of these beasts back into the world so hunger will be a thing of the past. Meat was a thing meant only for the rich and powerful in the old world, but now it has become the daily meal of the people turning everyone's 'iffy' feelings about the west takeover to full positivity.

Fire troops have been sent out to take down all left over monsters that the anti-species had left, such as the crazy tentacle monsters that spew from the ground, which after trying to eat we realize isn't meat at all but some sort of disgusting fat and gristle. After losing a few men in the process we have also been able to uproot all land mines placed around the city turning the yellow pastures outside the wall into a playground for the children to run and play.

Eight equal squads have been separated and sent across the continent of the west to find all left over cities to load up the anti-species for termination or enslavement, depending on their physical abilities. The enslaved come back here to New Greertopia where they are put to work building our soon to be completed power plant, which by the time it's done will be equipped with over a thousand bikes giving uninterrupted power to the humans twenty-four hours a day. Of course, personal slaves are allowed to all humans as long as they aren't mistreated to the point of not being able to pedal.

JANUARY 9TH, 314 P.D.

0922

9 MONTHS, 27 DAYS, 13 HOURS AND 32 MINUTES LATER

"People of New Greertopia! We thank you for your attendance today at our brand new auditorium!" I yell out through the loud speakers of the brand new facility that is well over maximum capacity. "With our new performing arts center we will bring

TIMELINE SIX

class and culture back to the west. Already booked four months out we will have musicals, plays, book readings, magic shows and even concerts from our fine local bands. Now we're not only here to celebrate this fine facility's grand opening but to also celebrate how far we've come in ten short months of being here. *Greer Today* is thriving covering all the topics from new housing developments to the massive job openings available to all Greerians. On top of that, the very first human radio station is up and active at one o' one point two. So give yourselves a hand."

I pause while the audience applauds for our great achievement. A radio station had been attempted in the east, but with the lack of resources and power it was never off the ground. Even if we did get it to launch, there wouldn't be enough people with radios to use them. Thanks to the anti-scum left over technology we have been able to adapt it to our needs and turn this place into a true paradise for the humans.

"And that's not all! Our state of the art television station is starting up in just three short months with the release of our very first television program starring yours truly! In addition to all that, the blue prints are in place for three new hotels, an amusement park, a water park and so much more! You got the privilege of being here at the birth of New Greertopia, a moment that you will tell your grandchildren and great grandchildren about! A moment that the history books will look back on with awe! At this moment we are witnessing society not returning to how it was before but ten times better!" The roar of the crowd shakes the auditorium.

I'm back!

NOVEMBER 18TH, 318 P.D.

1808

4 YEARS, 10 MONTHS, 9 DAYS, 8 HOURS AND 46 MINUTES LATER

Energy consumption has grown exponentially over the past few years as the population of Greertopia and all surrounding boroughs have soared over eight million. Luckily the newest Greer Power Plant just opened a month ago to keep up with the demand.

GENERAL GREER

"Here are the numbers from last quarter," my number two and vice president Cameron C. Greer says while dropping a pile of papers in front of me. "Camp eighteen populations have dropped nearly fifty percent."

I sit at my four-meter long desk, which stays in front of the large window that overlooks my great city that is now equipped with fourteen skyscrapers, two banks and a city square where the biyearly city festivals are held. "Why? What's with the decline?" The continent wide camps hold anywhere from eight hundred thousand to one million anti-species who are responsible for the constant production of energy here in the west. When populations drop it means that the reproduction officers aren't doing their job.

"They say last summer had a real toll on their bodies leading to a lot of them dropping due to heat exhaustion."

"What are you talking about? Are the air conditioners not working in the power plants there?"

"No, remember? They were scrapped with the new development of First Watch Mall's power needs."

"What the hell? That issue was solved before summer even hit. Why were the air conditioners not put back into place?"

"Thomas is in charge of camps twelve through thirty. I'm not sure why he didn't get them put back in."

Dammit! Thomas has been slacking quite a bit since becoming secretary of energy for the west. He's done a lot of good work, but if he is slacking we'll need to separate his workload. "Okay. Get him to fly in tomorrow so we can have a little chat."

"Yes sir," he walks out of my office to go send the order.

He is going to make a great leader when I'm gone.

JULY 30TH, 336 P.D.

2245

17 YEARS, 8 MONTHS, 12 DAYS, 4 HOURS AND 37 MINUTES LATER

TIMELINE SIX

"Are you ready sir?"

"One second." I walk up to my past self, who has taken the oath to become the new president of Greertopia, New Krielm, Cameron Flats and all surrounding communities of the west. "You've done a lot of good work here. I'm proud of you."

"It's been amazing hanging out with my future self all this time. Are you sure you're ready to go? We're not really sure what you'll find on the other side."

"I'm ready. I'm getting too old and too bored to stick around here anymore. I need more. I need something else to look forward to."

"For us to look forward to, sir."

I shake President Greer's hand and walk to Doorway Number Two that has been up and ready for nearly two weeks now. After using one of my boots the day of activation and seeing it come out yesterday proves that time travel in both directions has successfully been achieved.

"Okay," the lab coat walks over to stand next to me, "the destination is set for July 30th, 386 p.d. Everything has been calibrated and ready for take off."

I step in front of the doorway where a group of over two hundred wait to send me off. "Thank you all for being here today. I have asked all of my closest friends and family members to be here because you have all made this day possible. I have done all I can with the west as it stands today and leave you in the fine hands of my best friend and past self President Cameron C. Greer. I have full and complete faith in his abilities and assure you all that he will lead this world of ours to greatness. As for me, I am heading off into the future to see the fruits of all our labor and to assure that everything is going as we all hope and expect it shall. There has been strict orders for when I get there I will retake over this land so for those of you young ones who will still be around in fifty years, be sure to hold who ever is in charge to it!" I get my final laugh from the young people. I don't know if they laugh because I'm funny or because they fear what I may do if they don't laugh. Either way I love it! "Leading this land to greatness has been the greatest achievement of my life. Not that it has been easy, because it hasn't. From fighting giant monsters, to overtaking an entire continent, to recreating society, to living through the end of the world for god sake, I promise you it has not been easy. I know you weren't there, but

GENERAL GREER

the reason I came back in the first place was to keep the end of humanity from happening. And I would say I have succeeded fairly well if you ask me!" One final cheer from my young audience. "With that, I will leave you in the caring and trusting hands of my past self! As for me," I step into the doorway, "I'm off to change the world once again!" The audience continues to cheer as the generators power up filling the doorway with a bright blinding light.

Two worlds isn't enough for me. I'm going to take them all.

Flash!

TIMELINE SIX

CHAPTER 33

THE SECOND CHANCE

ALEX

ALEX

JANUARY 17TH, 313 P.D.

1932

23 YEARS, 6 MONTHS, 13 DAYS, 3 HOURS AND 13 MINUTES EARLIER

I'M SUPPOSED TO BE ON LEAVE,

but since the threat of the anti-species has come in I've been ordered to keep watch here in Drane.

As a small clustered community, Drane is known for their textile production and good-looking women. When on leave it's a good place for us recruits to go and chill, mostly because it's cheap and all of the higher ups end up going to Griever. I can see the city in the distance, but I'm specifically stationed at an abandoned warehouse just a few meters from the shoreline. I peer through my sniper scope waiting to see anything approaching from the water as commanded. I'm not sure what I'm looking for, but I've been ordered to keep my eye out for something coming this way. I'm supposed to be going on a date right now with this nice girl I met last week, Annie or Ajean or something like that, but I don't really mind being here instead. I like the solitude.

While sitting out here I'm given a lot of time alone with my thoughts. Being in the Krielm military is great and gives me a lot of chances for a good life, but I don't at all agree with their motives. I believe that our time should be spent trying to rebuild the old world rather than keeping watch for a minority group two thousand kilometers away. Why would they attack? They must know they don't stand a chance with our numbers and technology. Unless of course they have been repopulating out the ass for the past hundred years, but even then I can't see them having half the population we have here.

What's that?

I look through the scope to see a man. A single man. He walks through the desert land toward me with an injured stride. I lift the communicator to my mouth, "I think we have something coming this way."

TIMELINE SIX

The general responds, *"What do you see?"*

"It looks like a man wearing a metal suit."

He approaches quickly.

"Do you see a glowing being with him? He may be transparent or oddly sized."

What the hell are we expecting? "Uhm, no. Just the metal man."

"Okay, I'm sending some men that way."

"Do you want me to fire on him?"

"Negative. You will not be able to take him down on your own. Wait for back up to arrive."

"Copy."

I set down my communicator and crouch down losing sight of him so he can't see me as he passes. Is this what this is all about? Just a single guy in a metal suit? One walker could take him out in a second. Or maybe he's just the scout checking the area for threats. I don't know what the hell is going on, I'm just ready to get out of here.

"Alex?"

What the hell?

"Alex T. Van Hayes?" the voice asks.

What kind of trick is this?

I stand up to see him only meters away from me. His suit is more magnificent than I was expecting as his armor glistens in the sunlight making it obvious it is one giant piece surrounding his body. Crudely designed symbols and shapes, which appear to have been drawn by a four year old, cover the suit.

"It's me!" he continues. "I mean it's you, but it's me!"

I push my curiosity aside and refuse to respond. It is not my place.

"Listen. I need to tell you something in case I fail," he says in a panicked tone, "I know what they must have told you, but I am not an anti-specie's weapon. The anti-species never attack. The humans made it all up so they could have reason to fight the anti-species and take over the west. Everything they've told you is a lie! I am the combination of graphene skin and a complex computer created by two

scientists overseen by Sergeant Major Greer. Some of the computing power is provided by a brain scan done by a lead cadet in the military. It was you. I'm you."

He is trying to get in my head.

"I know it's hard, but you have to believe me. In a few months Sergeant Major Greer and Lieutenant Thomas approach you and offer you the opportunity to be a part of this effort to attack the anti-species. You decline. In your sleep they kidnap you and force you into the machine to scan your brain."

I'm not responding. I don't know what their goal is, but manipulating me won't be part of it.

"Your mother's name is Betsy Sinclair. Your father is Fredrick Van Hayes. You were born June 10th, 292. Your best friend is Chase Thompson whose plane went down in the ocean hours ago, but I saved him. He had a bullet in his leg and I helped him to shore then got him to a hospital. If he were here he would vouch for me. When you were a child you had a pet lizard named Barry. He died when you were thirteen because your mom accidently dropped his cage off the desk while she was cleaning, but she told you that he went on vacation to the moon. You didn't half believe her, but you didn't call her out on it either because you know she felt really bad for it. Your first kiss was with a girl named Paige and you were so nervous that you peed a little. The first time you had to go pedal for energy you passed out because you were so excited to do it so you didn't stop for water once. You joined the military because you didn't want to be a lab coat and you were nervous you weren't going to do anything with your life."

"Drane lookout, do we still have eyes on the target?"

What the hell is going on?

He continues, "You once believed that the only way to achieve true happiness was to make a lot of money and be famous, but it wasn't until after you found the military that you figured out that the every day activities is what life and happiness is all about. You need to believe me! If you want to help yourself, your race and the future of this planet you need to help me, now!"

"I repeat, Drane lookout, do we still have eyes on the target?"

TIMELINE SIX

There is no way he could know all of this about me. This is some sort of crazy trick! “Yes,” I say into the communicator, “He’s headed your way now.”

“Listen! You need to work with me! This is the most important thing you’ll ever do! I promise you!”

“You better get out of here metal man,” I tell him, “The human army is coming this way and you don’t stand a chance.”

“Please. Look into it. Get into the scientist’s lab and find the blueprints for me and tell me the humans didn’t create me! Get to this doorway-time machine thing. I don’t know where it’ll be now, but I’m sure it’s somewhere in Krielmopolis still. You need to get in it and go back in time and head straight to the west to kill myself and a man on a glider. You’ll need to follow a boat that heads over from Tepus Dock. I’m going to be on it. Wait until you see a flying man then kill him after he makes me unconscious. When I’m down and he’s dead search all over his glider for something that will completely deactivate me. It should be a pair of gloves if I’m right. I probably won’t recognize you at the time and I will attempt to continue my mission to kill the anti-species. Whatever you do, don’t let me succeed.”

I don’t respond.

As he walks away he yells back, “If you don’t believe me go to the hospital in Judsey and talk to Chase. You have to get to the time machine! You can fix all this and save millions of lives!”

He sprints off toward St. Srana’s base.

The anti-species have some strange mind reading technology that I’ll never understand, but to try to convince me of time travel? How stupid do they think the humans are?

JANUARY 18TH, 313 P.D.

0922

13 HOURS AND 50 MINUTES LATER

Walking into the Judsey Hospital recovery room I find Chase sitting in a wheel chair playing chess with a one-armed patient.

"Check mate!" Chase yells as I enter the room.

The one-armed man scans the board. "That's not check mate. That's not even check. Have you ever played chess before?"

I knock on the door, "Hey-oh! Mr. Chase!"

"Alex!" he wheels himself over to me, "How did you know where to find me?"

"Are you alright? I heard you got shot."

"Yeah," he replies while pulling up his pant leg to show off a massive scar. "One of the plane turrets shot right through my leg clean to the other side. Hurt like hell."

"How much longer do you have to be in here?"

"Oh, I'm good to go whenever. I have a few weeks of physical therapy so hopefully I'll be back on my feet in no more than a month."

"And when you are, you're going to use this as an excuse every time I beat you in a foot race, aren't you?"

"I took bullet through the leg! You're damn right I'm going to use this as an excuse. Which will just make you feel ten times worse when I beat you."

"Did you hear the news? We won! We kicked their ass!"

"Oh. Cool," his tone is much less enthusiastic than I thought it would be. "Come on," he says. "Push me out of here."

"Your arms still work."

"I'm a cripple you jerk! Now push me out of here!" I get behind him and push him into the hallway.

"Hey!" the one-armed man yells, "*What about our game?*"

"You done lost, Brian! Get over it!"

Getting into the hallway we are hit with the blinding light from the rising sun through the windows. "So you didn't answer me," Chase says, "How did you know I was here?"

I refrain to answer mostly because I still don't believe it myself. "More importantly how did you get here? Did someone help you?"

"Why are you dodging the question?" he's right. I'm avoiding answering him but I can tell he doesn't want to answer me either.

TIMELINE SIX

"The metal man told me," I say.

I push him past three more windows in silence before he replies, "Did he tell you anything else?"

He's egging me on so he doesn't have to sound like the crazy one saying it. "Yeah. Did he say something to you?"

Chase grabs the wheels bringing us to a stop. Flipping his chair around he faces me, "How did you know he spoke to me?"

"He told me he saved you out there. He said he's the one who brought you here."

It's not often Chase and I have a serious conversation, but when it comes up I find Chase has a hard time keeping eye contact. He looks to the ground and says, "He found me floating in the ocean after he took down my plane. I was sure he was going to kill me, but instead he said he knew me. He knew my name and everything. But the weirdest part about it was he said he knew me because he was... you."

Damn. I was hoping he would've said the metal man said that he was Chase, then I would've known it was all just a manipulation game he was pulling on everyone.

"He knew a lot of stuff about you too," he continues, "He seemed like he wasn't here to hurt anyone."

"But you know it was just a manipulation game? I mean, I would've known if the military scanned my mind to put into a robot."

"So he did tell you!"

"What?"

"I didn't say anything about the brain scan. Thank god! I thought I was going crazy! I didn't even tell the doctors about that!"

"Did you believe him?"

"What did he say to you?" dodging the question.

"He told me all about my past and who I am now. He told me about the lies Sergeant Major Greer is telling us and he told me how to fix everything."

"What do you mean 'fix everything'?"

"He said something about a time machine."

ALEX

Chase and I look at each other for a moment before we both let out a laugh. "Okay!" Chase flips his wheelchair back around, "That guy was full of it. It was just some weird ploy by the anti-species for sure. They must've just gotten some records on you and decided that manipulating you and I would somehow save his life. What a load."

I grab onto the wheelchair handles to continue pushing him. "Yeah. It's pretty ridiculous." Having the conversation dying out I decide to not bring up the fact that he knew things that no record has ever had in it.

But time travel? Whether he knew a lot about me or not, that is where he lost any credibility.

JANUARY 24TH, 313 P.D.

1215

6 DAYS, 2 HOURS AND 53 MINUTES LATER

Knock! Knock! Knock!

"Come in."

Back at Ft. Bildine in Krielmopolis I push open the door of Sergeant Major Greer's office. "You wanted to see me, sir?"

"Hayes, right?"

"Yes, sir." I enter the room leaving the door open behind me. His office is very organized with perfectly straight piles of paper on his desk with a note labeling each pile's purpose. There are no windows so the only light is from a single lamp on his desk illuminating the entire room.

Greer stands up and walks over to me to shake my hand. "I hear you were the first one to spot the metal man last week."

"Yes, sir."

