

Saint: The first halo

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The trouble father son relationship of Scott and Jamie Lannon brings out the worst in son Jamie as he grows into new abilities and chooses to use them on a darker path.



Published on
Booksie

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(Please note that what you are about to read is the unedited version. Spelling mistakes and grammar are already accounted for and will be reuploaded when chapter 10 is finished)

Prologue - Birth of a savior.

Miles away from any sense of civilization the skies run dark while every so often being lit by strikes of lightning. The winds rush and the waves of the sea seemed to form gnashing teeth begging for its next snack. The air hung heavy with droplets of rain that fell violently to the raging waters below. From within the clouds the figure of a man descends with such a ferocity that it punches a hole in the clouds allowing a beam of sunlight to trickle out.

The man's eyes focused intensely on a large fortress like structure built atop a large rock in the middle of the sea. His vision was blurred from the rain pattering against his goggles and from his thick brown hair that stuck to the lens. While falling head first the rain stained against his brown jacket and blue jeans. As his speed picked up he could hear the wind around him whistling as he watched the building close in.

Once nearing the building he pushed his hands in front of him mildly slowing his fall. Then he turned his body so that he was now falling feet first as he flew by the tall walls of the fortress. Once making contact with the ground he could feel the rock under him shatter. Pieces of rubble flew up around him throwing up dust everywhere. Dust settling, the man was seen standing unaffected by the impact. Peering out the man saw he was greeted by several armed guards holding him at gun point.

The man slowly raised both his arms into the air as he looked around at the guards dressed completely in black armor. With the air seeming to calm down within the confines of the walls he could hear the men shouting to him. Phrases like "don't move!" and "who are you?" Could be heard echoing around the walls. The man however stayed silent, slowly counting the foes before him as he steadied his breathing from the fall in. From what he could see there were only seven before him. But intuition would suggest to him that there were others hiding in things like snipers nest or heavily armed grunts behind the wooden door just about twenty feet in front of him.

He watched as rain bounced off the barrels of the guns the men held tightly in their hands. The guns they had were unfamiliar to him, but most guns just fire bullets. The speed or consistency of the bullets isn't his main concern just so long as it was bullets fired. Letting out a deep sigh he stepped forward only to be met with more chattering from the guards. He quickly scanned the entirety of his surroundings then glanced back at the men.

"Look I get it." The man spoke abruptly prompting the guards into silence. "Being a soldier is just another job, you do what you're told and move on with the day. You get paid and you don't ask questions. But I'm telling you this now and only now. Just because you work for a bad man, doesn't mean you're bad. So if you lower your guns now and step aside I promise no harm will come to you." He finished stating as he head-counted the men to watch their actions.

The man smiled as he watched one of the men lower his gun then drop it completely to the floor. But his expression quickly changed as he heard the sound of the other six guns firing. The man's eyes grew wide as the bullets quickly closed in on him. Then his eyes became relaxed again as the bullets hung silently still in the air in front of him. The man looked to the one who dropped his gun and smiled. "Would you please step away?" He spoke watching the individual who soon ran to the far side of the building.

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"Now for the rest of you." He said as he turned back to the other men who must have been shocked seeing the bullets still clinging in the air. The man smiled as his hands were still poached up in the air. He reached out and touched the cold metal of one of the bullets. "Whoa armor piercing rounds. You guys spared no expense in your attempt to kill me." Spoke the man while the bullets seemed to turn around as if switching targets to the guards. Placing his finger on the back of the bullet and peered at the guard furthest to the right.

Curling his pointer finger into his thumb the man set his target and flicked the back of the bullet. The bullet is then sent through the air at speeds matching when it was first fired. The guard lurched back but it was too late and the bullet drilled through the front of his helmet and broke out the back. His crimson fluids stained onto the bleak pavement behind. Seeing the other guards backing off and dropping the guns the man frowned. "I'm sorry but you missed your chance for that." His voice reverberated through the ears of the guard while the man's fingers passed another collection of bullets. One landed in the ankle of a guard while one made contact with the back of the same guard's head during his attempt to flee. Then the man put his palms before him and seemingly blasted the rest of the bullets forward. They ravaged the remaining four guards as their limb bodies fell to the ground beneath them.

