Resuscitated Dystopia

Another freezing, dark, frivolous morning awoke Marc as he braced to face another day. He sauntered over to the next room over, hitting a light switch as he walked — only to realize it was burnt out. He shook his head dismissively, brushed the door open to his sister’s room, and turned the lamp on her nightstand on.

Despite his being on one year older (and he was 16), he still behaved like a parent to Violet. He had no choice or say though – in the lack of parents, he was the only one who could. The responsibility had been thrust upon him, and he’d only began to become comfortable and cope as of recently.

*If it weren’t for those stupid Darks... No. Don’t walk down this path again.*

He curtailed his thoughts about the taking of his parents by the Dark. It only made him frustrated now, hardened and immune to the mourning that he fell victim to in the moments and weeks after they were taken. He still had no concept of why they were taken, only where they were *supposed* to be, providing they hadn’t been killed in some way, yet.

“Violet, wake up,” he whispered.

“Is it already time?”

“Yes, unfortunately.”

He stepped out while she got ready, then she accompanied him as they meandered to the main street. As they walked out, they noticed people running to the street swallowed them – they were the only ones walking.

“I don’t think we’re late…” Marc said.

As they filed into the back of the street, the presentation began. It was another self-centered pride-builder for the leader of the Dark, Federico. It was obvious to see that he had worked on his oration and tact since the last event. The siblings disconnected from what was going on as they became increasingly bored. After all, it was always the same self-righteous, psychosomatic-sounding pontification they’d become accustomed to.

As he was nearing the end of the speech, Violet felt as though she was being stared at. About when she acknowledged this, she let out an ear-piercing, high-pitched scream. Marc had no chance to stop this: before he’d turned around, they were gone. He sprinted down alleys and backstreets to get home quickly. He threw the door open, locked it, then lay on his floor, blood-cold, heart beating out of his chest. For an hour he stayed in this petrified state, before he plunged into darkness and sleep.

He awoke feeling numb and dull, incognizant of how much time had passed. He entered his room and found his whiteboard, one of the few relics of his old life still remaining. For hours, he toiled, sketching, planning, and erasing ideas he struck down internally. Hands sweaty, five hours later, he stepped back from the board. He scratched his chin — the plan to infiltrate was complete. Marc was finished being told what to do by the new government.

Before he set off alone, on a likely-to-fail and audacious plan, he wanted to verify what someone had told him — there were other rebels located in the capital city preparing an attack. He’d known a general area where they might’ve been located, so he set off at an inconspicuous walking pace towards the location of the encampment. Down by the docks, he ducked into one of several shipping crates he’d noted hadn’t moved in weeks.

“Move another inch and it’ll be the last!” a threat came from his right.

“I’m friendly — they took my sister yesterday and my parents eons ago. I’m out to strike back,” Marc replied.

“Alright, alright.”

He asked to be directed to their leader, upon which he was laughed at – Marc was told he was busy. Marc replied pointedly that he was serious: he had important plans to discuss. After asking enough people, he finally received a “yes.” A few minutes later, a teenager greeted him. “Jonah,” as he was called, appeared to be about his age, with the demeanor of upper-class private school attendee turned thug. Marc liked him for this — they’d both turned away from what they’d had to face what they hated.

They sat down like school-kids in the cramped space. Marc began elaborating his plan, but was cut off.

“This is no different than that of what we’ve already thought of. It has a fatal flaw: after we capture Federico, what do we do about his servants?”

“The lack of mention is intentional. There’s a reason the Darks move swiftly and don’t show their faces. They’re not “willing” to do the bidding of Federico, they’re forced to.”

“So we hinge our entire plan on the Darks snapping out of some trance when Federico’s captured?”

“They’re not in a trance – this isn’t a magic novel. They’ll just realize they have nothing to fear anymore now that he’s gone. They won’t be punished for not following orders, nor will their families. It makes sense – why else would they act the way they do?”

“I see your point. I’ll sleep on it.”

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“Morning, Marc.”

“Same to you. Have you thought about what I suggested to you?”

“Yes, it makes sense. They are basically his slaves, but not faithful. We shall act in the coming days.”

Marc was silently elated that his plan had been accepted. The haste of its inception led him to believe it had a fatal flaw of some kind, but his mind had delivered in his impulse after his sister’s abduction – he was driven.

“Marc, you’ll be with the first tier team. There will be about six of us with you; the best trained. We need our brain well guarded.”

Marc admired Jonah’s tenacity and tact – he seldom saw someone like him, and he provided additional motivation for him.

The following morning, Marc set off with his group of cold, hardened-to-the-elements teens. They supposedly knew each other, yet only seemed to communicate in grunts. This clued him in to not bother asking for names: he might get a stare in return.

The journey began with the group descending into the city’s sewer-scape. They lowered themselves down a manhole at night, avoiding the eyes of anyone they encountered along the way. As they reached the bottom, they turned their flashlights on and were aware of the vast, infinite-looking, and mossy tunnel. The sound of the wind rushing through each tunnel and passageway filled their ears, accompanied by the sound of innumerable mice and rats that dwelled in the dank environment.