"I also pulled your file, quite the record you have. Perfect marksman, unbroken agility records and an academic rating out of this world! What are you doing being a sniper? We have so many more opportunities for you here. Things with a lot higher pay."

TIMELINE SIX

"I've put in a request for a higher position every six months for the past four years so this is a great honor you're saying this to me, sir."

"Oh absolutely! You deserve it cadet. What do you say we get you a position as captain? We'll give you a platoon of, hmm, how about three hundred men? Think you could handle that?"

"Absolutely!" I work hard to stay professional and keep my smile at bay.

"Perfect! I'll get that in the works today and see if we can't get you over to the west before the month's out."

"Thank you, sir."

I about leave when he stops me, "One more thing. The day that you spotted the anti-species weapon we had called into you about your eyes on him, but there was a delay in your response. What happened?"

I don't even remember delaying. I felt as though I answered immediately but my mind was going a mile a minute. "I'm sorry, sir?"

"We had asked if you had eyes on him and got nothing back. We even had to ask twice. Why?" his demeanor has dropped from happily promoting to viciously interrogating.

"I'm not sure, sir. It was a stressful moment."

"You don't seem like one who would succumb to stress."

I stand with my back straight, holding eye contact waiting for my next question.

"Did he speak to you?"

"Yes, sir." With a lead role right around the corner I can't try and lie my way out of this. Who knows what he knows about the metal man.

"And what did he say?"

"He was trying to get out of me killing him by-"

"No!" he angrily interrupts me, "What did he say exactly?"

I don't fall under pressure too often, but when my entire future depends on it I can't help but find myself trembling a bit. "He said he wasn't here to hurt us and that the Krielm military is the evil ones."

"Anything else?"

"Yes. He had said something about time travel."

Greer silently stares into my corneas waiting for me to elaborate.

"Which is ridiculous. There is no such thing as time travel."

Greer puts his arm around my shoulder and walks me toward the door dropping the interrogation and filling back into his *friendly boss* shoes. "Of course! It is quite ridiculous, isn't it? Have you spoken to anyone else about this?"

"Just my friend Chase."

"Chase?"

"Yeah, he's currently at home nursing his battle wound."

I step out into the hallway and turn to face Greer. "Hopefully he recovers shortly," he says, "And Hayes, it's best that we keep this time machine absurdity just between you and I from now on. Good work out there cadet."

"Thank y-" I'm cut off by the door slamming shut in my face.

Walking down the hallway I pass two scientists heading toward Greer's office. I know it's a load of crap, but it's a strange coincidence the metal man told me about two scientist and here they are, especially after knowing Greer doesn't really communicate with lab coats ever.

The door opens back up with Greer looking around and making eye contact with me before slamming the door shut with the scientists inside his office.

Something shady is going on.

JANUARY 25TH, 313 P.D.

0108

12 HOURS AND 53 MINUTES LATER

I wait behind one of Krielmopolis's plastic bushes that sits just a few meters away from the science lab on the outskirts of town. The lights are turned off as the two scientists who met with Greer earlier today are heading home. They both get into their cars, the only scientists I've ever seen to own their own, and drive away leaving the lab dark and empty.

TIMELINE SIX

Once they are a good distance away I creep across the walkway to the front door where I try and open it, but it's locked. Luckily with my training, I have become a master lock picker. Reaching in my pocket I grab out my lock picking kit that I figured I would need tonight and fiddle with it inside the lock until I hear it click open.

Click.

Pushing open the door I find a perfectly organized, yet cluttered lab. With small lights blinking on computers and dim lights lining the floor I'm able to maneuver my way around the maze of desks and equipment to an opening at the far end of the room.

How am I ever going to find anything in here?

I just need to spot anything that proves they were responsible for the creation of the metal man then I can blow the lid off this entire operation. Or find nothing and push this ridiculous notion out of my mind. The desk sitting cattycorner to the room's edge is piled high with blueprints, books and notebooks making the desktop completely unseen. Knowing these scientists are probably anal about the setup of their lab, I need to make sure I don't disturb anything too much and keep everything in the same place as it is now. I get around to the other side of the desk and start rummaging through the papers looking for anything that says something about a metal man or a picture of him or orders from Greer or really anything that will tell me this is nonsense.

As I look through the papers I find nothing but mathematical equations and writing in a language I can't understand. I thought I was smart but damn, these guys make me feel like a Neanderthal. There are blueprints for some sort of a flying machine, a new building that looks like it generates its own energy, a gun that takes two people to work it and some sort of land mine thing, but no metal man. Organized guys like this? There is no way they would keep blueprints separate from each other.

I open the top drawer of the desk to find a single folder labeled in hieroglyphics:

'Bunrui sa ramashita'.

Opening the folder I find the designs for a bullet that has a full power source inside it, just like the ones my sniper was replaced with the day of the attack. The next few papers are designs for the missiles we were using that day along with the modifications to the walkers too. In the very back of the folder I find it. Blueprints for the metal man.

They did it. We weren't attacked at all!

Behind that I find a list of my fellow military members, each one with a line through their name. All but one.

'Alex T. Van Hayes'

Creak.

The door cracks open with one of the scientists peering in.

Knocking over the giant piles of paper I leap over the desk and get to the door before he can get away. Throwing him back into the room I pull the blade from my boot and put it to his throat.

"Why did you do it? Why did you make the metal man attack us?"

"Watashi wa sore o shinakatta kudasai!"

"What?"

"You're wasting your time." I jump away from the man on the floor and hold my knife to the door where the second scientist stands holding a bag of food. "He doesn't speak English."

Grabbing the second scientist by the collar I pull him into the room and push him against the wall. "Why did you make the metal man? And why is my name on a list?"

He keeps calm as if he isn't at all swayed by what is happening. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Bull! Why did Greer order you to make him?"

"We didn't do anything."

"I found the papers! I saw everything!"

The English-speaking scientist looks over to the foreign man who looks to the ground in silence. "You were supposed to destroy all that," he says to him.

TIMELINE SIX

"Hey!" I yell at him to get his attention back to me, "I'm not messing around here! Tell me everything you know!"

Sighing he answers, "We never actually made him. We only created the blueprints then we found out that he was already created. When he came out of the doorway we stopped the creation process and moved on to specifically trying to find a way-"

"Wait, stop. What doorway?"

"The doorway," he sees in my eyes that I don't know what he's talking about, "It's just the doorway that leads to the base. It's the one-"

"Are you talking about the time machine?"

He pauses, "What do you know about the doorway?"

It can't be. The metal man was telling the truth! Everything. All of it! "I need to get to it! Where can I find it?"

"I don't know. And even if I did, the only people who know how to use it are currently locked away. We couldn't help you go wherever you're trying to go without them."

"Where at? Storm Cape Corrections?"

"Do you know another prison?" smart-ass.

"What are their names?"

"I don't know. I've never met them. You'll need to get that information from one of the Greers, but good luck. That is all classified."

"*One* of the Greers?"

"Anata dake no kome o tebanasu kotow a dekimasen!" the foreign one blabbers out.

"Yeah, we can't help you any more soldier. We have done all we can for you. If you want anymore information you need to go speak to Greer."

"Are you going to tell him I was here?"

"He bought my silence, but you've forced my tongue breaking my commitment to him. He won't be happy about that. I won't say anything to him as long as you won't say you spoke to me."

"Okay. Not very loyal are you?"

ALEX

"I have no boss. Only customers."

I pull my knife away from his neck and head to the door. "Sorry about the papers on your desk. I hope it doesn't take long to clean up." I slam the door behind me.

JANUARY 25TH, 313 P.D.

0500

3 HOURS AND 50 MINUTES LATER

Working off only a half hour of sleep I wonder into the Storm Cape prison as soon as the doors are unlocked.

"Name!" the man at the front desk yells out.

The lobby area has a small floor space, only enough room for a dozen people maybe, but the walls extend three times higher than a normal room placing the ceiling twelve or thirteen meters above my head. I can't leave a trace that I was here incase Greer decides to look into it. "Jeff Wyatt."

"What is your business here?"

"I'm directly under Sergeant Major Greer who had some lab coats locked up here not long ago and I need to speak to them. He didn't give me the names but he said you'd know who I was talking about." Unfortunately visitors are not allowed at Storm Cape so I have to use this ridiculous excuse.

"Sergeant Major Greer hasn't brought in new prisoners for months. He said I would know what you were talking about? I'll give him a call to see what this is about."

He lifts the communicator to his mouth. "No, that's when it was. A few months ago. I need to see them immediately."

He looks concerned. "I'm still going to give Greer a call just to be safe."

He attempts to bring the communicator to his mouth again. "You're going to bother the sergeant major at this hour because you don't trust his number two? Go right ahead but it's your job, not mine. I'm coming to speak to the prisoners about a classified matter well above your pay grade. Now you let me in there and let me

TIMELINE SIX

speak to them or else I'll have the thunder of the entire Krielm military come down on this place! Do you really want to be responsible for the death of innocent civilians because you couldn't give me a few minutes with some good-for-nothing lab coats?"

I hold strong eye contact with him for what feels like an hour until he finally reaches under the desk and presses a button that sends a loud buzz through the lobby unlocking the door. "Cells two fifteen through two thirty-one. Place your weapons in the bin and make it quick." I drop my two knives in the box by the desk and head in.

Making my way out of the desolate lobby I find myself walking down a long hallway with flickering lights hanging from a ceiling fifteen to twenty meters above my head. The cells sit side by side with each inmate wearing yellow jumpsuits sitting silently on their beds staring at the ceiling or floor in a trance. None of them make a sound or even look into the hallway to see who is walking by their cell. The steady smack of water drops in the corner of the hallway is the only sound accompanying my footsteps as I arrive to the stairs that lead to the second floor.

211

213

215

Peering through the cells I spot a young man staring up at the ceiling, not realizing I'm looking at him. "Hello? Are you a scientist?" I ask.

"Huh?" he doesn't look away from the spot on the ceiling as drool drips from his mouth to the floor with his head tilting ever so slightly.

"Are you alright?"

"Uh-huh." I don't think he even knows where he's at. There is no way this is one of the scientists who created the time machine.

I continue on and look into the other cells where each person is either looking at the ceiling, wall or their own hands in a still disbelief or deep contemplation.

"Hey," finally a voice from someone who doesn't seem completely brain-dead.

228

He sits on the side of his bed and is able to make eye contact with me, unlike the others. "What's wrong with everyone here?" I ask.

"They keep everyone drugged up to keep them obedient. They don't want riots or talks of escape between prisoners so from the day you're put in here to the day you leave you're kept under a strict and high dosage of K-482."

"So why aren't you drugged up?"

"Because the sergeant major likes to keep me clear headed. He comes to speak to me every once in a while and when he attempted to get information from me when I was drugged up I was, without saying, not much help. With everyone else drugged up I wouldn't have much luck getting them to help me with an escape anyways." He turns his head to reveal a large and brutal scar on the side of his neck.

"You know Greer? Were you one of the scientists he had locked up?"

He stands and walks over to the bars. "I'm Dr. Muvato. I help Greer on occasion so I can get my sentence reduced."

"You made the doorway?"

The doctor hesitates before whispering back, "What do you know about that?"

"I know it's a time machine, and I know I need to use it."

"You were sent here by Greer?"

He was put in here by the sergeant major so I can't imagine the two of them are too close, but I can't take any chances of him revealing I was here speaking to him about the time machine. "What are your thoughts on the sergeant major?"

"I believe he is a war hungry, thieving, power tripping son of a bitch who deserves to die." Perfect. "What do you think about him?"

"I believe he's a lying, manipulative son of a bitch who deserves to die. If you haven't heard, they are in the process of attacking the west. I need to use the time machine to go back and stop all this from happening and I was told you were the one who knows how to use it."

"Well I made it. Wouldn't make much sense if I didn't know how it works," he turns and walks back to his cot. "But it doesn't matter. I couldn't explain the inner workings of it to a field head like you. You'd never understand."

TIMELINE SIX

"Try me."

He lies down and looks up to the ceiling. "You know, sometimes I wish that they would just drug me up so I would zone out and forget I'm here. I'm envious of my fellow prisoners for at least they don't care if they have no one to talk to."

"Hey! The time machine! This is really important. I need to know how to use it."

"You can't!" he sits up, "It won't work unless you have someone on the outside to operate it and unless you want your atoms scattered across a trillion different timelines you won't be able to use it without one of us. And unfortunately for you, we all seem a little indisposed at that moment."

I step forward to the bars and whisper, "What if I get you out of here? Would you help me?"

"I would want nothing more than to get out of this place, but you don't seem to understand how impossible that would be. Breaking me out is the easy part, but breaking into Ft. Bildine and getting to one of the most classified and valuable assets owned by the humans isn't going to be a cake walk. Hell, I don't even know if it's still at the fort. Sorry, but it's impossible."

"I'll get you out of here. I'll get all of you out of here under the condition that you help me do this. When are the drug injections?"

"Why?"

"I'll get you out right before they get your coworkers that way everyone can sober up a bit for the escape."

"Are you not hearing me? It's impossible! You may be able to get us out of here, but you're not going back in time. There is no hope for you."

"If I have to do this myself I will, but I'm going back in time to stop this. With or without your help."

Walking down the silent hallway the doctor's voice echoes down to me, "*The second and seventeenth of every month. That's when they inject the prisoners. It will take a few more days after that before they're sober enough to focus, but if you find a way to stop those injections on the second we should be able to leave by the fourth.*"

I turn back to him. "Be ready."

ALEX

JANUARY 29TH, 313 P.D.

1126

4 DAYS, 6 HOURS AND 20 MINUTES LATER

"Hello Robert."

Walking back into the prison lobby I see the same receptionist as last time.
"Who are- oh. Jeff. Here to talk to the scientists again?"

"You got it."

I drop my blades in the box by the desk followed by him immediately sliding the box away from me. "That's funny, because I had actually spoke to Greer the other day after you left. Turns out he doesn't even know a Jeff Wyatt."

I thought this might happen. "Ha, you really think he's going to share that information over an open communicator line? If you don't trust me, have him come down here."

Luckily I know that he is currently at St. Srana so he won't even attempt to come all the way back to Krielmopolis for this. He lifts the communicator to his lips, "Lines director at Storm Cape, Robert Holmes calling for Sergeant Major Greer."

We silently wait as the communicator connects. Robert stares at me both with confusion at my plan and envy for the fact I'm a successful war veteran and he's stuck behind a desk in a prison. "*This is Greer.*"

"Sergeant major, I'm here with that Jeff Wyatt. He says he needs to talk to the lab coats again."

I grab the communicator from his hand and speak into it, "Sir, this is Jeff Wyatt in regards to case two four three dash eight one two," the numbers at the top of the metal man form I found at the scientists' lab, "I have been requested by Dr. Haru Xaun to ask Dr. Muvato about the you know what as new developments have arose."

"New Developments? What new developments?"

"Sir, as you know it is best not to speak about this with open ears around. We must keep this private as there is the possibility of a second coming through."

TIMELINE SIX

"What are you talking about private?"

"Xaun will explain everything when you get back to town, but we must act quickly to stop a second attack."

"Do what you need to do. I'll be back in a couple days to figure this out. This is ridiculous. I can't fu-" the communicator cuts off.

Robert clearly does not believe a word I've said. "And you said you were sent here by Greer?"

"If I told you I was sent here by Dr. Haru Xaun, would that mean anything to you?"

"This sounds like a bunch of shrep to me. How about you just wait until he gets back to town then we'll get this whole thing figured out."

"Did you not hear him? He said to 'do what you need to do' and I need to get inside. Now if you don't let me in, there can and will be serious and devastating consequences to the human race. Do you want to explain to Greer why you knowingly disobeyed his order and let hundreds of thousands of his people die?"

After another hour of intense eye contact he reaches under the desk and presses the button sending a loud buzz throughout the building unlocking the door leading to the cell hallways. Exiting the lobby I make a mental snapshot of the fire escape routes to the prison where it shows the infirmary, master control room and guard break room.

With the envious receptionist all on edge about my presence I can almost guarantee extra eyes are watching me. A couple guards come from their hideouts to look over the rails at me as I make my way down the hallway to the stairs. With everyone drugged up here there aren't many guards needed to keep watch, but I see at least three so, like cockroaches, there are probably several others that I don't see.

I make my way to Dr. Muvato's cell where he sits on his cot. "Hey," he says to me trying to hide the fact that he is excited to see me. The guards waiting around keep their distance to act like they aren't watching me, which luckily means they can't hear me either.

"How's it going?" I ask.

"It's going. What are you doing here? It's only the first."

"It's actually still January. Only the twenty-ninth."

"Nothing screws up your Friday more than figuring out it's Wednesday," he steps up to the bars, "So what are you doing here then?"

"I'm going to switch out the injections with water, but I don't know where they keep them. I'm thinking the infirmary, right?"

"No," pointing with his eyes he tells me they come from a closed door at the end of the hallway on the bottom floor. "They always come from that door but you'll need a badge to get in."

"What time do they come out with the injections?"