Stepping forward the man grimly smiled and looked at the large wooden doors in front of him. "Chimera, I'm here for you. I don't want to dance around waiting. We both know your grunts won't be of any use to you here." The man screamed, letting his voice boom through the storm. He then heard some rustle from behind the door and he couldn't help but smile. Once the noise stopped he could feel a presence next to him. Looking to his right he was surprised to see one of the bodies of a fallen guard beginning to stand up again. The guard reached his arms up and grasped his helmet.

"Ace, it's good to see you again. Our last encounter was less than pleasant." Spoke the guard as he lifted his helmet letting his long brown hair barrel out falling just past his shoulders. Peering at the 'superhero' in front of him. "Pretty ruthless how you took those guys out I honestly didn't expect it, lucky for me I shifted right before impact." He spoke as Ace stood there watching him in mild aggravation.

"If I knew it was you I would have destroyed you right there and then." Ace retorted to Chimera. Bringing his arm to his side he levitated one of the guard's gun to him. "Now lets fini-"

"Hold up champ. You got one more thing to do." Chimera turned his attention to the large wooden door. "The military is prototyping some new toys and they gave me a model to test out. On you of course." With Chimera's attention focused on the door a bright light seeped out of the cracks and framing. The a large gust of wind blew the door off its hinges. The door carved through the air towards Ace who brought his arm up and swung it to the side smacking the door away. The door careened past him and into the stone wall splintering upon impact leaving chunks scattered on the ground.

Before Ace had enough time to recover from the door's impact a large figure darted out from the now smokey empty door way. The figure was dressed like the guards only with heavier armor to accommodate its size. The thing slammed its arm hard on Ace's throat making him let out a small yelp. With the help of some propulsion rockets sprouting from its back, its arm kept pressuring Ace's neck until his back violently smashed an indent in the stone wall behind them. This impact surged a rush of blood to drip out of Ace's mouth and onto the floor. The thing brought its heavy arm up and gravitated it towards Ace, Bringing his hand up Ace caught the blow before it reached him. Looking into the eyes of the monstrosity all he could see was a faint illumination.

"Target analysis being conducted. Processing. Alias is Ace. Birth name is Scott Lannon. Known abilities include Flight, strength and telekinesis. Threat is, processing. Critical. Protocol four activated, Eliminating target." The Beast spoke with a metallic ring as it backed off and put its arm forward revealing a hole in its hand that had a small gun barrel in it. The barrel began to spin rapidly and Ace's eyes grew wide. "Death is assured, goodbye." Standing up as the Robot spoke Ace was met with a barrage of bullet. Immediately after

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standing up Ace ran to the right as the bullets cascaded behind him pounding the wall to bits following him. Then Ace ran right by Chimera and looked dead into his eyes and flashed a quick smile, at the this point he jumped towards the castles walls. He feet landed soft on the wall for a few seconds he seemed to defy gravity.

Rain beating on his back Ace set his intents on the robot in his gaze who was now directing his shots directly at him. Ace then pushed hard off the wall obliterating it out of pure strength, The bullets crashed against his skin ripping apart his shirt but grazing off of his skin. Bringing his arm back Ace prepared his counter attack. Approaching the Robot he brought his arm back forward which then slammed hard into the metallic chest of his foe. His hand went right through the armor and through several of the devices wires and circuits. Pulling his hand out the robot fell to the ground and continued to speak of eliminating Ace. "Keep talking, it seems I've paralyzed you. Or destroyed enough wires to destroy your function to move." He said as he turned back around and met gaze with a surprised Chimera. "Now our fight begins. And ends." Ace walked forward as him and Chimera made eye contact, Ace slid off his jacket as it fell with a smack weighted down by the rain.

"Come at me young hero, lets see how the generation has raised you." Remarked Chimera in a taunting tone. The rain let up and a small hole parted the clouds letting a beam shine down onto the building. "Looks like the gods are interested in this fight too." Spoke Chimera who now wears a wide smile. Ace knelt down and unlaced his shoes and took them off. Placing his feet on the still wet ground he curled his toes. Then abruptly he began his charge as Chimera just stood and waited. Jumping shallow into the air Ace brought his foot up and attempted to hit Chimera in the head, just as his foot was to make contact he felt nothing and fell behind landing on his back. Ace stood up again hearing Chimera laughing in front of him. "Did you miss?" Chimera taunted again.