They crept ever closer to the capital building – it was quite convenient that it was connected to the rest of the city’s sewer system. Marc felt slightly grateful for his rainy summer days of sneaking around under the city or memorizing arbitrary routes around it. As they drew nearer, the tunnel shrank to be one-man wide, and neared the surface. They could hear men and women above shouting at each other, and the near inaudible tread of the Darks on pristine tiled floors.

Finally, they arrived at the rusted ladder that would serve as their entry point. They sat still, holding their breath in desperation to hear anything that lurked nearby. At last, they began their ascent upwards – they emerged, upon opening the manhole, in a cobbled path that appeared to be in one of the capital’s many gardens. In a few moments, the second phase of their plan – they camped there waiting, on edge and feeling vulnerable. After what seemed like hours, the sound of fireworks and firecrackers began all over around the capital area’s walls. The rush of many Darks overcame the group, as they watched dozens flock out of the main building, commanded to find whoever dared create a noise at that hour.

Now that the majority of the guards were off their post, they snuck into the kitchen, hoping fervently they wouldn’t hit the pots and pans. They traveled as stealthily as possible, like soldiers in a forest. Swiftly, they progressed from hallway to hallway, until eventually they were on the centerline of the palace. From the interior, they could still clearly hear the barrage of noise-making occurring going on.

Regrettably, they stepped out into the main hall of the palace. It took less than ten seconds for Federico, at his so-called “desk,” which was really a finely upholstered throne, to spot them and call for assistance. In a very movie-esque scene, they marched down the grandiose hallway towards, boldly approaching the man who they and the rest of the nation thought was such a tyrant. Only a few Darks appeared; the rest were preoccupied with their original task. It continued sounding off in the distance, like the rhythm of a march. The first of the guard-Darks charged at them, sliding past, then pushing Jonah to the ground. He threw it backwards with his legs, and the fight began.

Each member had two Darks to deal with, as they continued to wade toward Federico. Marc eliminated his assailants with kick to the face and a punch that hurled it off to the side. Each tall and mysterious one fell steadily, except for what appeared to be the squadron leader, who still triumphed over the collective group. Marc turned to watch the last stander pick up Jonah and a girl from their group and throw them into the left wall. Marc refused to acknowledge it, but he knew they were done. He waited for his blood to boil, and stir a larger reaction inside him.

After catching his breath and steadying himself, he threw himself at the demon, grabbing onto its back and hitting with enough strength to topple it, sending it sprawling. Finally, their last foe had been eliminated, and the hallway appeared to be a seen from a western-film bar fight.

Federico signaled for more help, but no one came to aid him. He began to flee, but the remnants of their group surrounded him. Unable to move (loyal servants unwilling to help, seeing his demise), he finally stopped behaving like an upset child and started like a cornered thief. On time yet again, the rest of the rebellion waltzed in through the front gates, bursting into a triumphant rage when they saw the outcome. Federico was now being restrained by his own evildoers, and now, more residents of the capital were arriving, marveling at what had been accomplished.

Battered and bloodied from the battle, Marc refocused and attempted to obtain some clarity after the long night. Even so, it did seem remarkably easy in hindsight. He let his thoughts trickle over to Jonah, who was confirmed dead by multiple citizens who’d come in. He attributed their victory to him: without the rebel forces and his support, this wouldn’t have been possible. Yet, he still had to rescue his sister. He maneuvered through the crowds of people, all discussing many things at once, attempting to find an open passage that led to the “palace” holding cells.

Minutes later, he found a less polished, refined, and well-kept passageway. He broke into a sprint, hoping the light at the end of the tunnel would be what he was actually looking for. He heard many people as he approached, and his heart fluttered – inside, hundreds of cells filled with several people each lined the walls, floor-to-ceiling. It was dark, disgusting, and grimy, and reminded Marc of a swamp-sewer combination. He grabbed the keys from the wall and opened each cell sequentially. Once he’d reached the end, reflecting to see the troves of innocent galloping away free, he realized he hadn’t seen his sister.

He returned to the rest of the group. The rebel forces sat in a circle, distinguishable due to their all-black outfits, similar to the Darks. They’d split off from talking to the adults when the talk had shifted to something more political; that wasn’t their speed – taking down a militant governor was.

Marc said he’d see the group later, and walked out of the palace, like it was another ordinary day. He stumbled down the main street, where his journey had began, bursting into run, like before, taking the same route home.

When he rounded the last corner, he noted one house had a lamp on within it. The faint flicker started a similar one in his heart, as he sped up down the trampled sidewalk. He knocked at the door, noting it was locked for the first time in quite some time. Within a minute, his sister appeared at the door.

“I thought I recognized who opened the doors.” Violet whispered, a faint smile on her face.

“Way to make me feel like I did all-that for nothing!”

“I figured I’d run home since I didn’t see you around, if nothing else, to finally get some decent food and warmth.”

They sat on the couch next to each other, talking for hours upon hours. Eventually, the sun rose, filling the room with a rosy light, but they continued reminiscing, still aware of the noise emanating from the center of the city. It didn’t really matter to them, however: they were all they had left in the world – brother and sister, and they had catching-up to do.