"I have no idea. There are no clocks in here."

Looking around I notice there are not even windows to be seen. There is no way for them to know what time it is. "Do you have any guess of morning, afternoon or evening?"

The doctor walks back to his cot to have a seat, "I'm telling you, it's impossible."

"No it's not. All I need is a badge. I can get that easily."

"And then get to the injections unnoticed? They don't have it heavily guarded here, but they'll notice you walking into their medication room. It was a nice thought though."

"Come on! You're a scientist, you can help me figure this out."

As if he's pumped full of medicine he silently leans back in his cot and stares up to the ceiling.

"Fine. I'll do it myself."

Walking down the stairs and back down the hallway I feel the guards' eyes falling away from me.

Exiting the hallway I step up to the desk to grab my weapons that are no longer there. "My knives?"

Robert, the jealous desk attendant, hesitantly pushes the bin back over to me. "Don't you come back here without Greer. You hear me?"

I grab my knives and head toward the door.

TIMELINE SIX

"You hear me boy? Don't even think about walking back in here unless you have someone I know with you!"

I leave, still with no clear plan in mind.

FEBRUARY 1ST, 313 P.D.

2158

3 DAYS, 10 HOURS AND 28 MINUTES LATER

Greer had just gotten back to Krielmopolis a few hours ago meaning my time is running short. If Greer finds out I'm the Jeff Wyatt he's heard about I'll lose my promotion and probably my freedom too.

With the doors of the prison locking for the night in a matter of minutes I make my way through the front door. Out of time and options I approach the front desk holding a bat and three different lines of rope. I run into Robert as he is speaking to the guard taking over his shift.

"Hey! What did I tell you last time?" he makes his way around the desk to me. "I told you without Greer you're not coming in. And guess what? I had even spoken to-"

Already feeling remorseful for my brutality I swing the bat across his face knocking him to the ground spewing blood across the floor. The guard behind the desk sprints toward me with a small baton, which I easily dodge while sweeping his legs out from underneath of him. Using the rope I quickly tie his feet and hands together behind his back and slide him to the corner of the room. Robert slowly pushes himself on his hands and knees creating a small puddle of blood on the ground below his nose. I pull his arm out from under him bringing him back down to the ground giving me the freedom to tie his arms and legs together behind his back as well. I rip the badge off his shirt as I slide him across the floor to the opposite corner of the room.

"You're done! You're done for!" Robert yells to me as he struggles to get himself free of his restraints. "I hope you like how these prisoners are kept in here cause you're about to join them!"

It's all for the greater good.

It's all for the greater good.

I drop my bat into the bin by the desk then use his badge to open up the door leading to the cells. I close the door as quickly as possible so his voice isn't heard echoing to the other guards. *"You hear me you son of a bit-"*

I speed walk down the hallway, but not too quickly as to draw attention to myself. The guards pacing in front of the cells up above stare down at me as I make my way to the door at the end of the hallway. I'm able to unlock the door before one calmly yells down to me, "Hey! Hey, what are you doing down there?"

I don't reply as I enter.

"Hey! Get out of there!" the guard yells sprinting down the stairs to the bottom floor after me.

Throwing the door shut I find the closest chair and pry it under the door handle. Beeps are heard over and over again as the guards continue using their badges to unsuccessfully unlock the wedged door.

"Uhm," Quickly turning around I see a skinny, terrified guard sitting at a control table filled with buttons and levers. "W-what's going on?" he nervously asks.

"I need you to step away from the table and get in the corner of the room."

Without a fight he hurries out of his chair following my command.

With him cooperating I calmly ask, "Is there a way to unlock all the cells from in here?"

"Open the door!" one of the guards aggressively yells from outside.

The master control operator looking to the door shakes in his boots.

"Hey buddy!" I get his attention back to me, "Is there a way to get the cells open from in here?"

Rapidly shaking his head and answering far too hesitantly he replies, "No."

One thing the military has taught me is to spot a liar immediately. "I'll ask another way. Which of these buttons unlocks the cells?" I threaten him by showing off the knife in my boot.

Hesitantly he answers, "The eight buttons on the bottom row."

TIMELINE SIX

I lift the plastic housing covering the bottom row of buttons and press every single one. The sound of sliding metal is heard from outside the door.

"What are you doing in there?"

"Now operator," I bring his attention back to me, "A lot of these inmates are too drugged up to be any use for me. Is there something here that can sober them up?"

"Uhm..."

I step closer to him, "And I would highly suggest not lying to me again."

"There is no antidote. The only thing that would work is maybe adrenaline shots."

"Okay, where can I find those?"

He points to the other side of the room where another locked door sits, this one with a window on it.

"Walk over to the door and open it," I order him.

He sprints to the door and fiddles with his badge to unlock it. Opening the door turns on the white motion lights showing off aisles of cabinets and drawers full of medical equipment.

"Get the adrenaline and make it fast!"

Running inside he fiddles through the medicine cabinets knocking vials and jars to the ground.

Crack!

The chair holding the door shut begins losing its durability with the force of a half dozen guards attempting to push it open.

"Come on buddy!" I announce, "We don't have all day!"

Hurriedly, he fumbles through another drawer, "Here! Here they are! I found them!"

I rush over to him so I can verify the word 'adrenaline' is printed on the container holding the several dozen syringes, but that's not the case. "What the hell is epinephrine?"

"It's adrenaline, I swear."

Knowing I plan to use it on the inmates I tell him to, "Use it on yourself."

"What?"

Crack!

"For your sake, I hope this isn't another lie." With the chair giving way I rip one of the needles from the drawer and stab the operator in the arm injecting him with the fluid. "How do you feel?" I ask.

The green of his eyes disappear as his pupils over take the iris. His entire body shakes as if he has electricity coursing from his head to his toes. "Ahhhhhhh!" With the extra energy and confidence he dives at me as an attack, but I quickly move out of the way allowing him to slam into the wall behind me.

I hurry out of the room holding the crate of adrenaline shots and shut the door behind me. As he pushes himself toward the door I grab a crowbar from the corner of the room and smash the badge scanner so he is unable to get himself free. He slams his body against the door over and over trying to bust it down, but is clearly just wearing himself out while probably dislocating his shoulder in the process.

Crash!

The door being held shut by the chair is thrown open as the chair legs completely break apart. I scan the room quickly taking note of the number of guards, the weapons in their hands and their projected paths toward me.

Done.

With the crate safely in my arms I swing the crowbar down destroying the master control board sending the prison into a temporary pitch-black fighting ring. Keeping the visuals of the room stuck in the monitor of my mind I leap in the air and feel the jawbone of one of the guards break apart against the end of the crowbar. Hitting the ground and crouching as low as I can I feel the wind of one of the batons swing above my head followed by him collapsing to the ground with a shattered shin from another swing of my weapon.

The guards attempt to regain their spatial placement as the back-up lights lined along the walls flip on filling the prison with a dim blue light. Four guards stand around me ready to fight, as one lies unconscious on the ground and the other squirms back and forth holding his dented leg. I have made my way over to the door

TIMELINE SIX

putting my back toward the hallway as the other guards face me with their backs to the master control operator still trying to push his way out of the medicine room.

"Give up guy. It's over," one of the guards says to me as I back out into the hallway. "Put the box and crowbar down and put your hands in the air."

I know I can take them, but I'd rather not have to hurt all of them. They are just doing their jobs and don't realize the necessity of my mission. Turning around I look at all the cells to see the prisoners slowly wandering out of their containments as they try to figure out what's going on.

Maybe I don't have to hurt the guards at all.

I sprint into the hallway having all the guards follow me as I place the crowbar under my arm while fishing one of the syringes out from the box. I grab the toughest looking inmate who is aimlessly looking around his cell and inject him in the arm with the epineph-a-whatever. His sense of confusion fades as the pupils fill his eyes and his fists clench up. I hand him the crow bar from under my arm and sprint up the stairs halfway to the second floor. Regretting my decision almost immediately, I watch as the inmate brutally slams the crow bar into a guard's face while letting the others get away from him.

"You want to spit on me!" the inmate yells as the guard's face is being smashed into a pulp. The other guards don't seem too affected by their murdered coworker as they sprint up the stairs after me.

I grab the inmate staring at the ground from cell 201 and fill him full of the epi-stuff. I toss the needle to the ground while grabbing another to inject it into inmate 203. Heading down the line I continue injecting inmate after inmate until I arrive to the doctor's cell where he has wandered off, nowhere to be seen. I look back where I came from to see all the guards on the ground being beaten half to death by the over-energized inmates.

"Come on, Ocean. Do you hear me? Are you in there?" the doctor's voice rings out from a cell a few meters down the hall.

I hurry to the cell and look inside to find the doctor kneeling down in front of a young kid who stares at his hands without noticing the doctor is even speaking to him.

"Come on Ocean, just concentrate on my words."

The kid replies, "Yeah. Yup," obviously not understanding a word being said to him.

The doctor looks over to me, "What were you thinking? I said we couldn't get out of here until the fourth at the earliest! There is no way they can get away from the prison like this. They'll be captured within minutes!"

"Here, hang on." I pull out a syringe and place down the box so I can inject the energy fluid into the kid's arm. The doctor worriedly watches as Ocean blinks a few times then closes his drooling mouth as he comes back to reality.

Shaking with energy he yells, "Wha- what's going on?"

The doctor looks back to me, "What the hell did you give him?"

"Epi-something."

The kid stands and jumps up and down trying to get rid of his extra energy. "Ahhhhh!"

"Epinephrine. You're a genius!"

The doctor reaches in the crate grabbing a handful of syringes to begin injecting all of his fellow scientists who are wandering aimlessly around their cells.

The kid stops jumping up and down to walk over to me. "What is going on? Who are you?"

"My name is Alex and I'm here to get you out of this place." I hand him a handful of syringes. "Help me shoot up all the inmates up with this adrenaline so they can sober up."

Worried, he looks down at the syringes shaking in his hands. "All the inmates?"

"That's right. We're going to need every single one of them to be awake and wired."

I give the kid a little push followed with him running down the wall of cells injecting everyone he sees. The door leading out of the prison begins to be flooded with juiced up convicts in their yellow jumpsuits heading back out to the free world. Reaching into the box for the final syringe I inject another wandering prisoner.

TIMELINE SIX

“What are you doing?” the doctor asks me with his jittering team standing behind him, “They aren’t on our team. Why are you injecting everyone?”

“What better distraction to get everyone from the fort than to have a town full of juiced-up, escaped inmates?”

“I’m telling you, it will still be impossible to get in there! They won’t send out everyone.”

“I got you out of here and you promised you’d help. We need to try!”

The doctor hesitates before turning around to his convulsing team, “Okay people! This man has gotten us out of jail so we’re going to help him get to Emergence. It won’t be easy so anyone who doesn’t want to help is more than welcome to run off into hiding.”

This announcement is followed by half of the group sprinting down the stairs and out the front door.

“Alright. Everyone else. Come on!”

I follow the motivated doctor down the stairs over the dead guards, having the rest of the scientists outrunning us both toward the exit.

The kid gets to the doctor with one last syringe in his hand. Stuttering he tells him, “H-here Dr. M. Y-you sh-should use this so you-you have a better chance of g-g-getting away.”

The doctor contemplates for a moment as he watches the rest of his team evacuate the prison like animals from an oncoming tsunami. The color in his eyes vanishes as the needle penetrates his thigh letting the juice pour into his body.

“Let’s go!” he yells running after his team with the kid right behind him.

I hurry to catch up as I pass the mutilated prison guards who had been tied up earlier in the lobby. Poor Robert never stood a chance.

FEBRUARY 1ST, 313 P.D.

2348

1 HOURS AND 50 MINUTES LATER

"Report to your homes and lock the doors. This is a red alert! Report to your homes and lock the doors until the all clear sounds. This is a red alert!" the voice echoes over the communicators and loud speakers as we enter Krielm Central.

The scientists, still wired and jittery, follow me behind a building where we hide from the marching soldiers heading out to the desert land in search for the escaped inmates. We are right around the corner from Ft. Bildine and luckily have made it all the way through town without being noticed.

"Okay, those were a bunch from the fort," I tell them as they jump up and down wanting to continue on. "Our plan is working. As long as we stay out of the way we should-"

"What the hell is going on?" the sound of Greer's voice sends a shiver down my spine as I push the scientists back out of sight. "Who the hell was on watch tonight?" Creeping around the corner I see both Sergeant Major Greer and the new general, who I'm assuming is his father or older brother, as they look nearly identical. I missed the ceremony, but somehow he was able to take over Jim's job without much attention being brought to him.

The general replies, "You don't know? You said you had the prison on lock!"

The two of them, along with Lieutenant Thomas, head toward Ft. Bildine, "I know who it was! It was that dag-nosed piece-" Thomas is cut off by the door of the fort slamming shut with the three of them on the other side. Two armed guards stand watch outside the fort's door.

The kid gets next to my shoulder, "H-how are we going t-to get inside?"

"We need some sort of distraction."

One of the women scientists steps up. "L-listen. W-w-we've already botched this life. Our only ch-chance for another one of u-us being hap-p-py is for you to make it ba-back in time. Make sure I-I don't stay in prison in th-the next one." She takes a deep, shaky breath and sprints off passed the fort. "Hey you! C-come get me!"

Recognizing her yellow storm cape jumpsuit one guard runs after her while the other decides not to leave his post.

TIMELINE SIX

The kid leans back over to me, "O-okay. One down. How ab-bout the other one?"

Pulling out my blade I debate on whether to use it. He doesn't deserve to die, but is it worth it for the greater good?

The doctor leans over to me, "Th-throw it at him. We need to move before the o-other g-guard comes back." He's right. I wasn't trained to hesitate under any circumstance.

Without a second thought I move around the corner and chuck my blade through the air toward the guard keeping watch. I sprint after the blade in the air toward the guard ready to stop the inevitable firing of his gun. He points the barrel at me as the blade goes deep in his neck throwing his other hand off the trigger. Still alive he attempts to fire at me, but I arrive at his gun in time to rip it from his hands before he can fire a single shot. Hating to see him suffer I grab the blade and slice it across his jugular sending him face-first to the ground. Just like the guards at the prison he was just doing his job, but still he had to die because of the orders from Greer.

Pulling the badge from the guard's shirt I open the door to the fort to reveal an empty hallway with dozens of doors on either side. I motion for the scientists to hurry over to me. Each of them, besides the doctor, can't seem to get their eyes off the bloody guard lying face first on the ground as they enter.

"Hey!" a few meters away the guard who had ran after the woman returns with her captured and handcuffed.

Summersaulting over the dead guard I grab his gun, crouch, then shoot the approaching man over the lady-scientist's shoulder hitting him square between the eyes.

"Someone will have heard that! We need to hurry!" I whisper as loud as I can as the woman unlocks her wrist restraints with the corpse's keys. The sounds of the chaotic city are silenced as the door is slammed shut with everyone of us inside the fort. "Okay. Where is this machine?"

The doctor points down the hallway. "This way."

We only make it a few steps down the hall when the shadows of a couple soldiers walking from the end of the corridor are seen coming toward us. I quickly unlock the closest door with the badge. "In here! Quick!"

With the six of us all piling into the small room big enough for maybe a couple people, we are barely able to get the door shut in time.

The juiced up kid whispers to me, "What's the plan? Th-they are for sure going to-to be watching Emergence l-like crazy! Th-there is n-no way we'll be able to g-get to it."

Even with the dozens of soldiers they sent out to catch the inmates there will still be a hundred men scattered around this base either keeping watch or working. And a time machine? That type of technology is going to be blocked off and watched like nothing else here.

There is only one way. "Which of you can fight?"

The group of scientists all frightened by the thought of hurting others look to one another without answering.

"I know none of you want to fight, but one of the most important things I've learned in the military is a lot of times fighting is the only way to get things done. No one wants war. No one wants to kill people. No one wants to see people suffer. But there are times when the last resort for the good of human kind is to pick up your arms and fight. In just a matter of months millions of innocent anti-species are going to die. I don't know where you stand on anti-specie rights, but you must admit they do not deserve to die or be enslaved by the humans. They don't deserve the pain and suffrage people like Greer and this new general are going to put on them. They-"

"It is Greer," the doctor interrupts me.

"What?"

"The new general. That's Greer from the future."

I try to look past the fact that this is something I didn't figure out on my own earlier. "Well I'll be damned. Anyways, we cannot let him succeed! Our best bet for him to fail in his tirade is to get me to the time machine and send me back. I have been given solid evidence on how to stop their plan and help everyone involved. Now who's with me?"

TIMELINE SIX

The scientists, still shaking with adrenaline, look to one another again before one in the back has the courage to respond, "C-can we kill Greer?"

"I would have it no other way."

"Let's do it! I ca-can't stand it in this small room anymore!"

Before I can announce the plan, the scientists burst from the room and into the hallway where the armed soldiers rudely greet them with guns out, "Who the hell are you?"