"What was that? I hit you!" Ace Chambered out in anger as he stood up again and dusted himself off. He then scanned the area quickly looking for anything that might create any sort of illusion. Getting mildly frustrated when he saw nothing he looked back to Chimera. "Ok fine I'll find out on my own!" He abruptly spoke charging at the villain again. Stopping in front of him he swung his fist which to Ace's lack of surprise went right through Chimera's face without making contact. He attempted again which bore the same results, just as Ace was convinced it was some sort of holographic object he felt a hard force hit his face. Stumbling back Ace grabbed onto his face and peered through his fingers to see Chimera with his fist stretched out.

"It's all me dear, no tricks here." Chimera joked putting his hands on his hips he let out a maniacal mocking laugh. Just as Ace was preparing for a second go he saw Chimera lunge at him. Ace put his arms up across his face to guard him but he could see a fist eerily pass right through his arms. He felt a force against his face again followed by a jab to his stomach. Then he suffered through a flurry of blows all over his body, he was defenseless and treated like a rag doll. Feeling weak he fell to the ground his observed the blood running down his face. He then noticed the mechanical body that laid next to him of the fallen opponent. It's severed head still spoke out statistics of Ace and his weakness and strengths.

Looking up Ace saw Chimera running at him again and he smiled grabbing to the robots head. He quickly stood and pointed the face of the robot towards Chimera who halted his charge due to his shock. Then they both heard the robotic voice chime out. "Target analysis being conducted. Processing. Alias is Chimera. Birth name is James Alices. Known ability is phasing his body in and out of reality at desired intervals, however it cannot be sustained for prolonged periods of time. Threat is, processing. Hazardous. Protocol four activated, Eliminating target... unable to eliminate target." Ace smiled as it continued to spurt out various facts. He chucked the head at Chimera who let it phase through him, then he shot forward and began an assault of various attacks. All of which went right through Chimera who was returning the fire and landing his attacks on Ace but showing resilience Ace kept up the assault refusing to move.

This kept up for several minutes but both showed no sign of slowing down. Then as Ace pushed his right arm forward he saw Chimera jumped back to avoid the hit. "You dodged!" Ace shouted excitedly. Putting his

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goggles back on Ace brought his foot down heavy on the ground and he pulsed towards Chimera. Then right after his foot hit the ground a large boom echoed through the area obliterating the area around Ace completely, his speed left Chimera's vision disrupted until he felt Ace's shoulder slam indefinitely into his chest which immediately forced a pool of blood out of his mouth.. Feeling the pain vibrate through his body he was lifted off the ground as Ace kept his forward momentum destroying Chimera's body. "How much were you holding back?" Chimera managed to muster out through the air pressure.

"Everything!" Ace shouted violently as he took Chimera's arm and swung him back toward the rubble of the building. Letting him go his body crashed into the ground, as the rain pattered against the limb body the sun shined on the once glossy darkness now stained red.

Landing gently Ace walked over to the motionless body and knelt next to it. "I'd say this generation did a pretty good job." Ace spoke softly. "You shouldn't have played all your cards right away. Now rest in peace James Alics" He reached over and closed his eyes. He stood up as he heard soft footsteps behind him, turning around he saw the figure of the soldier he had let live when he arrived. The guard reached up and took off the helmet. Ace stood speechless as long blonde hair rolled out and the soft face of a woman appeared from under the helmet. They both looked at each other. And the woman fell silent into Ace's chest who in return wrapped his arms around her without a word as the sun shined on them both. This is Scott Lannon, he will have a son. His son has an undeniable destiny, to change the world.

Chapter 2: Stasis

The sun fell lightly on a quiet town as the wind rustled through the rural area and swept through buildings. The calm winds danced around the brick building of Alistair High school. On the grass just outside the building laid Jamie whose hair was resting over his eyes. He brought his right arm and rested it over his face to shield his eyes from the sun. He shuffled his legs as the grass stained his blue jeans and pressed on his green tee shirt. Despite it being the middle of the summer he wore a black thermal under his shirt.

He was skipping the school classes he was supposed to be attending but when questioned by staff he would say he graduated last year. They would leave without question which left him to wonder why a teacher is so easily fooled by a student. School itself was a hell for the boy, just a place for authorities to tell him something educational then praise him for remembering something he heard not just seconds ago. That's not learning, that's a memory game. The only peace he found was in the silence of the day. He had only two more hours until he would be able to walk home undisturbed.