I step pass the scientists to be face-to-face with the soldiers. Still wearing my military uniform I explain to them, "I got a hold of these inmates outside. I'm bringing them through for lock up."

"Why the hell did you bring them here?" the first one asks.

The second chimes in, "And why were you all in the utility closet?"

Out of answers I reach out and grab the gun from the second soldier's hand and flip it around to bust the first soldier in the face before he is able to fire on us. His gun goes flying across the room followed immediately by the kid running over and picking it up. "Okay," I say to the soldiers, "throw your badges to the ground."

The two of them throw their badges to their feet and throw their arms up in the air to surrender. I walk them forward toward the front door leading out of the fort. Pushing the door open, soldier number one trips over the blood dried corpse lying outside the door.

"Be lucky I didn't kill you," I regret saying as I shut the door to lock them out. I normally would never say something so dark to a fellow military man, but that's the only thing I can think of that *might* get them to not come back.

I turn back to face the scientists. "Okay, we have to move to the armory to arm everyone here. Follow me."

Our footsteps echo down the hallway as I sprint forward with the herd of scientists close on my tail. The kid keeps the barrel of the stolen gun facing forward as he notices I do the same with my new weapon. "Military man, w-what's your name?" he asks. This kid obviously doesn't understand the need to be silent right now. "I just wa-wa-wanted to say thanks f-for getting u-us out of there."

"Shhhh!"

I peek my head around the corner to see that the coast is clear.

"Let's move." The kid and I lead the way with the doctor and other scientists right behind. "You're welcome kid."

"I heard it too." It's Greer!

We've gone too far from the corners and have no doors nearby for us to hide behind. Greer and Thomas's shadows circle around the corner up ahead next to where the armory door is. I whisper as loudly as I can, "Go! Go back! I'll take them!"

A few of the scientists take a few steps back the way we came from until they notice the doctor stepping up in front of the kid and myself. Muvato rips the gun from the kid's hands. "Take the soldier to Emergence and get him back where he needs to go," he orders the kid, "I'll take care of Greer."

"Hey! Who's there?" the shadows hurry toward us.

"But Dr. M," the kid pleads, "what's going to happen?"

"If he succeeds this will be one of only a few timelines where we are killed. Our other selves will thank us for our sacrifice today."

"I hear you lab coat!"

"You were a great mentor, Dr. M," the kid's voice shakes as he latches his arms around the doctor.

"You were a great student Ocean. Now get him out of here!" The doctor pushes the kid away from him.

Sergeant Major Greer and Lieutenant Thomas circle around the corner with both their pistols pointed toward us.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

I pull the kid against the wall as bullets whizz through the hallway at us. The doctor fires and misses every shot as Thomas and Greer both successfully hit a few of the scientists standing around the doctor. I shoot Greer in the leg, dropping him to his stomach with his gun sliding away from him across the floor. Unfortunately, the doctor has taken a bullet to the stomach during the confrontation.

"Dr. M!" the kid yells out while I hold him back with one arm and aim the gun with the other. With a single pull of the trigger I put a bullet between Thomas's eyes forcing his lifeless body to fall on top Greer's leg keeping him pinned to the ground.

TIMELINE SIX

The doctor, struggling to keep his balance, stumbles toward the sergeant followed by the surviving scientists. Greer reaches for the communicator at his waste but the doctor gets to him first and kicks it away from him.

"You damn lab coats!" Greer squirms on the ground attempting to reach for his gun, "I should've put you all to death the day you made that machine!"

I whisper to the kid, "Come on. Those gunshots will have been heard all through this place. We have to get to the time machine now!"

"No," he cries back as I try to pull him down the hallway away from Greer, "We can't leave Dr. M!"

"If we don't, all of this will be for nothing. Let's go!"

I pull the kid along while he holds a strong gaze on the doctor and Greer. The sounds of punching and kicking are accompanied by the yells of Greer as we make our way around the corner.

Four armed guards make their way down the hallway toward us. I yell to them, "I've got this one!"

Blinded by my uniform, they continue on toward the scientists pummeling Greer.

"Okay kid, where's the machine?"

"It's-" he's cut off by the sound of gunfire from around the corner followed immediately by the dropping of dead bodies.

"Kid!" I get his attention back on me, "We need to move! Where are we going?"

"Th-this way," he says through the tears running down his face.

We hurry down the hallway until we arrive at a cracked open door, which I thought would be locked shut. Inside sits a large electric box with wires and cables hanging off it. Fiddling with it are two more military men and the new general. I hide Ocean outside the door as General Greer turns to face me.

"Soldier! What is going on out there?"

"We have it taken care of," I tell him.

"Well get in here and help us with this. We need to move this out of here immediately!"

With all of their heads turned back toward the machine I pull up the gun and put a bullet into both of the soldier's heads immediately followed by Greer turning around with his pistol pointed at me. The kid slowly steps around the corner to face the general.

With him noticing the sniper patch on my arm he makes the correct decision to place his pistol on the ground. "You're making a big mistake soldier. Do you have any idea who I am?"

I push the kid forward into the room while circling around the general to get him away from the machine. "Start setting it up, kid."

Greer calmly asks me, "What are you trying to do traitor?"

The kid messes around in the back of the machine as I kick the general's gun toward the wall. "How much longer kid?"

"Uhm, a couple minutes."

"You're never getting back," the general says trying to step forward toward me. I step forward with my barrel only a meter away from him forcing him to stop. "Do you understand what we're doing here?" he continues, "We're giving the humans a new life, a new way of living. We're struggling here! The air is dangerous to breathe, the ground won't grow crops and energy production is at an all time low. We need the west for us to live on. What is this about? The anti-species? You think you are going to be their savior? Bull! You can't help them! They are a dying breed that doesn't deserve what they have. They are mutated freaks that ruin this world with their gangs and their crimes and their crazy religions!"

"Kid, how much longer?"

"I need time!"

Greer attempts to step forward toward me again. "You don't know what I've seen from them. They are monsters! They have disgusting giant creatures that can wade across the entire ocean with ease! You know what they did? They came over and knocked down buildings and killed every single person they could. Thanks to me coming back we stopped that from happening. We saved this world! *I* saved this world! Hell! I saved the entire human race! Are you about to try and undo this? You are attempting to single handedly be the downfall of the human race, soldier!"

TIMELINE SIX

I show great restraint by continuing to hold my tongue. If only he knew how wrong he was. "Kid, come on! What's going on back there?"

"I'm going! I'm going! M-my fingers are all shaky from that shot!"

Stomp! Stomp! Stomp! Stomp!

The guards are returning down the hallway after surely killing all the scientists. I keep the gun pointed at the general as I make my way back to the door. After I slam it closed I move the barrel of the gun away from the general for half a second to blow out the pad to the door lock, which will hopefully destroy the mechanism on the other side as well. The general forgets my military skillset and leaps for his gun on the ground, but I return my aim and shoot through his hand forcing the gun to fly across the room once again.

"Owe!" he screams holding his bleeding hand.

"We're coming general!" The door beeps repeatedly on the other side as the guards attempt to use their badges to open it up. *"Move. Let me try mine."*

"Why don't you just kill me already?" he asks me now accepting that he is defeated, "What's with dragging this out?"

"Because," I say my first words to him, "you don't deserve a quick death."

"What the hell did I do that was so bad? Huh? I've done everything in my power to help this race and you think I'm just some monster? What did I do that was so bad?"

"You lied! You took my consciousness and put it into a robot without my consent. You used me to kill a race of people that I don't have a problem with. I told you no and you forced me into a war I didn't belong in. There was a conscious version of myself out there in a metal suit living a life of pain. And not just that, after you created him you killed him! You forced him to do things he- I didn't want to do and then when he comes back you blow him to bits! There isn't many times a person gets to avenge their own death, but here I am with a gun pointed at my murderer."

"What? The metal man? You think you were in there? You stupid, stupid idiot. That was just a bunch of wire and cables! I watched the lab coats take it apart myself! There wasn't a bit of human life in there!"

"It wasn't human but it was me nonetheless. Organic material or a bunch of wires and cables, I had a conversation with myself less than an hour before he died. He was in pain. He felt remorse. He felt the need for revenge. He gave me the mission to avenge his death and every single person you made him kill. And when your future self comes back and tells you to do something, it's not a bad idea to listen to him. You should know a thing or two about that."

"He wasn't real! It was a damned computer!"

The kid speaks up, "Okay. It's ready."

I keep the gun pointed at the general as I step backwards into the machine, "If sentience is being questioned, then sentience exists to question it."

The kid picks up a box with a switch on it as I step onto the platform in the machine.

I whisper to him, "Did that make sense? What I said just now?"

"Kind of. It's a stretch, but if he thinks about it he may get it."

Bang!

Letting my guard down for half a second has severe consequences as the sound of Greer's pistol fires off. Not realizing he was right next to it he had time to pick up his pistol and fire. Realizing I am perfectly fine, proving what a poor shot he is, allows me to fire the pistol of my own sending a bullet through the general's head.

"We're coming general!"

"Kid? Are you okay?"

The kid scrunches his face as his shirt begins to soak with blood.

"Frak! Kid! You'll be all right! Don't worry!"

I go to step out and help him when he throws his hand up, "No, don't. Let me send you back."

"But you're going to die! I can help you real fast so you can send yourself back too."

"It doesn't work that way. One person always has to stay behind to operate the switch." His legs begin to buckle.

"Alex. My name is Alex."

"Ocean. It's nice to meet you." A smile forms over his pained face.

TIMELINE SIX

"One... two... three!"

Bang!

A battering ram slams against the door nearly breaking it down.

"Hurry," the kid says, "get back in. Fix all this."

"I will. Thank you."

With his fingers on the switch he says, "And if you can, don't let us go to prison. That place really sucked."

I force a smile over the immense amount of pity I feel for him.

Switch.

A roar begins to grow behind my head as the lights of the machine fill the room.

"One... two..." the voice outside the door fades away under the enormous roar of the time machine. I have enough time to see Ocean fall unconscious on the ground just as the door is broken down.

"I'll save you kid."

Flash!

ALEX

CHAPTER 34

THE TRAITOR

TIMELINE SEVEN

ALEX

JULY 2ND, 312 P.D.

2123

6 MONTHS, 30 DAYS, 8 HOURS AND 19 MINUTES EARLIER

I'M BLINDED

from the surrounding light around me.

The cold feeling of travelling through different dimensions lingers in my body even though I have zero recollection of the journey. I feel as though I have just woken up from a weekend binge of whiskey, tequila and morphine. The piercing light slowly fades away revealing that my perception of this timeline is nothing like what I expected. Looking out the doorway entrance I see three men, two of which are slowly raising their pistols toward me while the third lies bleeding on the ground. Their arms swing slowly toward me as if the air were a vat of thick gelatin. I attempt to move out of the way when I realize my own body has the exact same vitality as theirs. Like stuck in a bad dream, I find myself struggling to get my own body to make any actions at a speed in which I'm used to. The terrifying feeling that this time progression may be permanent is relieved as the seconds start ticking forward in a way that seems familiar.

"Wwwwwhhhhhhooooooo ttttthhhhhheeeeeee hhhheeelllll aarree youu?" Greer, in the general's uniform, asks me as I adjust my mind to the world around me.

My vision finally returns to normal giving me the chance to look at the ground behind the Greers where I realize the third person on the floor is Doctor Muvato gasping for air while holding his bleeding neck. "Wwwweee neeed tooo helpp this man!" I yell as time has finally returned to what I remembered it to be, "Get him to the hospital immediately!"

The general ignores my demand, "I said, 'who are you?'"

"My name is Alexander T. Van Hayes. I have been sent back to help you succeed in your mission, future Greer. First, we need that man helped before he bleeds out," I respond.

TIMELINE SEVEN

The general lowers his gun and faces toward the younger Greer, "Go get the medic for the lab coat. After he's sewed up have him locked up immediately along with the others."

"Uhm, okay," the young Greer responds. Obviously still very confused by what is happening, he runs out of the room and shuts the door behind him leaving just myself, the fake general and the dying doctor.

"Why are you here, Hayes?" Greer asks.

"I've come back to help you in your mission. You send me back just a few months from now because something goes wrong. Now I need to get moving if we plan to succeed."

"How do I know you're telling the truth? What if this is a trick by the anti-species?"

"Sir, I do not know what you're talking about, but if I don't act quick we will fail. Check out my file on who I am and I assure you that you will believe in my abilities and trust my word. I need to get to a ship and head to the west right away."

Greer steps forward and asks quietly, "What happens? Why did I need you to come back?"

I lean forward to his ear, "You lose everything. You are dethroned by General Jim and placed in prison for time tampering, a new law he set forth without Eitman's knowledge. You recruited me to stop this from happening."

He steps back away from me. "Tell me your entire plan and I will let you go."

The younger Greer re-enters the room accompanied by two guards holding a stretcher where they place the gasping doctor.

"If you trust me," I tell him, "you'll let me go now. Time, ironically, is not a luxury we have to play with."

The doctor is carried out of the room by the two guards. The young Greer asks, "What's going on?"

The general ignores his younger self, "Get going cadet, but get back to me as soon as you know what's going on. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Walking out of the room the young Greer puts up his hand to stop me, "Hey, I deserve to know what the hell-"

"Let him go!" the general yells, "I'm in charge now and if I say an order you better damn well listen!"

Even to his younger self he is pretty evil. "I need into the armory," I tell him.

"What for?"

"A weapon."

Without hesitation the general walks ahead of me to the armory where he opens it up and lets me enter. The thought of him being dethroned has blinded him to any possibility that what I say is a lie. Not wanting to take too much, I grab a pistol and a sniper along with plenty of bullets for both. "Anything else?" he asks.

"A vehicle. I need to get to Tepus dock as quick as possible."

A slow walking, confused Sergeant Major Greer approaches. The general walks to him, reaches in his pocket and rips out a set of keys. "There is a bike outside. Use it. Just get it done."

The young Greer, getting fed up, reaches to pull the keys from my hand. "Now this is where I draw the line! You think you can just come back in time, take my transportation and boss me around?" I'm not sure which one of us he is talking to as he keeps looking back and forth from me to his future self. "This entire thing is a trick and I know it! You can't just come back and think you own everything! This is my fort, my soldiers, my weapons and my vehicle! I'm tempted to have you both locked up!"

The older Greer waits a few seconds before throwing his fist into the sergeant's chin knocking him to the ground. He bends down, grabs the keys and hands them back to me. "Good luck soldier."

I shake his hand and head toward the exit of the fort.

"How dare you speak to me like that you self-loathing piece of garbage!" My guess is Greer needs a therapist more than a war. It doesn't matter because if all goes as planned, he'll be dead in a few weeks.

TIMELINE SEVEN

JULY 3RD, 312 P.D.

0558

8 HOURS AND 35 MINUTES LATER

"It's bout damn time! Y'all act like this ain't important!"

John Holsturn, the owner of Tepus dock, yells as I get off Greer's bike in front of his house. The weather is starting to lighten up as I attempt to ring out my uniform from the downpour I just drove through. My first intention was to steal a boat, but apparently he was expecting me to show up.

"That son-a bitch went off with my ship an hour ago! How you gonna catch him now?"

"Settle down, Mr. Holsturn," I need to act like I'm supposed to be here, "Is the tracker still attached in the boat?"

"Ship! And no. That bastard ripped it out right 'fore he took off!"

"*Dad! Is that the Krielmopolis guy?*" a young boy yells running out of the shed-like house.

"Get on back inside now! No reason to be 'wake."

The kid runs to stand next to him. "I've never seen the military 'fore."

"Boy, I say go back inside." The kid only steps a few feet away and then stops again to eavesdrop.

"The ship," I bring the conversation back around, "did he say where he is going with it?"

"Across the great divide or something like that. I got a way we can get 'em." He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a small box. "Back in our hay day we had a bunch of our boats hooked up with these here trackers of our own. They ain't as high tech as you military folk made us put in, but they can let us know when we twenty or so kilometers away from our property."

I take the box from his hand. "How does it work?"

"There four speakers on it. If it beeps from the left one, he's to the left. If it beeps on the right one, he's on the right. Front, front and back, back. Faster the beeps, closer you gettin'."

"Perfect," I place the box in my pocket. "I need a boat."

"What? Hell no! You 'pose to have your own ships! Can't jus' take one mine in hopes I'll get it back!"

"Do you want your boat back or not?"

"Ship! And that soldier was sent by you guys or somethin'! That weren't some suit put together in a basement somewhere. You all need to pay for it!"

I reach back in my pocket and pull out the keys to Greer's bike. "Here. The bike is collateral until I return."

Holding the keys he contemplates for a moment.

"Listen, sir," I tell him, "every second we waste means he is getting that much further away with your property. Give me a ship now and I will bring it back to you while bringing him to justice."

The boy, overhearing our conversation, slowly walks to the bike admiring its design.

"It looks like that boy could use a new toy," I tell him, "All I need is a ship right now and the bike is yours."