"Jamie, what are you doing out here?" Spoke a gruff voice who after moving his arm turned out to be Mr. Alberts.

"Skipping your class and lying to the teachers?" Retorted Jamie to the teacher hoping his truthful sarcasm would save his punishment."

"Why do you always choose to skip my class." Albert said as he reached his arm out and Jamie took Mr. Alberts's hand to help himself up.

"Because I hate how your name ends in an S, it makes writing a possessive of a noun for you hard..." Jamie joke as both of them began to walk to the building. The teacher gave out a quick chuckle and they walked through the large doors and a cool air from the building's A/C took them both over. The inside really opened up showing a large empty area which served to keep it less crowded during the morning rush. They made their way to a decent sized office that had the vibe of every dental building you've been too. He was directed to a smaller room where his principal saw him and shook his head.

"You know we have to call your father." Spoke the principal as he picked up the phone and motioned for Jamie to sit down. He dialed the number and held the phone to his ear.

"Good luck, he's not home. He never is." Jamie said as he looked down at the fiber on the shaggy rug. He peered around at the several self-hypocritical inspirational posters which were shipped out by people who want nothing more than to gun down their office. He heard the principal hang up his phone and looked back at them. "School ends in about twenty minutes. It's obvious you don't want to be here. Go home and come tomorrow and go to your classes or there will be consequences. Understand?" The principal questioned and Jamie nodded his head and stood up turning around to walk out. Jamie looked back at the tall slender man behind the desk who wore a formal suit everyday and always had his short hair slicked back.

"Principal Barley. Are you okay? You seem different." Jamie said as he felt like something had changed from the previous times he had been in that office. But the only response he got was a smile and a wave out the door. He stepped out of the office and made his way out the way to his locker down a long hall across from where he just came out of. He braced his cold lock and twisted it to the required numbers. Fumbling a few times he eventually opened it and grabbed out his black backpack and put on and took out his iPod and placed his headphones on.

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The second the music began all other noise from beyond his song melted away. He stepped silently through the building as the sound vibrated through his ears and into his head. He left the cool of the A/C into the harsh beating of the sun outside. He saw a friend walking by and he nodded to him as he turned onto the sidewalk and began to walk home. After some time he turned into an ally that would lead directly to the back of his house. Looking down as he walked he pulled out his wallet and shuffled through the bills and considered walking to the store. As he decided he would he heard a felt as if something was behind him. Turning around he saw nothing.

After a second he turned back and decided to ignore the cliché and went back to walking. Just then he could feel something sharp press lightly on his back. He reached up and pulled his headphones out. Turning around he saw the hooded figure of a desperate man. His hand was shaking and his teeth crashed together. The man was obviously looking for a fix from one substance or another. "Look kid we both know how this goes. Just gimme what you got and you'll get to go home." Spoke the man while stuttering over his words. Jamie looked around for any sign of salvation. To his disgust he saw and car drive right by them, making eye contact with the driver he saw him mouth 'sorry' as he drove by.

Jamie had no choice. He reached into his pants and pulled his wallet back out and handed the money too the man. He stared putting his hands down and the he saw the figure point at the headphones around his neck. "No please I..." Jamie spoke as he felt a sharp pain invade his shoulder. He looked over at the knife imbedded in him. Felt the man ripping his headphones away from his head and taking his Ipod with it. He watched as the man ran off. Falling to the ground Jamie struggled with pulling the knife out. He yanked violently with a scream as his blood trickled off the blade and onto the concrete of the ally street.

Clutching his shoulder he began to stumble down the alleyway with a thin trail of blood trickling behind him. He alternated between walking on to two feet then also using his good arm the brace before he fell down. He saw his house in the distance as he trembled getting closer and closer to the safety of the structure. He reached the back porch and placing his hand on the flimsy wooden hand rail he pulled himself up each step.

Now shock had set in and he couldn't feel the pain in his shoulder anymore. All he felt was a tightness in his chest that he couldn't shake. He gripped the cold door handle and slowly turned it. Pushing forward the door opened slowly as Jamie lost his grip and fell to the ground spill a small pool of blood onto the ground. Looking up he saw his dad turning the corner "Dad!" he choked out in an empty whisper as his eyes started to dim he saw his father running towards him. Last thing he felt was his father picking him up as he faded from loss of blood and shock. His father rushed the now limb body to their couch and setting Jamie down and pulled his phone out, fumbling over the keys he managed to dial out to the emergency responds. As he explained the situation he took a towel and put pressure on Jamie's wound.

He then thought to get his shirt off to observe his wound so he disregarded the bloody garment and threw it on the ground where it landed with a smack. He peered at the wound and could identify it as a stab of some sort, but as he watched he could swear the wound was repairing itself. He sat curious as he then put a fresh towel on and waited with his eyes closed. "You'll be okay." The father spoke out confidently. He could hear the faint sounds of sirens now as they approached closer and closer. Although time seemed to creep on it wasn't long until he heard a frisk pounding at his door. Getting up the father rushed to the door and swung it open. Without a word the paramedics went over to Jamie and examined his then placed him on a stretcher.

The father watched as time continued to creep on, he placed his hands on the back of his head as he watched them take his son without a word or even a glance. He knew there's no room for him to ride along. So he began walking down to his car and stepped inside and preceded to follow the ambulance.

The drive for him felt completely silent and he watched the red lights pulse on the top of the ambulance. Every so often he would let out a sigh, he knew how close the hospital was but the drive felt as if they were going across the country. He would normally be freaking out but a part of him was full of anxiety for what

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was to come, a kind of unsettling uncertainty. He could see cars passing by him and the white sedan driving to his right. He peered at the various people on the side of the street who were probably thinking "I wonder what happened?"

It was odd to him how a majority of the time curiosity did not mean sympathy or concern. People just see something they don't know about and naturally they want to know more. He was lost in thought one hand on the wheel with his other arm resting on the window. He almost didn't notice the ambulance pull right into a large parking lot and veer off into the emergency ramp. Both his car and the Ambulance came to a stop and he got out and watched the paramedics scramble to the back opening and pulling his son out. He attempted to follow them in but one of the paramedics told him he would have to sign in at the waiting room and well... wait.

Slightly in dismay the father agreed and trudged his way to the see through automatic doors that slid open as he stepped in front of them. The instant they opened he could feeling the wafting smell of the sick and elderly. And that aroma that said "This place is very clean, but you don't want to touch anything." That smell always gave him a headache and now was no exception as he reached up to rub his forehead. Letting out a grunt he approached the front desk to be greeted by a rather heavy set woman who was way to happy to be working at a hospital.

"Please take this form and sign your name and reason for visiting and the other bits of information that's on the form." The woman gleefully spoke to him. As if there wasn't a chance someone was dying a few rooms behind her. Annoyed he walked to a ranch of chairs and sat down. He wrote his name down and checked in various boxes and signed his name a few more times. Not understanding why he had to write his name so many times, it's not like halfway through the form he's going to change into a completely different person. He chuckled at the thought and could almost feel the stares from the people around him as a hospital wasn't a very comical place.

After he was done he stood up and once again walked over the linoleum floor over to the front desk. He flashed a shallow smile at the woman as he handed the paper back over. She stood there and read over it for a second flipping through and making sure everything was in order for him to be there. She smiled back at him as she said "Everything seems fine. You can take a seat and we'll call on you when you can go in and see your son, thank you for the patients." After she was done talking he walked back and sat down in his already warm plastic chair and sighed as the words 'thank you for the patients' rung through his head. Another way of saying he was going to be here for a while and there's nothing you can do about it.

He looked around at the other people who sat waiting as they read through pamphlets they wouldn't read in any other circumstances. Or as they somehow were comfortable enough to fall asleep in. He watch them as they were called standing up with sighs of "Thank god" and he truly envied them. His back began to sting so he quickly shifted position slightly watching another group of people go up. People he was sure he came in before, maybe some paradox happened and his papers shifted on the waiting list. Yeah, that's the only reasonable explanation for it. Finally he saw a doctor with graying hair that implied seniority and experience approach the door and whisper to the desk lady who then peered in his direction.

She then pointed at him and the doctor took a slight glance at a clipboard in front of him then back up at him. The doctor was about to call out his name but it was obvious the doctor was referring to him so he stood up and walked over.

"Hello sir my name is Dr. Phoenix I am in charge of the well being of you soon and would like you to come look at his condition." He spoke as he nodded to the long hallway behind him. All the father could think about was the last name Phoenix the kinda name that made someone pretentious about themselves, it's no wonder he became a doctor. He followed the assumed egotistical doctor down the long unnecessary cold hallway. He'd

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peak through the small glass windows on the several wooden doors. He could see doctors doing any number of things to different people. This kind of perspective made it seem like it was more of a torture compound as opposed to a hospital. Then again the only difference between the two is morphine and you have to pay.