The boy rubs his hand along the seat of the bike adoring the possibilities of riding it around the desert.

"The one on the end," Mr. Holsturn says, "It's one of the fastest. You'll have a bumpy ride on the open ocean but you'll catch him. I'll go get the keys."

The boy has a seat on the bike as his dad walks away to his shed. I head over to the child who is playing with the throttle while driving it around the desert in his imagination. "So you wanna go into the military, huh?"

"Yeah, definitely! But I never could," he tells me, "I gotta stay here and watch the docks. Dat's what my dad has done and his dad 'fore him. What he says, not me."

"Why can't you do both? You know there are a lot of people who are in the military who work in the private sector too. You could do it. Hell, you could specifically work at this dock cause I know the Krielm would love to take over Tepus. They'll even pay for all the upkeep while still making you in charge of the whole thing."

"Hey military man! C'mon if you comin'!" John yells out to me.

TIMELINE SEVEN

The kid steps off the bike. "Thanks a lot, sir. Good luck finding the metal man."

The kid runs away while I walk to the ship preparing myself to be one of the only humans in this generation to travel the west.

JULY 3RD, 312 P.D.

1332

7 HOURS AND 34 MINUTES LATER

The further I get into the ocean the more the storm clouds clear up and the more the sun beats down on me.

I use the tarp that is kept in the hold of the boat to block myself from the sun as much as possible. The rays beaming through the toxic atmosphere above seems to leave an uncomfortable rash on most people who spend a lot of time in it so I attempt to only get a few minutes of sun every hour. Next to where I found the tarp is the food reserve, but unfortunately it looks like the Holsturns haven't been keeping up with the mandatory inventory as there is only a package of crackers and nine bottles of water in here. That, or he took a bunch of it out right before he gave me the keys. I wouldn't put it passed him.

I continually hold the tracker box to my ear seeing if the beeping is just too quiet to be heard, but still I hear nothing. I've travelled several hours and at least a few hundred kilometers and still no sign that I am getting close to him. My robot self left about an hour before I did, but if John was right about this boat, I should be catching up to him really soon. That is unless he took a detour. If I don't get to him soon then the direction we're headed on the waters will stray apart too far and the tracker will be useless.

He is me, so my initial thought is my subconscious will take me straight to him because we're bound to follow the same path. But how could he be me? He wasn't my organic material, just a bunch of ones and zeros. It's more probable it was just an illusion in his mind thinking he was me. Sure he had my memories but it was just like data on a computer, not the physical hormones or the actual feelings

attached. I can't help but think he was just a computer that was having thoughts of feelings but not really experiencing any of them. If a color blind person sees black and someone tells him it is green why would he not believe he is seeing green? That is all he knows and he will believe it to be true. I don't know. There is just no way for a conscious mind to be put in a computer.

More than that, to be sent back in time? Time isn't a plane to be run around on. It's continuous and on going. Travelling from one point to another is impossible because there isn't a chance everything is happening again and again, over and over again for me to revisit at any time I want. But here I am. Did I physically go back in time or just back in my memories? I'm probably just in a coma and this is some weird delusion in my mind. I don't pretend to understand how time travel or the inner mechanisms of a robot work, but this all just seems too ridiculous.

I have far too much time to think out here.

Beep.

It's him! Left speaker.

Turning the wheel to the left I aim the direction I think he should be headed. I'm just now getting his reading so it's important I get these beeps closer together or I may lose him. I follow my compass going west and slightly south. Why is he going this way? From everything I've heard the anti-species were dropped in the northern hemisphere as all the south is rumored to be overtaken but an unrelenting jungle.

What's your plan robot?

Beep.

Right speaker. I over compensated so I turn the wheel slightly to the right in an attempt to keep on his trail.

Pulling up my binoculars I peer over the flat ocean to try to spot him but I see nothing. I wasn't expecting to see anything yet, but it was worth a shot. I'm sure it'll be an hour or so before I get close enough to see him.

Beep.

Forward speaker. I'm going in the right direction. Now we wait and continue forward.

TIMELINE SEVEN

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

0627

4 DAYS, 16 HOURS AND 48 MINUTES LATER

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

I've had to smother the annoying tracker in a blanket as it beeps every three seconds, and if it wasn't my only indicator to where I was going, I would've tossed it in the water already. I pull it out every twenty minutes or so just to be sure I'm still going the right way. I try tuning it out by focusing on the sound of the smacking waves, but that only works for a few minutes until I have to check it again.

The past couple days have been gruelingly hot and irritating. A heat rash has covered the entire left side of my body as I slept too long yesterday morning without any cover from the sun. The water splashing up over the edge of the boat relieves some of the pain, but it seems like it will stick around for a while. Luckily the waves haven't been too rough so the sailing has been relatively smooth. I've been able to spot the boat several times through the binoculars but knowing he has some super vision or something like that, I keep my distance. Luckily with the sun rising behind me, he should have a hard time spotting me.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

Why is it speeding up?

Looking through the binoculars I realize I'm approaching his boat much quicker than before. More than that, I see land is finally in view as his boat has stopped dead in the water less than a kilometer away from me. He has almost for sure seen me by now. Maybe he knows who I am. Maybe he already knows it's himself coming to help. Or maybe he has no idea who I am and is stopping to kill me.

While approaching I don't tare the binocular's view away from the boat's deck, but he is nowhere to be seen. He's not up top and I doubt there is any room for him in the hold below, so where is he? I can't imagine he jumped into the water and

swam but no matter where he is, I know he's headed to shore. I need to hurry so I don't lose him!

Boom!

What the hell was that?

Small pieces of wood begin landing on my boat. Examining them I see they are chunks of a smaller boat that he must've used to get to shore. Looking through the binoculars I see what appears to be a man flying through the air holding another man... just as the robot said.

What a strange species these people are. I never thought I would ever get the chance to see an anti-specie up close, but here I am! The crazy skin colors and small size make them look like abstract cartoon characters, just like we were taught in school. An entire hemisphere of clowns. I might be the first human in a hundred years to see one of these guys up close! If only I had a camera to prove I was here. Chase would never believe it.

Pushing aside my state of awe, I shuffle through my things to grab my sniper rifle.

Cocked and loaded.

The robot's order replays in my mind. *'Kill the flying man... Shut down the robot.'*

I struggle to hold the flying man's head in my scope as he flies around in the air with the robot standing on the back of flying machine with him.

Whoa! It looks like the robot is doing the job for me!

The metal man shoves his blade right through the flying man's gut. I don't see him surviving that wound, but obviously he does otherwise I wouldn't be here.

Okay, they've slowed down and I have a clean shot. Here we go. The cross hairs are perfectly lined up. This is what I was trained to do.

Crash!

What is this now? Something even more ridiculous!

Odd looking blue things shoot from the ground into the air at the flying man, which throws him off balance forcing the metal man to fall to the ground.

There is no time to investigate. I have to do it now before he escapes.

TIMELINE SEVEN

I pull the trigger.

Bang!

I don't miss.

With blood spewing from the anti-specie's head, he careens to the ground slamming down with an explosive force.

"No!" the yell comes from shore.

Grabbing my binoculars I look to the shoreline where I see a kid in what looks to be an anti-specie's military uniform. The kid runs to the dead flying man.

This is my chance.

Pulling down the sails and using the back up battery I force the propellers to push through the crashing waves until I feel the sand start building up under the bow of the boat. I jump into the shallow water and run to the unconscious metal man lying on his back in the sand.

There I am. Not at all like looking into a mirror as I was hoping it would be. Is he unconscious? Maybe dead already?

"Alex?" I say, seeing if he'll wake up. "Are you in there? It's me. I'm you. Can you get up?"

Before I can get a response I'm knocked to the ground by one of the blue force field things slamming into me. The wind is knocked out of me as I'm thrown onto my back.

"You killed him!" the kid yells to me through the voice box attached around his neck.

He must have been a friend of the flying man. I push myself up bracing for another attack.

From the palm of his hand he shoots another blue wall thing at me. I drop to the ground letting it fly just above my body. "How could you? He was mine to kill!"

I guess he wasn't a friend. "Kid, listen. He was evil. I had no choice," I jump back to my feet and leap into the boat just a few meters away.

"I know he was evil! He killed my family and I was supposed to be the one to get revenge!"

I hurry and grab the sniper rifle from inside the boat while staying crouched behind the wall of the deck. I point the barrel of the gun right at his chest. "I don't want to have to kill you, kid! Don't shoot that stuff at me again!"

"Why did you do it? Huh?" the kid is nearly in tears, "That was the only reason I was here and you killed him! He was mine!"

"Obviously he wasn't yours otherwise I wouldn't be here! You failed in killing him so I had to! Now just go home! You are too young to be killing people anyways!" Is this what the west has turned into? Just a bunch of anti-species out for blood?

The blue things start flying at me over and over again knocking my boat around on the sand. I duck down hoping he will wear himself out with whatever the hell he is doing. "Dammit! I'm going to have to kill you if you don't stop!" I don't think he has the power to kill me with whatever he is using, but I can't get the metal man back to the east if he doesn't knock it off.

With the blue things still flying at me I'm left with no choice. I throw the barrel of the sniper over the edge of the boat and pull the trigger.

Bang!

The blue things stop flying at me, but he still stands. He holds one of the blue walls in front of his body having used it to shield himself from the bullet.

"Go home kid! This is done!" I stare at him for a moment until he drops the shield leaving him a clean shot for me. I keep him in my crosshairs waiting for any swift move.

"Why?" he asks, "Why did you kill him?"

"To save the human race."

"Did you use the doorway?" he asks.

I lower the barrel, "What do you know about the doorway?"

"I saw him try and destroy the humans. I came back to avenge my family from his murderous rampage."

"You say you used the doorway? How? How did you get to it?"

"It doesn't matter. It's all over now. He's dead." He walks toward the tree line.

I jump from the boat after him. "Kid, wait! What do you know about the time machine?"

TIMELINE SEVEN

He stops and faces me. “No matter what happens there is always the same outcome. Olena has made that clear. It was the flying man’s destiny to be killed by the humans. I never stood a chance. This is what I know now. Olena never would have allowed it.”

Wow, this kid has some serious issues. He continues into the jungle by himself. Not wanting to get into another fight with him I let him go.

Getting back to the metal man I grab ahold of him attempting to drag him through the sand. Weighing several hundred pounds I struggle to move him. I try flattening the ground with my feet as I pull, but the sand continues to bulk up at his shoulders. Filling a bucket from the boat with water to pour on the sand along the metal man’s path I keep the sand flat for easier mobility.

After twenty minutes of dragging using a series of sticks to roll him on, I get him into the boat nearly forcing me to pass out from heat exhaustion. I sip on the little bit of water I have left while sitting next to the unconscious version of myself. I wonder what’s going on in his mind right now. Or I guess in his programming, if anything.

What am I saying? Nothing is going on! It’s just a robot with my memories. That’s it.

Before I head out I grab the dead man’s flying machine as instructed to use on the robot if he wakes up. I walk to the dead anti-specie, pull his scarred and disfigured hands from the gloves and remove his feet from the flying machine’s holds. Looking into his lifeless eyes I can’t help but feel a sense of remorse for killing him. As an anti-specie he just got dealt with a bad hand for life; destined to never speak with his mouth and be permanently exiled from human society. How shameful, as he was obviously a smart guy to have created such a device and, by the looks of his hands, had gone through some great obstacles to do so. I know he’ll just wash back up on shore but that doesn’t stop me from pushing his body away from the beating sun into the water. Hopefully the tide will give him a nice burial.

Throwing the flying machine next to the metal man and getting the boat back into the water I ready the sails for the journey east.

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

0819

1 HOUR AND 32 MINUTES LATER

Arial balancing rods, magnetic footholds, maneuverable boosters and weapons galore makes this flying machine the most high-tech piece of equipment I've ever seen! Although, I can't be for sure how elaborate the metal man is.

I continue across the Atlantic on our voyage back to the east with the unconscious robot lying at my feet. Dehydrated and malnourished, I have barely enough water and only a handful of crackers left for the rest of the trip. When I see Holsturn I'm going to kick him right in the ass for putting me in this position. Possibly from dehydration or pure shock, I have found myself staring and admiring the metal man lying on the deck. No openings, no weld marks, no nuts or bolts at all. I can't even tell how it's possible his joints move as he looks to be one chunk of metal. As I rub my hand across the surface of his midsection I am able to feel small indentions and grooves.

Kchhh!

The jolt of the suit frightens me enough for me to jump back in the boat away from him. Is he waking up?

"Hello?" I say.

He stays perfectly still. Muffled clicking and tapping comes from inside him but he doesn't move.

"Alex? Are you awake?" It feels weird addressing him as me.

He replies, "Can you hear me?"

"Yes," I say watching his stoic body, "Can you here me?"

"Yes. Where am I?" he asks with a sense of concern.

"You're on a boat headed over to the east. Do you remember who you are?"

"I- I don't know. I can't really remember anything. I can't move! What am I wearing?"

"You're not wearing anything. You're brain has been programmed into a computer that's inside of a robot." I don't know how he is going to react to news like

TIMELINE SEVEN

that. I probably should've lead with something else. "Do you recognize me?" I ask attempting to ease the tension.

"Can you get these goggles off me?"

"Goggles? You're not wearing any goggles."

"What is going on?" he is worried.

"Alex. Stay calm. Everything is okay. I'll explain everything to you. You--"

"Alex? That's not my name. My name is... it's Sam."

What the hell? Was this just a big scam? Is it even me in there? "You don't know who I am?"

His shoulders roll around awakening his first movements. He struggles to push himself to his feet. "No. I have no idea who you are. I need to get back to the west."

I push myself to my feet along with him. "I know you have a mission, but you need to remember me. You need to know this isn't what you're meant to do."

"I have no idea what I'm meant to do! I just know I need to get back to the west. That's what my eyes are telling me."

"You're eyes?"

"I can't breath! Can you get this thing off of me? It's too tight. Please!" he throws his hands all around the suit trying to find a way to get it off but it's impossible.

"I told you, it's not a suit. You're a robot. There is no way to get out of it."

Looking more relaxed he steps forward to grab hold of the boat controls.

"What are you doing?" I ask.

"I need to get back to the west. I don't have a choice in the matter."

I place my hand on his forearm to stop him from turning the wheel. "Hang on. We c-" before I can finish my thought his hand swings around and throws me into the side of the boat where I collapse to the deck.

"Whoa, sorry!" For nearly breaking my back he seems truly apologetic. "I don't have control. Something is forcing me back to the west. I can't explain it."

I try pushing myself to my feet, but the pain shooting through my back is excruciating. The boat does a full one eighty as we head back toward where we

came from. "Alex or Sam or whoever the hell you are, does the name Greer mean anything to you?"

"Greer? No. That doesn't mean anything to me."

Shaking and holding onto the side of the boat I'm finally able to get to my feet. "He sent me here to stop this. He is the one who sent you on this mission but it has been aborted. We need you back in the east immediately, soldier!"

"I can't. My body won't let me. I need to get back to the west or else something bad will happen. I can feel it."

"No! Your name is Alexander T. Van Hayes! Your consciousness was copied and put into this war machine against your will. If you continue on your path you're going to kill a lot of anti-species who don't deserve to die! Please, you need to believe me."

He stays silent for a moment staring forward into the open ocean. "They aren't innocent. I've seen what they do. It's all coming back now. They invade the humans and hurt them. They torture the humans. Trust me, I've seen it. I need to do this."

How do you convince a computer that his computing is wrong? "Sam. You're not who you think you are. This is all a lie. Some evil humans that want to take over the world programmed everything that you're feeling and experiencing. You can't do this or you are helping the most evil people on the planet. Is that what you want to do?"

He doesn't respond.

I side step my way behind the robot to the flying machine and put on the gloves like the metal man from before had said to do. Based on the hands of the man who was wearing them before, it's understandable that they are oddly designed and uncomfortable around my fingers.

If it were me in that robot I wouldn't be able to kill myself. Right?

I'm a little over my head here. How am I supposed to operate this flying machine if no human has ever seen it? Maybe the gloves work by just touching his metal skin or with me grabbing down on him. The cables connecting the gloves to

TIMELINE SEVEN

the flying machine stretch out as I walk toward the metal man. Quickly, I grab onto his shoulders and tighten my grasp waiting for him to drop like before.

Nothing happens.

He knocks me backwards to the other end of the boat as he turns around forcing me to crash on top of the flying machine.

Long, serrated blades now protrude from his forearms as he steps toward me. "Listen," he begins, "you're a human so I don't want to kill you, but if you get in my path again I won't have a choice. I've decided not to throw you overboard as you'll surely drown out there. Please, just let me continue!" Acting as though I'm no sort of threat he faces his back toward me to watch the open ocean again.

Maybe it wasn't even the gloves that did it to him. Maybe these are just gloves he was wearing to hide his hideous hands and the flying machine is what did it.

I lift myself to my feet and quietly place the flying machine flat on the deck. Stepping atop I feel my feet get vacuumed to the footholds, which now emit a slight glow. Pushing my foot forward the boosters loudly fire up and shoot me forward a few meters toward the robot. Before I slam into him I push my foot back to stop the rear thrusters while simultaneously engaging the front ones. The metal man turns around with his blades out ready to attack as I shoot to the back of the boat.

How the hell do I work this thing? "You just don't understand!" I yell trying to buy myself some more time before he turns me into a shish kabob. Pushing side to side on the flying machine footholds I'm thrown left and right like a rag doll in a child's hands.

"Missiles engaged" A speaker from the flying machine announces as a missile flies from under my feet completely missing the metal man and shooting off into the distance.

"You're a human! You're supposed to be working with me," he angrily exclaims.

He swings his blade at me, but luckily the flying machine, completely out of my control, shifts and throws me off the boat forcing me to hover just out of his reach.

"Blades engaged"

Dammit, stop!

This machine, with the most sensitive sensors ever, emit long blades out from the front of the flying machine while pushing me forward at the metal man in an attack.

It won't stop!

Flying over the boats deck he leaps into the air with me going directly underneath him. Doing a front flip he points his blade down at me forcing me to instinctively duck and throw my hand up to protect myself. His blade goes through the glove then into my hand sending blood all over my face. His blade pulls back out of my palm as I slam into the edge of the deck wall throwing me off the flying machine and into the water. Luckily the cables attaching the gloves to the flying machine keep me from straying too far away.

I wait in the water afraid to climb back up knowing he is up there waiting for me. I can't take this guy. Hell, the only weapon that could possibly do any damage to him is going to take more practice than a thirty-second crash course lesson. Not to mention the gash in my hand from the center all the way out to the side will make fighting him near impossible. I bite my lip and work my way through the pain as I realize my pinky and ring finger will never work again. I can't stay here. I can deal with a lot of pain, but the constant flow of salt water entering my gash is nearly unbearable.

"Sam," I yell out, "I'm coming back up! Do whatever you want and I won't get in your way."

There is no response.

I grab onto the side of the boat putting myself through excruciating agony as I lift back onto the deck. Ready for another of his attacks I throw my hands up to block my face, but nothing happens.

He lies face down on the boat, not moving.

What is he doing?

The glove... he stabbed right through it. They worked!

Not wanting to waste anymore time, I turn the wheel of the boat and get us going back the correct direction toward the east. I rip off the bottom of my shirt to

TIMELINE SEVEN

wrap my hand in an attempt to keep myself from bleeding out. I put my feet near the flying machine with my one good hand resting on his chest anticipating another attack soon.

JULY 8TH, 312 P.D.

2341

15 HOURS AND 12 MINUTES LATER

Every two or three hours Sam wakes up so I need to constantly be ready every time with the flying machine and gloves.

I sit under the moonlight eating what little crumbs I can scavenge with the flying machine to my left and the metal man to the right. I've figured out that by simply placing my hand on the flying machine's foothold the gloves will turn on without engaging the boosters and that is enough to shut the metal man back down.

"Where am I?" he says for the fourth time.

I place my wounded hand on the foothold while keeping my hand on his chest. After only a second of touching his metal shell he shuts back down.

How complicated is consciousness if it can just be copied into a computer program? Is there any true difference between the metal man sitting next to me and my own self besides the concepts that control our bodily operations? I am made of organic material that grows and reproduces while he is man made by wires and metal therefor I must be more. He is unnatural. He is a man made product that was never meant to exist. Man is natural. Man was grown through millions of years of evolution while he was constructed in a matter of months. Hell, maybe even weeks.

But then again, our brain was created through evolution and our brains created this man. Why could he not be the next step in evolution? Our bodies are flawed and fragile. They fall apart and die with the only goal in life to make another that will grow, fall apart and die. He doesn't die like we do. To create a new part for us humans is an arduous task while for him it is simple if the materials are there. If humans do die out, would he be considered the next species to over take? We made him, therefore would humans still technically survive?

I think the dehydration is getting to me.

JULY 12TH, 312 P.D.

1455

3 DAYS, 15 HOURS AND 12 MINUTES LATER

"Who goes there?" the voice yells out from an approaching boat.

Finally, people! I have become so dehydrated and malnourished that I have begun to crave the soothing voice of another human just so I can consume something. Anything.

"I say, who goes there?" he yells again.

I attempt to clear my parched throat to reply, but I am unable to produce a single drop of saliva. I have decided to head to St. Srana and deal with the Krielm military versus going back to Tepus Dock and explaining to Mr. Holsturn why I only have one of his boats with me. Three military ships now circle me, each with four to five men on the decks with rifles at the ready.

"I'm here by order of Sergeant Major Greer!" I yell having finally regained control of my vocal chords. "I need water!"

The man ignores my request and yells back, "State your name!"

"Jeff Wyatt!" They won't be able to look me up by that name, but if they knew my actual name they could bring my other self around and who knows how that could end up. "Bring me to Greer and he will explain everything!"

"Where am I?"

Oh no! Not now! I hurry to the flying machine lying next to the metal man.

"Hey!" the military man screams at me, "Don't move!"

I continue toward the flying machine. "I mean you know harm! I just-"

"Freeze or we'll shoot!"

I stop in my tracks only a meter away from the flying machine and metal man. "You don't understand! Let me just do this and-"

"We're coming aboard!"

"Hello? Can you hear me?" the metal man frozen on the ground asks.

TIMELINE SEVEN

"Just stay there, Alex. Stay calm," I beg him.

Two Krielm boats pull up on either side of Holsturn's. Two men from each boat jump aboard with guns still pointed at me until the metal man is discovered. Quickly the gun barrels turn toward to him. "Who is that?"

Kchhh!

"What's going on? Where am I?" the metal man asks accompanied by his rolling shoulders.

"Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Don't move!" one of the Krielm soldiers yell to him.

Standing up and feeling threatened, the metal man's arm blades shoot from his forearms. "I mean you no harm," he says as his blades are pointed right at them.

"Drop the blades and step out of the suit!"

With the military men distracted I side step toward the flying machine. One of the soldiers notices. "Don't move!"

"Listen, he is a robot," I attempt to explain, "He doesn't know what is going on. I'm bringing him back to Greer for decommission so I need to shut him down and the only way to do that is to get to that flying machine lying on the ground right there."

"You stay put until Greer gets here," his voice cracks with stress.

"I need to get to the west," the metal man says, "I do not mean to harm you but I must get over there now. This is bigger than all of us."

"What the hell is he talking about Wyatt?"

"He is a malfunctioning machine," I answer, "You must stand down or he will hurt you."

The metal man turns to the boat's controls and attempts to steer the wheel back toward the west. "Hey, hey, hey! Don't move or we'll open fire!"

Just as I did, one of the soldiers gets a little too close to the metal man, which is immediately followed by him being thrown across the boat.

"Fire!"

"No don't!" I try to stop them but it's no use.

I drop to my stomach to duck under the barrage of ricocheting bullets flying off the metal man.

"Everybody stop!" the older Greer, who had come from the future, yells out from the shore halting the stream bullets. "Metal man! Come with me!"

With the bullets stopping just in time the metal man luckily had no time to kill anyone. "I cannot! I have orders to get to the west and-"

"Samu wa, daun shite tatte imasu! Watashi to kite!" the foreign scientist standing by Greer yells.

With no hesitation, the blades slide back under the metal skin followed by him jumping off the boat into the water. He swims to shore with everyone at the base trying to get a good look at him.

"Hurry up, Hayes!" the older Greer yells.

The soldiers on the Holsturn boat don't pull their eyes away from me as I push myself to my feet and drive the boat to the dock.

One of the soldiers tries to complain, "But sergeant major these men just-"

"It's general!" Greer yells as he turns around and walks back to the car that he pulled up in. Inside that vehicle sits the younger Greer and the other scientist responsible for the creation of the metal man. Older Greer has a seat behind the steering wheel while the metal man steps in the bed of the vehicle. Picking up the flying machine I make my way to the car while trying to keep my balance and hold back my delirious state due to dehydration. I toss the flying machine in the back with the metal man then have a seat in the backseat with the two scientists. Greer pulls the car around to head back to Krielmopolis.

"What the hell was that Hayes?" the general barks.

"Sorry, sir. It was hard for me to convince the soldiers of what I was doing here. Do you have any water?"

I never believed in any religious deities, but as soon as Greer handed me his canteen of water I felt as though God was inside me rejuvenating me with his grace! While chugging the rest of the life saving nectar I look over to the scientists who haven't even realized I'm sitting next to them as they are having trouble pulling their eyes away from the metal man sitting in the back. Their eyes are glossed over with wonderment as they see their invention for the first time.

TIMELINE SEVEN

"Lab coat?" the general continues his interrogations, "What did you say to him? Why did he listen to you and not me?"

The two of them are so entranced they don't even realize they are being spoken to.

"Lab coat!" Greer yells.

The English-speaking scientist faces forward and replies, "He told him basically what you said. The only difference is our voices are programmed into his wiring as a fail safe. He must do exactly what we say."

"Why the hell didn't you put my voice in there?"

"I'm surprised we didn't," he says, "As you may have noticed, we aren't the exact people who created him. It was us in another timeline so we don't have all the answers for you. Who knows what changes or variables arose during his creation."

Trying to keep them from being yelled at anymore I chime in, "So what's the plan?"

Greer, enjoying the attention of being the go-to-guy, quickly replies, "We're taking him back to the lab coats' workspace. They are going to open him up and reprogram him to do exactly what we want."

They still don't know that I know it's me in there. That's the last thing I'm going to let them do to him. "Sounds good to me, sir."

"What's the thing you threw back there with him?" Sergeant Major Greer asks me through his fat lip.

"Something from the anti-species. They had created-"

"What?" General Greer slams on the brakes to look back at me, "You made it all the way to the west? Did they see you?"

"No. I got out of there without a trace."

"We would know if they showed up here! And you stole their damn technology? They are going to attack for sure you stupid frik!"

"No they aren't!" I normally wouldn't yell at a superior, but I can't imagine him being in control of me much longer. "We were in a remote location surrounded by thick jungle. There was no way for them to know I was even there."

ALEX

"Then how did you get that technology? There is bound to be someone out looking for it!"

"No. The owner is dead."

"What? You killed someone? You son of a bitch! You stupid son of a--"

"Listen! I knew what I was supposed to do. The task is done. No one saw me and no one followed me. They had no idea I was even there."

The general turns back around and continues to drive toward Krielmopolis. "I swear to god if you shrepped this up for us your ass is going to spend the rest of its days at Storm Cape."

We spend the next few hours driving in silence.

JULY 13TH, 312 P.D.

0318

12 HOURS AND 8 MINUTES LATER

"They say it will be a few days before he's all finished up," General Greer says having just gotten off the communicator with the scientists.

I hold the flying machine under my good arm keeping my freshly wrapped hand elevated above my head as I follow both Greers down the hallway to the offices of Fort Bildine where I will be briefed on everything I know.

"Why is it going to take so long?" younger Greer asks.

"They need to get into his hippo something to find out where he went wrong."

Continuing down the hallway I looking into the window of the door leading to the fort's storage area doubling as a holding cell where I see Dr. Muvato and Ocean being kept. "Oh, hang on," I say.

Both Greers stop to face me.

I hand the flying machine off to them. "I have to go to the bathroom real fast. I'll meet you down there."

"Dammit. Can't it wait?" The rude general barks back.

TIMELINE SEVEN

"Sir, I need to go. Now." I've been chugging water constantly since they picked me up so the request is not suspicious in the least.

The two of them turn around and continue walking. "Well hurry up!"

I pretend like I'm making my way to the bathroom but instead I get to the unguarded holding cell where I can peer in and see the group of scientists all sleeping on the floor. Using the badge I've held onto since before I went through the doorway I unlock and open up the door.

"Ocean? Dr. Muvato?"

The group slowly wakes up, confused to see me. "What do you want?" the doctor, rubbing his eyes asks me. He wears a large, bloody bandage on his neck.

"I'm here to get you out."

Ocean, worried says, "I thought we weren't getting transferred to Storm Cape for another three days?"

"You don't know me, but I used your machine. You all helped me get back here and save a lot of people, therefore, I'm here to save all of you. Now let's go! We don't have much time."

Moving like a pack of snails they push themselves to their feet and slowly move toward the door.

"Come on!" I loudly whisper.

The group continues to head out into the hallway as the doctor stops next to me. "So you really used Emergence? This isn't a trick?"

"Yeah I did, but we don't have time to talk about it now."

I try pushing him along with the others, but his feet don't move. "What was it like," his eyes shine with curiosity, "to travel through timelines?"

"It was something else," I answer him to calm his racing thoughts. "I felt as though my body became as thin as air, but only for a second. It was as if every tiny bit of my body separated from each other and disintegrated into space. Then the weight slowly returned and my body became whole again, as if it never even happened. I can only compare it to dying then coming back a whole new person."

"Did it hurt?"

"No. It felt... refreshing."

He smiles.

"Now, go! We don't have the time!"

I push him along with the others who continue to the fort's front door. I sprint back down the corridor to make it to the storage room where the time machine is being kept. Using the badge again I enter the room to find the large doorway sitting exactly where I left it. I wouldn't dare tell the doctor what I'm about to do, but it's time to destroy this machine so that no one can ever use it again.

I hurry to the back of the machine to start pulling wires when an alarm begins to sound throughout the building accompanied by flashing red lights along the ceiling. Obviously the lab coats had a hard time getting out of the building unnoticed. I grab the back panel of the machine, but before I'm able to rip out any wires the door of the storage room is thrown back open.

"You!" I stop and face the entrance of the room where General Greer stands with his pistol pointed at me. "What are you up to Hayes?" he asks over the alarm.

"The last part of my mission. This machine needs to be destroyed for the good of mankind."

"The good of mankind? Do you know how much good this machine can do in our hands? What we can do with it? Every major catastrophe from here on out can be avoided or, in the least, be prepared for with more confidence."

"And to take over the west because you know how to sway the outcome of every battle in your favor? You have no intentions of using this machine for good. Your intent is world domination and that's it."

Taking a step forward he points the gun directly between my eyes. "And how is that not for the best of mankind? Cleansing the west of the anti-specie filth to make way for the human race to retake their place at-"

"Anti-species filth? How can you judge them when you've never even seen one in person?"

"Humans used to dominate the planet! We were at the top of the food chain for millennia and now we're forced to share the top with some dirt scum? No! The planet is ours and ours alone!"

TIMELINE SEVEN

"And you consider yourself the right hands for this machine? You're just an arrogant racist!"

"It doesn't matter. The most we know is some mysterious human clone created by the anti-species was sent over to the east to infiltrate and destroy our defenses for an attack. Luckily, General Greer was smart enough to figure it out before any real damage was done. The clone was humanly put down right here at Fort Bildine."

I dive behind the machine as Greer pulls his gun and fires off a bullet that barely misses my face slamming into the wall behind me.

"You're in my fort, son! There is no outcome where you leave this place alive!"

Attempting to listen through the blaring alarm I sense the vibrations of his feet creeping to the left of the machine. I creep to the right just as he jumps around the corner and fires off another shot.

With Greer on the other side of it I push on the heavy machine as hard as I can. Struggling, I am able to tilt it upward until it teeters on its side.

Greer tries to jump out of the way, but the time machine crashes down on top of his legs crushing all the bones below his waste. Wires and chunks of metal go flying across the room as the fragile machine breaks into a thousand pieces.

"Ahhhh!" he fires off several more shots and misses them all except the last one of his clip that scrapes my shoulder. He continues to try to fire at me, but the bullets are completely gone.

With my shoulder pain somewhat tolerable, I pull the knife from my boot and walk over to him as he struggles to get his smashed legs out from under the destroyed time machine. "You should have known that this was never going to end well for you," I tell him.

"You have officially ended the human race! I hope you're happy living under the boot of the anti-scum!"

"What the hell is going on?" the younger Greer enters the room.

"Kill him!" the general yells, "Kill him now!"

The young Greer nervously fiddles with the gun in his holster, giving me enough time to insert the blade into the general's neck and slice across spewing blood across the floor. Young Greer doesn't fire at me being frozen solid in shock at the sight of his future dead body.

"Now sergeant major, just relax," I order him as I remove the blade from the corpse.

Nearly crying, the young Greer points his shaking pistol at me and pulls the trigger.

I leap out of the way too late letting the bullet pierce my arm sending a wave of pain throughout my body. Slamming to the ground behind the broken time machine I ready my knife once again for an attack. With the bullet lodged in my bicep distracting me from the pain in my hand and shoulder I push myself to my feet and leap over the broken time machine. Sprinting toward Greer with my blade out I attempt to predict when he will pull the trigger next, but as soon as he readies the gun again he is smashed across the back of the head with a bat and knocked unconscious. I watch the gun slide across the floor before looking up to see Doctor Muvato standing in the doorway holding the blunt object.

"Doctor, you didn't get out?" I ask.