He looked over at the calm confident doctor with his smug look and long stride like he was this hospital's savior. "So about my son's condition, why can't you just tell me before we get there? Is it serious?" The father spoke in an unwavering voice as he grabbed the doctor's attention.

"No worries..." The doctor paused for a second as the both walked leading the father to wonder how long this hospital was, A kind of Doctor Who esque phenomenon. "Actually it's rather remarkable. All we did was put him under and from there we just... watched the wound heal itself." Phoenix peered over at the father to see what his reaction was. He was met with a worried kind of empty daze.

"I've only seen this once before, a middle aged man wandered in after he had been hit by a semi truck going about sixty. As we were using an X-ray on him to see the extent of his injuries we could see the bones physically active and putting themselves together. It was recorded in a medical journal but the records were all burned so of course everyone thinks I'm making it up." He chuckled with a slight sign a depression as he stopped in front of one of the doors. "He's in here." Dr. Phoenix spoke as he turned the door handle and pushed the heavy wooden block open.

The doctor and father walked in to see an unconscious Jamie laying with an oxygen mask on and IV running into his left arm. The father walked over and placed his hand over Jamie's forehead. He then reached down and pulled the collar of his gown to the side to reveal where the wound once was, only now it was vacant and his skin was perfect with no scarring or any visual sign of injury. The father's eyes darted around the room as it felt his worst fear was now at his door step. He then heard the doctor make a small gasp. Turning he could see the doctor checking his charts then making a double take at the father. "Is everything okay doc?" He asked afraid the concern from the doctor was about his child.

The doctor stood with his eyes wide open as he looked at the father then took another double take to the charts. "Now that I'm looking at you standing there next to your son. That man I said was hit by the semi-truck, that was you wasn't it? I know it was Mr. Lannon. Scott Lannon I remember now... I remember everything, I want answers." The doctor stood firm with a commanding voice that pounced around the room. Scott just stayed in place shock and turning his gaze back to his son the only thing he could think and the only thing he could say resounded through his body.

"Shit." He said silently once again locking eyes with the doctor as the both stood still in a stalemate.

Chapter 3: Reverberations

An echo of footsteps slowly pelted the pavement as the sounds bounced in a large empty stone corridor. The kind of plane that looked like you could fly a plane through it, yet you knew one would never come. At the top of the curved roof were several long florescent light bulbs that very dimly lit the hallway. The only other source of light was faint glow of a lit cigarette and the lightly illuminated trails of smoke creeping out of it.

The footsteps and lit cancer belonged to General Davis who walked with boundless pride and stature. His gray hair was kept in line by his issued rank hat. His uniform was kept clean and almost devoid of wrinkles. On his chest were several war allocated medals from his years of service in the military. Now he was one of the most decorated war hero of his time. The scars on his face and the thick but well groomed scruff of gray hair on his chin stated the challenges he faced rising through the ranks.

He continued to walk as he got closer to the end of the hallway which presented a large interlocking steel doors that reached to the ceiling. He was greeted at gunpoint by two well armed guards that circulated post to keep a twenty four hour watch. "At ease." His deep choppy voice spoke out as he lifted his identification to the men. In any other light he would have recognized him but in this place everything is just a large collection of shadows. The men in turned saluted the general. Davis walked forward and took a thin plastic key card out of his pocket. He carefully slid it into an electronic device that was attached to the door.

"Identifying please wait." A female voice rung out as the device when through the library of allowed personnel that were allowed past this point. "General Davis is permitted past this area. Please enter your code and precede as normal." The voice spoke again as Davis pressed his fingers on a keypad located right below where he put his card. After the code was enter and accepted he grabbed his card and the doors began to open in front of him. They separated with a slight vibration and a noticeable creaking of metal against stone.

"Good day men." Davis said as he walked past the armed guards into an even larger circular room. Davis was then greeted by a nervous man in a lab coat, they both walked silent as the walked down a flight of stairs and into another smaller hallway. Then they opened one last door and stepping inside Davis looked at the man next to him. "Status?" He retorted to the shaking man.

"Sir! Project 'Nightlight' is preceding as planned with no notable complications." The man spoke perhaps louder then necessary as it could be head through the circular compound.

"Magnificent." Davis said as he inhaled on last drag of the stick and reached up to take it out of his mouth. He smiled as looked on at several large cylindrical vats that held humanoid like objects suspended in a green liquid. "We'll go active in one week, make sure we're ready by then." the smile on Davis's face would easily frighten anyone as his plans were finally starting to set in motion.

Meanwhile the stalemate at St. Peter's Hospital continued, eyes meeting between Dr. Phoenix and Scott. To much time had past for either of them to accept it as just an awkward silence. The hard truth was out there and disputing it would be useless. Now that the doctor had remember his face there was no point and trying to tell him he was wrong. Scott pondered how the doctor would react to the truth, how he would take it knowing the boy he "saved" years ago has been saving him since his recovery. Not him specifically, the human race in general not that he was looking for any thank yous.

The air was beginning to be stained with the scent of resentment, he should have been more careful. Just as Scott started to open his mouth to spew some nonsensical excuse he and the doctor heard the intercom on the wall click on.

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"Attention Staff we are experiencing a severe code red. Please assist as previously addressed to in such an emergency." Spoke a delicate female voice who was notably frightened from the fire. The doctor grunted with frustration as he turned and opened the door. Looking back he knew Scott would take the kid and run but his hands were tied so he just left the room and rushed down the hall. Looking around in a slight panic Scott started pulling various tubes out of his son's arms and chest. After sliding the unneeded oxygen mask off he picked his son up with ease. Walking over to the door he took a second to listen, to see if anyone was on the other side of the door. He heard nothing so he brought his foot up and pushing it against the door it came off it's hinges and hit that wall across from it.

Peeking his head out the door he didn't see anyone so he stepped out listening to the faint sounds of hysteria he pivoted and walked in the opposite direction. On his way through the hall he saw a very elderly man wrapped in a brown cloth that covered his body and head. The face of the man was familiar to Scott, he had heard of and seen the man countless times. A true unspoken celebrity whose purpose for being in this hospital were unclear.

"Darrius." Scott spoke as the walked close to each other, a sign of respect to acknowledge his existence and his stature.

"Scott." Darrius spoke back in the same pleasantry. Then Darrius stopped and turned to look at Scott. "Get yourself and your son as far away as you can Scott. I have a job to do here, you'd be wise to avoid becoming problematic." He spoke out with a sense of dread as the hospital filled with smoke and the heat from the fire could now be felt radiating throughout the building. Darrius pulled his brown cloth off as his gray hair partially fell off as a more youthful scarlet color hair grew in. His figure also altered, it became more refined as if years of exercise accumulated in a matter of seconds. I was like he was aging backwards at an accelerated rate. "You're still here?" Darrius questioned as he reached into his pocket and grabbed a match and lit it without striking it against anything.

His eyes intensive Scott could figure out where this was going, the man in front of him was no friend but with his son in hand he was in no position to intervene. So he turned and began to run, out past that wooden door and out the sliding glass doors. He didn't bother to let them open, he felt glass patter against his clothing as he crashed through. Seeing his car he rushed over and placed his son in the backseat and laid him down. He then climbed in the driver seat and turned the engine. After it caught he drove in silence as in the rear view mirror he saw a billow of smoke. Darrius was contracted to destroy that hospital, it was a job and Scott wasn't permitted to get involved.

Gripping the steering wheel tight he kept repeating in his head how he was not to get involved. After he was a few blocks away his eyes became relaxed and he slowed down the car. After coming to a complete stop looked at his son in the back, he was asleep and should be for a few more hours. "I love you." He softly spoke as he got out of the car and looked towards the pillar of smoke. Walking forward the world seemed to quiet itself. The clouds above made the streets dull and seemingly devoid of color.

He began to pick up speed as his anger towards the situation grew and grew. His eyes intense and focused, his fist balled up and prepared. He began to sprint as he got closer to the hospital he felt the heat more and more. Seeing embers pass by he let his emotions take hold of him. Now only feet away from the hospital he halted his run and bent his knees. Taking a small breath he extended his legs again with enough force to send him bashing through the hospital walls. He saw Darrius about so set off a large explosion and before he could Scott slammed into him with enough consistent for to send them both pulsing out of the hospital. They fell hard into the parking complex crashing through three stories of it, rubble was scattered all around them as they shifted to get free.