"I figured you might want my help. Are you okay? You're bleeding all over the place!"

I walk to him and shake his hand as the alarm continues to rage on. "I'll be okay. I don't think I'm hit anywhere important. Now let's get you and your team to safety."

"Wait," he stops me as I attempt to leave the room. "Is that it?"

The realization had not even crossed my mind as I look back at the many years or decades of his work destroyed on the floor ahead of him. "I'm sorry, Muvato. It had to happen."

As if a switch went off in his head, he turns to me and pushes me back. "Why?" he screams, "If used properly, Emergence could have saved millions or even billions of lives! Who are you to say it should be destroyed? Who the hell are you?"

"We can talk about this later doctor, but we need to leave now!"

TIMELINE SEVEN

I attempt to pull him toward the exit, but again he pulls back. “No! You give me one good reason why it had to be destroyed!”

“You’re right! There is the possibility of saving millions of lives with the doorway, but no matter what, if there is technology out there then it will eventually fall into the hands of the wrong people. That is exactly what happened and that is why I’m here! I’m here to save lives and stop the possibility of further deaths.”

Muvato’s lividness seems to have eased off as he thinks about what I’ve said. “You are definitely right,” he honorably admits, “but how can you say ‘no’ to human advancement? What if we never went to the moon or dove to the bottom of the ocean or sailed across the sea just because there was a possibility of people dying? No matter what the consequences could be, human advancement will always continue.”

“I know you probably spent a lot of time and money on it but-”

“It was my legacy!” his switch flips again for a moment before he is able to regain his composure. “That was all I had. I never attempted friendship because after it was finished, Emergence would be all I needed. I gave up the chance to have a family just so I wouldn’t get distracted from its progress. I never created a single true bond with anyone because Emergence was all I needed. But now it’s gone. My legacy is gone.”

The time machine isn’t about going back in time or changing the world to him. It’s the materialistic equivalent of his life. He is literally looking at everything he’s ever worked for lying in pieces ahead of him. “I love your enthusiasm doctor but unfortunately, we are still in a highly armed fort with a dead general and unconscious sergeant major lying in front of us. If you want the chance to make more crazy experiments then we have to leave now! Also, I think I’m losing a lot of blood so come on!”

I grab ahold of the doctor and drag him along with me as he refuses to tare his eyes away from the broken time machine. “It was my legacy.”

JULY 14TH, 312 P.D.

1233

I stand outside the science lab I had broken into just before travelling through the doorway watching a dozen Krielm officials raid the building pulling out all sorts of papers and machines.

The two scientists who created the robot stand nearby defeated and handcuffed watching as all their work is thrown brazenly to the ground. General Jim, the real general, stands next to me watching the building get torn apart. "Almost twenty-two different charges of national security threats all in one room," he says in shock, "Where did they even get those kinds of explosives from?"

After the doctor's team and I escaped the fort we went straight to Jim to tell him everything we felt comfortable telling him about what had happened. I watch as they wheel out the unconscious and opened up metal man. "What are you going to do with him?" I ask the general.

"After speaking to the lab coat about his capabilities we are going to reprogram him for our special ops unit. Of course we're going to install a fail safe in him that will be remotely operated to shut him down at any minute."

"Uhm, sir," I hesitate to let him know the details of the robot's mental state, but I must use the argument to save my copied mind from anymore mistreatment. "He is actually rather special to me as his mind is the copied version of my own."

"What are you saying?"

"The scientists had, without my permission, copied my brain into the computer of that robot. The robot has all my memories, my secrets and basically every single thought that I've ever had. He thinks like me and is really no different from me besides the construction of his body."

The general rudely laughs at my remark, "Are you trying to tell me that that thing is alive? And with your brain?"

"Well ye-"

"Nonsense. We're not going to just waste that kind of technology." He pats me on the back as the metal man is wheeled into the back of a van waiting nearby. "You've done a great thing for the Krielm, soldier. I feel ridiculous that I wasn't more

TIMELINE SEVEN

on top of Greer this whole time. To know that he was using such technology and back door tactics for personal gain is disgusting yet not surprising. But to cover up the death of twelve soldiers as crimes by innocent scientists? That is too far.”

“Sir, if you don’t mind me asking, who is going to take Greer’s place as sergeant major now that he is being sent to Storm Cape?”

“Lieutenant Thomas is unfortunately next in line. We are beginning his tests next week.”

“If I may suggest, sir,” I find myself in a position for my own personal gain, “if someone better came around, would it be possible for him to be able to step up and take over that position?”

“I see what you’re getting at, but we don’t know anything about you. You said you aren’t from Krielmopolis so we really have no information on you or your past. Some random person from an outside city just wanders in and takes over a military position? A high ranking one at that? That won’t look very good.” I’ve kept the lie that my name is Jeff Wyatt going as keeping the time machine and my use of it a secret is necessary. If they find out, I can see them wanting to test on me or worse, try to recreate the doorway.

“I understand,” I push it a little more, “but if I passed all the psychiatric and physical tests better than the original candidate, wouldn’t it be irresponsible to not let me in?”

General Jim stares deep into my eyes not letting me know which way he is leaning. “Perhaps. If you are serious, we can give you the tests. If you barely pass Thomas’s scores then we are going with him. A few points difference won’t be enough to kick him out of the spot. But if you surpass him with flying colors then I will present it to Eitman and the other Krielm officials and we will see what they want to do. There are no promises.”

“Thank you, sir. It’s a real honor that you’re even considering it.”

He looks away from me to continue watching the raid. “Huh, that would be something. A real curve ball if you worked out. That could get me some serious praise. You may or may not be Sergeant Major Wyatt in the next month so be ready for it. Start studying up on your Krielmopolis history.”

ALEX

CHAPTER 35

THE PROPER LEADER

TIMELINE SEVEN

SERGEANT MAJOR WYATT

JULY 2ND, 313 P.D.

1218

11 MONTHS, 17 DAYS, 23 HOURS AND 38 MINUTES LATER

“YA READY FOR THE NEXT ONE, SIR?”

the Holsturn boy asks me having been hired on as my personal assistant two months ago.

“Yes, send him in.”

Entering the room to present their invention for this year’s technological advancement open door day is an elderly man wearing a yellow jump suit accompanied by a pair of boots that are three sizes too big for him.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” his voice nervously shakes as he speaks, “I present to you the first ever life saving boots. Before if you ran out of food and water you were forced to scrounge or beg for more, but not any longer! With the Fueling Boots you are now able to store up to six days worth of food and...”

I haven’t been sergeant major for too long, but already I’ve made some great changes amongst the community. Fort Bildine has been shut down temporarily until the proper improvements can be made such as a proper chain of command as well as the full renovation of the interior. Storm Cape has also gotten rid of all mind-altering drugs used to detain inmates so we can use the prisoners for work detail allowing them the opportunity for early release.

On top of this, Lab 87 has been expanded with Dr. Muvato now leading a team of nearly forty scientists to continue work on reversing the environmental side effects of the Great War under the strict rule that tachyon generators cannot be used under any circumstance. Unfortunately for him, one of the greatest advancements in human history will go unknown and forgotten just as many war machines of the past should have. The new university under construction will bare his name to hold his place in Krielm history and possibly, at some point, they will teach of his great technological achievement. Until that day comes when we think we can handle such

a powerful machine, that information will stay between his original team and myself. Greer has tried to blow open the secret on several occasions, but luckily that only adds to his lunacy and proof of what a horrible leader he was becoming.

Ocean is now leading Lab 207 where he has full reign to do with what he wants. He has the same restraints as Dr. Muvato as far as the tachyon generator is concerned but other than that he can create whatever he wants and sell it back to either Eitman or the public, which is the first time the public will be able to get a hold of the newest technology before the government does. That is, as long as they aren't used in a dangerous manner.

"... as you see there is nearly a gallon of water combined in the reservoir of both boots." The old man drinks from a straw that stretches through his jumpsuit to his boot, disgusting the Holsturn boy who has a hard time holding his facial expression stoic.

Lieutenant Thomas enters the room interrupting the old man's presentation and walks up to me. "I apologize for the interruption," he whispers into my ear, "but there was an accident at Griever. General Jim is dead."

I take a moment to absorb the information. "How did it happen?" I whisper back.

"There was an explosion. An investigation is going on right now, but it looks like a malfunction in his body guard."

Since the day Greer's scientists were arrested, the robotic version of myself had been programmed to be Jim's personal bodyguard, which I continually urged him to get rid of. The special ops team was going to use him, but after the events at Ft. Bildine the use of artificial intelligence was banned for any thing other than home and office assistance, meaning my other self had been Jim's servant all this time. I had approached the robot several times to see if he knew who he really was, but every time I spoke to him he was still convinced his name was Sam. I suppose I'm happy he's gone. At least now we don't have to go through any more confusion about his identity. "Do they need me there?" I ask.

"No. It's best you stay away... General Wyatt."

TIMELINE SEVEN

My promotion has just clarified itself in my mind. With the general gone I have been promoted. "Thank you, Sergeant Major Thomas."

I feel pleased having moved up the ranks, but I can't help but feel somewhat discomforted by the fact that a conscious version of myself has just died. Maybe it was for the best. Maybe in the end, it wasn't even me.

GENERAL WYATT

JUNE 1ST, 328 P.D.

1322

14 YEARS, 10 MONTHS, 30 DAYS, 1 HOUR AND 2 MINUTES LATER

“HALT!”

the voice yells out over loud speakers coming from behind the wall surrounding the giant city of the west.

Attempting to reopen connections with the anti-species I approach in a single ship accompanied by twelve Krielm soldiers. We shut off the engines about a kilometer off shore to show we are no threat. As general, I have been bestowed with the ability to hold out secret missions for the good of Krielmopolis and I find that this may be the best one of all. Without the support of Eitman or the rest of the Krielm officials, I left under the cover of night with a few soldiers to gain the trust of the anti-species race.

“We are coming out to you!” Six smaller boats all speed out toward us and surround our ship in just a matter of seconds.

A leader for the anti-species yells out to me over a loud speaker attached to one of the boats. “I am the Taoiseach Nikolay Ingram. What do you want here human?”

What the hell is a Taoiseach? I had not come prepared with any sort of voice amplification system so I am forced to yell at the top of my lungs. “My name is General Wyatt! I come offering an olive branch to the anti-species from the humans! We hope we can live in peace once again!”

There is a long pause in our communication as the boat approaches closer to be side by side with ours. A long wooden board is thrown between our two vessels creating a bridge for the Tao-whatever to board us along with four of his men. The bald, blue-skinned anti-specie stands directly in front of me wearing his military uniform covered in red and blue stars to show off his accomplishments. He stands

TIMELINE SEVEN

confident and proud even though I stand a full half-meter taller than him. He speaks through his elegantly clear voice box. "What did you say?"

"My name is General Wyatt of the Krielm military. I come in peace from the humans. It was a different time when the anti-species were prosecuted and sent away from the east and I come with an official apology from all humans."

He sizes me up and down before replying, "The humans caused great pain for our race long ago. Since our banishment from the east we have begun to thrive and live in great wealth in the west. It is no longer the anti-species banned from the east but the humans banned from the west. We want nothing from you. Go home human." He turns with his men to walk back to his boat.

"Please, sir. I do not come for desperate need from the humans." He stops without facing me. "I come because the separation of humans and anti-species bring nothing but animosity from both sides toward the other. I come because I do not want to see another generation of humans grow up not knowing about the world they live in. They deserve to have the opportunity to travel to the west if they like just as all of you deserve the opportunity to travel to the east. Opening the borders cannot be so out of the question that even a conversation concerning the topic is off the table." He turns to face me as I continue. "All I ask is that you allow me to present all information regarding the joining of forces between the anti-species and humans and I will hear you out for all information against. We cannot have become so separated and barbaric that a simple exchange of words is impossible."

The leader looks back to his men to gauge their facial expressions before coming to a decision. "You may come in alone. Your men will stay outside the city limits only after being searched and stripped of all weapons. As soon as I say leave, you all leave. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir." Two of his anti-species guards pat me down to remove my only weapon, the knife in my boot.

"Those two other boats will take your men. You come with me."

Two other boats throw their long wooden boards along side us followed by six anti-species from each boat boarding. I'm held close between the guards following the anti-specie leader as I board the boat that heads back to shore. I'm

forced to have a seat as the leader sits across from me without breaking eye contact, even as I shake back and forth from the splashing waves hitting the sides of the boat. Approaching the sand we drive between two turrets the size of buildings with bullets nearly as large as the boat we travel in. Smaller turret gunners keep watch on the boat I travel in as a line of snipers hold their aim on my men still sitting out in the open ocean.

Arriving at the dock we're greeted by nearly thirty anti-species each with a gun in their hand and a scowl on their face. Apparently, anti-species are as distrustful to humans as humans are to anti-species. "You see sir, this is the reason why-"

"Silence!" he barks at me. "We do not talk here. We will have this discussion in private."

Looking back to my men I see the group of them uncomfortably being forced onto the other anti-specie boats while our ship is being hooked up for towing. Possibly this wasn't such a good idea. I'm out for good and righteousness, but possibly this isn't the best way to get it. Could peace between us really be so far out of reach?

"Move!" An anti-specie soldier pushes me out of the boat.

I'm forced to walk between two lines of armed anti-species behind the leader until I arrive at a small building built of clay by the docks. I'm brought inside where a large, windowless room has been set up with a round table and two chairs sitting across from each other. The anti-specie leader, two guards and myself enter the room with the door shut behind us. The two of us have a seat at the table across from one another as the guards stand on either side of the table.

"Okay, Mr. Wyatt. Pitch."

"Mr. Ingram, I first want to thank you so much for your time today and appreciate you being so accommodating," I say while two armed guards stare at me ready to take me down with any false move I make. "I know this process will not happen over night and we will have a lot of minds to sway, but I believe the first step for worldwide peace is to create a society in which humans and anti-species live together. If we can prove that our two races can live in peace with one another,

TIMELINE SEVEN

without fear or crime, I believe we can prove to the world that making humans and anti-species neighbors again will have nothing but positive side effects.”

“The anti-species have no desire to do this. As you may have seen coming in, we have specifically designed this city to keep humans out and away. We are the strongest hold in the west from any incoming attacks and we plan to keep it that way. Letting humans in will only make us weak to your attack.”

“What if we bring anti-species to the east? We can even plan some reparations for all of you. All living expenses will be paid for and jobs will be provided for all. We just need some volunteers to start out with.”

“Test subjects? You want me to just give you a handful of my citizens to bring over in the hopes that the humans don’t get violent on them?”

“Not at all, sir. In both our societies, just like every society before us, there will be those who hate people who are different. We will vow to keep them safe and out of their way. Eventually, we will be able to kill any animosity from humans to anti-specie and vise versa, but it will take time.”

“Mr. Wyatt, who all knows you are here?”

“I’m sorry?”

“Have you come with the support of the humans behind you or are you reaching out in hopes to present our cooperation to your own people?”

I lean forward placing my elbows on the table immediately followed by the armed guards gripping their weapons more fiercely. I present myself as vulnerable and inferior in hopes he will abide to my plea. “I will be completely candid with you Mr. Ingram. I do not come with the support of the humans, nor do I come with their disapproval. I come in hopes that I will be able to return with the announcement of our cooperation instead of departing the east with the desire of a negotiation. Humans, as you know, are hardheaded and stubborn when it comes to negotiations as they feel it is a sign of weakness. I do not see it this way. I see negotiations for peace as righteous and in everyone’s best interest-”

“Ahh, righteous,” he interrupts me, “I see. This isn’t about anyone’s best interest but your own. If you can return with the ability to say *you* fixed the anti-

specie and human issue you will be praised and admired. Hell, they may even create a higher position just so they can promote you again."

"Sir, you have it all wrong. All I want-"

"I am not wrong! This is a selfish act, plain and simple." He stands. "You may be apologetic for the way things turned out but the humans are not. The anti-species are thriving without human presence and we will continue to thrive for a long time."

"Sir, please you must-"

"I mustn't do anything! Negotiations are over. Pass the word to your fellow men that humans are banned from the west, not the other way around. Get your men and your boat and do not return."

I stand with him. "Are you really going to allow your one opinion to halt world peace?"

"My opinion is the opinion of the entire anti-species race!"

"No it's not! It's just you and I standing here." He faces away from me and walks out of the room followed by the two armed guards. "Hey! We're not done here! Hey!"

Four different guards march into the room, grab onto my arms and march me out to the dock. I'm forced back on my boat, which is tied up and being carefully watched by several anti-species guards. My men waiting on the boat for me anxiously watch as the restraints are loosened and we are pushed off back toward the east.

"What now?" one of my men asks.

What is now? I can go back and let everyone know what we spoke about then get reamed by Eitman for coming over at all. I can come back and stay silent and let this all be for nothing. Or "We're going to go back to the east, get supplies, then make another trip over. They don't have the entire west border patrolled. I know of a little place down south that we can make camp."

"Make camp, sir?"

"Yes. Humans will not be stuck in the east because of one unruly anti-specie frik. We will start in the south and work our way north to the more populated areas."

TIMELINE SEVEN

My men stay silent until one soldier in the back speaks up, "You're suggesting war?"

"That anti-specie may have his preconceptions about humans, but he's wrong. Not all men and women are commendable and gracious, but as a whole mankind is good. His irrational opinion that humans are so tragically bound to deceit originates from the worst of times while the credence, tenderness and condolence of the best is neglected. In days like these when rehabilitation is so important we must stray from ignorant bliss and seek out righteous knowledge for the good of all mankind, even if we must walk through kilometers of darkness before we arrive at the light."

I do not plan to go to war, but then again, how many wars start with that in mind?

GENERAL WYATT

CHAPTER 36

THE LOSS

TIMELINE SEVEN

ANJA

SEPTEMBER 2ND, 334 P.D.

1509

6 YEARS, 3 MONTHS, 1 DAY, 1 HOUR AND 17 MINUTES LATER

ALEX HAD SHIPPED OFF

for Atrora over a month ago, but on his way he was drafted to partake in the War for the Great Divide. He isn't a supporter of the war, but he is a supporter of the Krielm force so he didn't have much of a choice when they *asked* him to lead a squad in an attack on an anti-specie base.

I scrub the inside of the icebox, as it is something Alex had been trying to get done for the past few months. With him coming back in a couple weeks I thought it would be a nice gesture for him to come back and see finished.

The war started almost five years ago and ever since then the Krielm force has had to bring just about every retired military member back into service. Back in 329 General Wyatt put out an emergency announcement that the anti-species were creating an elite army to attack the east so a preemptive attack was necessary to protect our way of life. We were unsure how strong their force was really going to be, but after five years of fighting it has been made clear that the anti-species are much stronger than expected.

The first few years of the war were the hardest as word came back to the east that the first six platoons sent to the west were completely wiped out upon their arrival. The next waves from the east were sent from the banks of Ancient China in an attempt to surprise the anti-species by coming from an unexpected direction. Unfortunately, it turns out there was a reason no one lived in the Outer Bounds of the west. The land was emitting so many toxins left over from the Great War that all their food reserves become poisonous and they were forced to retreat back across the ocean.

These last few years have calmed down thanks to General Wyatt finally coming to his senses and attacking with long distance missiles from our own land,

which did great damage to their shore's security while saving countless human lives. With the anti-specie's defenses down, hundreds of ships and planes were sent over to finally put an end to the anti-specie attacks. Deaths are reported now and again, but it is clear now that the humans are succeeding and the war is soon to be over.

"Hey, get out of here! Mom!" my daughter, Faith, yells to me as I hear her younger brother, Jokubus, come sprinting out of her room upstairs as if he is completely innocent from her complaints.

"Jokubus!" I yell for him as I take off my gloves, "Leave your sister alone."

He walks into the kitchen. "I wasn't even bugging her!"

While Alex is away I've been given the great duty of watching our three kids: Lucas, Faith and Jokubus, which has always been a challenge, but without the hammer here they find it is their chance to get away with everything they want.

"Yes he was!" Faith walks into the kitchen. "I was doing my make-up and he just barged in!"

"You're eight years old. Where did you even get make-up?" I ask examining her face trying to identify if she stole my expensive foundation or the cheap stuff given to me by my mother.

"Yeah!" Jokubus chimes in trying to get her in trouble.

"That's enough." I lightly push him back while crouching down to be face-to-face with Faith. "Why do you feel it necessary to be wearing make-up, sweetie?"

"I just want to look pretty," she replies looking down at her feet while simultaneously wrenching my heart.

"Baby, you are beautiful!" I think back on the first time I decided to wear make-up. "This isn't about a boy, is it?"

"Eww! No, mom!"

Jokubus steps in the middle of the conversation again, "What about Caleb Zweerink?"

"Lucas!" I yell upstairs, "Come get your brother so Faith and I can talk!"

A sigh echoes down the stairs as our oldest son, Lucas, makes his way down to the kitchen.

Knock, Knock, Knock.

TIMELINE SEVEN

Before Lucas can grab his brother a visitor at the door is heard. "Take your brother and check who that is, would you?" I ask Lucas.

"Come on mom, I was studying."

"Help me out, please." I whisper to him.

He rolls his eyes. "Fine. Come on Jock." Lucas grabs his brother by the shoulder and heads out of the kitchen.

"Who is Caleb?" I ask Faith.

"It's no one. Just a boy in my class."

"Do you like him?" I move my head trying to get her eyes to meet mine.

"No!"

I move my head again as she continues to dodge my gaze. "Well, does he like you?"

She hesitates before replying, which answers both of my questions. "I don't know. Maybe."

"Mom," Lucas stands in the archway of the kitchen grabbing my attention. "Dad's friend is-"

Before he can finish his sentence, Chase Thompson, Alex's longtime friend, storms into the house. Out of breath he exclaims, "Anja, I need to tell you something. You might want the kids to go in the other room for this."

Shocked by the unusual, serious demeanor from Chase, I tell my oldest, "Lucas, take your brother and sister upstairs for me."

Lucas, curiously hesitant, grabs Faith's hand to walk her out of the kitchen while Jokubus does the opposite and sprints toward me. "What's going on mom?"

Nudging him back the way he came toward his siblings I say, "Follow your brother. Uncle Chase and I need to talk."

"But I-"

"C'mon," Lucas interrupts his brother's plea and whispers to him, "mom's going to tell us everything they talk about later anyways."

Chase gets closer to me as the three of them slowly walk up the stairs to their rooms.

"What is it?" I ask, "Is Alex okay?"

"Something bad happened in the west."

I feel my throat swell up and heart begin to race as I assume the worst. "He's not..."

"No, he's alive." My heart rate calms as he assures me that this isn't a death notification. "But he's in trouble. A lot of trouble."

The swelling in my throat, almost relieved, grows again. "How much trouble? Is he okay? Did the anti-species get him?"

"You cannot let anyone know I told you this because I'm not even supposed to know, but he has been labeled a traitor."

Alex is one of the most decorated soldiers to ever fight for the east. There is not a chance he would betray his people. "What are you talking about? Alex isn't a traitor."

"This is everything I overheard from some of the higher-ups conversation, but apparently he is helping the anti-species now. The base that he was sent to had over a hundred anti-specie POWs released with the help of a human. They think it was Alex who freed them."

I know Alex isn't a fan of the humans and anti-species going to war with each other, but he would never let them free. "You know that isn't true. Alex would never jeopardize his rank, and more than that, his fellow soldier's lives by releasing the enemy."

"I know that! But they *think* it was him. There is a convoy of Krielm officials headed here right now to raid your house and find any clues on his motives and where he might be."

"Where he might be?' They can't find him?"

"No one knows where he is. General Wyatt has ordered a full search to bring him in to answer for his crimes."

"What is going to happen to him? Oh god! Is he going to be sentenced to Storm Cape if he's found?"

"You don't understand. He's been labeled a traitor. If they find him, he's going to be put to death."

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I try to respond, but the swelling in my throat has completely muted any ability to speak back. My legs tremble nearly bringing me to the ground with the thought of losing my husband. I've barely prepared myself for Alex dying in battle, but for him to die by the hands of the people he's put so much time into helping makes me want to break down in a tantrum.

Chase runs to the kitchen window. "I see them. They are almost here so we've got only a few minutes."

"A few minutes for what?"

He walks back over to me. "Is there anything in this house that shows he is an anti-species supporter? A journal he might've kept or a picture of him with any anti-species advocates?"

"I- I don't-"

"You have to be absolutely sure that there isn't. If they find any shred of evidence that he would go against his race they will use it against him in Krielm court and he'll never stand a chance."

"I don't know! How am I supposed to know who an anti-species advocate is? He has pictures with scientists and politics from all over the east."

"What about the kids? Do they know anything? Anything he might have told them about his fondness of the anti-species?"

"Why does that matter?"

"They are going to be questioned. You all will. This will not be an easy process for anybody, but as soon as they have what they need, Alex's death certificate will be as good as signed."

Knock. Knock. Knock.

"Krielm officials! Open the door."

Chase grabs a hold of my shoulders to bring my attention back to him. "Anja, you need to get upstairs and warn your kids of what not to say."

"Mrs. Van Hayes! Open the door now!"

"I can't do this! You need to help us!"

"I will. I promise. But you need to act fast. Go speak to your kids. Search the bedroom for anything the officials can use against him."

"Last warning! Open the door!"

"Anja! Go!"

I sprint out of the kitchen and up the stairs where I find all three of my kids waiting at the top.

"Mom?" worried, Lucas asks, "What's going on? Who's at the door?"

Slam!

The front door is kicked open letting in a dozen Krielm soldiers, each headed to a separate part of the house.

Chase rushes to the door. "Hey you can't just-"

A soldier interrupts his plea by knocking him to the ground and throwing his hands behind his back. "Chase Thompson, you are under arrest for compromising the well being of the Krielm forces."

"Mom?" crying, Faith grabs a hold of me.

Five soldiers rush up the stairs, two of which walk pass us to the bedrooms while the other three each grab onto my kids.

"Hey! Get your hands off of them!" I scream at the top of my lungs.

"Mrs. Van Hayes, you need to come with us."

Crash! Crash!

I listen to my bedroom being torn apart as I'm forced down the stairs with my children being manhandled behind me.

"Mommy!" Faith screams.

Halfway down the stairs I rip my hands free from the soldier. "Let her go right n-"

I'm interrupted by the back of a gun slamming into my forehead with my screaming children being the last thing I hear before

black.

TIMELINE SEVEN

CHAPTER 37

THE FIRST ACTIVATION

ANJA

TIMELINE ONE

BOOT

DR. MUVATO

JULY 2ND, 312 P.D.

1514

22 YEARS, 1 MONTH, 30 DAYS, 23 HOURS AND 49 MINUTES EARLIER

“COLLEAGUES,”

I begin my scripted speech I’ve had prepared for years, “Nearly three decades we have worked on Emergence 601.1993. Since the first tachyon was discovered, this moment became inevitable. The human race discovered fire. We’ve discovered extraterrestrial life. We’ve teleported a being over three kilometers unharmed. And today, we find out whether time travel is within our bounds. With the Great War halting this technologies progression so long ago, we now continue our predecessors’ work to travel to another dimension. I’d like to thank you all for your hard work, dedication and passion for this milestone in our species’ advancement.”

1515

“Today we make history.”

I flip the switch.

I wait for the tachyon generators to power up, but they stay silent.

Maybe there is a delay? What didn’t I account for?

Nothing.

I grow impatient.

Tick.

Tick.

Tick.

Tick.

Seconds tick by.

No reaction from Emergence. Nothing is being received.

One minute.

Nothing.

The look of disappointment covers the face of my colleagues.

Nothing coming from emergence right now means one of three things: One – the machine doesn't work. Two – for unknown reasons, nothing is ever sent back or at least not to this exact moment. Three – we are in a timeline that is never at the receiving end of the future tachyons, only the delivering.

I flip the switch off.

The roar of Emergence quiets to a hum.

Although I'm confident in our math and designs, I'm unsettled in the results. Could there have been an algorithm with a typo in the destination database? Possibly a connection isn't being made between the tachyon sparks and Emergence outputs? Or worse, our theory of how tachyons work is completely flawed. Whatever the issue, I must keep my team working.

"Okay, Ocean. Place the boot."

Ocean approaches Emergence and places the boot on the platform.

"May another dimension one minute ago receive this boot," I say discouraged.

I flip the switch back on.

The generators power up attaching tachyons to the displaced particles of the boot within the confines of Emergence.

Flash!

The boot still sits on the platform, as it should be, while the copy is possibly hurling through the fourth dimension.

I flip the switch off.

My colleagues begrudgingly turn the lights of the lab back on.

What are the odds that we are in the very first timeline to send the boot back? One in a billion? One in a trillion? Probably far more than that.

Ocean comes to stand next to me. "Is there anyway to know that it worked?"

TIMELINE ONE

"No. The boot's identical counterpart will be gone, but this one will stay here. Quantum entanglement is a strange concept that we still don't fully understand and testing for success is almost impossible with this type of experiment."

"So if it did work the cloned boot will be somewhere-"

"Not a clone. It's the exact boot that sits in front of us here. To be cloned and sent back will mean that we would have to have material at our disposal on the other side to recreate this boot. With quantum entanglement the sent back item stays exactly where it's at while also being at a second place at the same time. No matter what, you can never truly leave the timeline you're in. You can only hope that a version makes it to the other time in one piece."

"So what do we do now?"

"Pack it up. There is nothing more we can do except hope for the other timelines who receive this boot to do well with this machine. It is in their hands." I turn around and begin organizing the papers concerning the creation of Emergence on the desk for burning. Whether it worked or not, we cannot let the Krielm know what we have been working on this whole time.

"What are you thinking Dr. M?"

I'm apparently not holding my firm demeanor as strong as I hoped I was. "I think that no matter what, we were never going to see that boot Ocean. Everything that happens happens for a reason and every outcome that could be possible would always lead back to the same results. We can try to change the past, but at the end of the day the timeline is written and whatever has happened will continue to happen. We can't change the passage of time for too long before it begins to correct itself. That's time. That's the way of the universe. Disease, famine, war, if it's already happened it will continue to happen. We may be able to delay it, but we are foolish to think that we three-dimensional beings have any control over the other timelines. The best thing to do is let time play out, as it should. At the end of the day if this machine worked it would have just caused trouble. It's a good thing it didn't work for us because who knows what the future would have become if it did?"

ALEX

CHAPTER 38

THE SET-UP

TIMELINE SEVEN

TIMELINE SEVEN

I'M BLINDED

by the piercing sun as I awake. My vision slowly returns to me as the silhouettes of trees and mud huts make shape through the overpowering light. As I attempt to move I realize my hands and feet have been tied together like an animals that is about to be roasted over an open fire.

Three anti-species men walk to stand in front of me who finally block the bright sun allowing me to see that the entire town has come out to witness me.

"What are you doing here human?" one of the men standing in front of me says.

"I'm not here to hurt you. I'm not like the other humans in the north," I plea.

"What do you want here? Why have you come?" another anti-specie asks.

"The humans were mistreating your people in the north so I helped them. I couldn't stand to see innocent civilians suffer. If you let me go, I'll just be on my way."

"We'll let the Cacique decide if you leave or stay."

"What's a 'Cacique'?"

"*I'm the Cacique,*" a voice speaks up from behind me. I turn to look at him.

"Why have you come to La Palomar, human?" He asks.

"La Palomar?" I've never even heard of this place."

"That is where you are. You are in my village. My name is Tyran."

Their leader has long hairs that grow sporadically around his head leaving most of his scalp bald. He wears a voice box like everyone else does, but his is a different style and has an orange band wrapping around his neck versus everyone else's blue. Below the voice box hangs a jewel-covered necklace that gleams in the bright sun.

TIMELINE SEVEN

"You're not the first human I've met. I know not all of you are bad, but most are. So what is your business here? Good or bad?"

"I want to help you. The humans have no right treating your people so horribly."

"We have no intentions of fighting the war for either side."

"I was told you could help me."

"If the humans are in the north, it will just be a matter of time before they arrive here. How do I know you aren't going back to warn them of our village hidden in the thick jungle?"

"I can't promise you anything, but I'm making my way to General Wyatt to put an end to this war once and for all."

"You have honest eyes human, but no one can be trusted. You are on your own."

"Jose Majiah sent me. He told me you would help."

"Jose sent you?"

"Yes."

"If you have earned Jose's trust, then you have mine. We will travel north in the morning."

"I was just hoping for a temporary sanctuary until the humans lost my trail. If you aren't trained or prepared then they will tare you to shreds. I don't want to be responsible for-"

He interrupts me by forming a strange, glowing, blue ball out of thin air in between his hands. Like magic, it sits in his palm until he shoots it forward at a tree ahead of us. It isn't thrown from his hand, but is pushed away like a bullet, smashing a tree to the ground. "If you plan to end this war, you will not be able to do it alone. I will help you." He looks to the other anti-species, "Untie him!"

The restraints are pulled from my arms and legs as I'm brought to my feet. The anti-specie leader looks much shorter than a moment ago as I now stand half a meter taller than him. "How can you come with me?" I ask, "Isn't this your village? Don't you have to stay here?"

ALEX

“I have someone who will fill my place while I’m gone. I will warn the village and prepare us travel sacks to bring with us on our journey. Do you have a plan in mind to end the war?”

“Yes. We need to find General Wyatt without being spotted by any other human forces. If they spot us we’re as good as dead.”

“Don’t worry. I can protect myself if they try to kill me.”

“It’s not you I’m worried about.”

The leader turns around and walks toward a large concrete building in the center of town. “We will stay here tonight and you will tell me more of your history and where you’re from. In the morning we head north.”

TO BE CONTINUED...