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"Scott! What are you doing? You know how much trouble you can get into for interfering with my job. Not to mention you know the difference in our abilities." Darrius rung out furiously as his voice bounced of the concrete ceilings and floors.

"You and I both know that your job was only for one person. There's no reason to take a whole building full of people who are already suffering!" Scott yelled back. It was dark. The only light came from the hole in the ceiling and eventhat faded out quickly.

"Actually, my job was to exterminate every living thing in the disgusting building." Darrius retorted smugly with a smile that could almost be felt through the thick darkness. The room remained silent for several seconds as if they were both waiting for the echos to stop replaying the conversation.

"I'm sorry, I know the risk involved. But those people deserve a fighting chance.." Scott spoke as he finalized his resolve. "I'm that fight." After he spoke he could hear a slight chuckle from the Abomination that stood just feet away from him. He could feel a wave of heat radiate from where he knew Darrius was standing.

"You are out of your league Scott." Darrius mocked as he raised his hand In the shadows. Snapping his fingers a small flame appeared and danced on the tip of his pointer finger. The flame caused a faint glow to press on Darrius's face outlining his most prominent facial features. "I'd ask if you wanted one last chance to turn and run, but I'll assume how that would go. So I'll just show to respect your Elders." The flame on his finger grew bigger and bigger. Eventually the flame caused enough light source to show the two figures at their stand off. Darruis brought his arm forward pointing the flame at Scott. "Pow." Darrius spoke aloud as the flame surged forward towards Scott.

Jumping back Scott narrowly avoided the flame as he watched it dissolve in the air he could feel the head of another flame approaching him. As soon as his foot him the ground he rolled to the left to dodge the other flame. As he was rolling he could see another flame already being formed. It was troublesome but there was no way Darrius wasn't playing with him. These small flames were nothing compared to what Scott knew Darrius was capable of. Dodging one last flame Scott observed as the flame instead of being shot grew in length and intensity. And instead of using the flame as a projectile Darrius charged at Scott and swung his arm forward as the flame acted like a blade burning into Scott's cheek.

His cheek burned as a small trail of smoke seeped from the cut, the flame had such density the it actually broke his skin and cauterized it in one swing. Darruis thrust forward but Scott caught his arm stopping it from making contact then pushing his arm aside Scott landed a blow in the middle of Darruis's chest which sent him flying back. After the thud of his body hitting the floor there was a brief silence, more eerie then awkward as if Darruis didn't expect to be hit. Then an odd chuckle rung out while a small scuffle could be heard as he stood back up.

"I do so ever hope you enjoyed that Scott. It'll be the last move you make." Darruis spoke and with each word a small puff of fire crept out and an intense heat could be felt rising in the building. Lifting up his right hand he cradled a small flame, it grew and grew until the flame touched his skin. Once it did the flame enveloped his hand in a second skin of fire that started spreading up his arm. The flame continued to devour Darruis as it ate it's way up his arm, onto his chest, down to his feet and eventually his head. He would completely covered in flames almost to the point where clothing and color was unrecognizable.

The fire seemed to be alive as its breath formed a pair of wings and an active tail, the flames on his hands condensed into claws as his ears became pointed. "I like you Scott, thats why i'm letting you see me like this. But we both know having a son has made you soft. You're no stronger now then you where when you fought Chimera." Darruis stepped forward as his flames held such a significant power it was able to light the entire section of the parking garage. A smile was seen through the wicked flames as Darruis began to charge flames trickling of his back.

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Swinging hard he landed his right fist into Scott's stomach picking his feet off the ground and stealing his breath. The flame covered fist charred the fabric on Scott's clothing and before Scott could react he felt the intense blazing tail wrap around him. He could feel the heat cindering his lungs and stomach. He attempted to scream but somehow the tail made of sheer combustion held a solid property and compressed his lungs. The tail unwrapped and sent Scott winding into the air, Darruis held his arm out and some of the fire on his hand collected into a large burning ball. He aimed it and let it fly towards Scott, upon impact the ball burst and sent Scott up into the next floor of the compound.

He landed with a thud and held his stomach as he attempted to get his footing. After stumbling a bit he got back onto his feet and took a breath meanwhile hearing the flapping of wings he could see Darruis levitating to where he was. Without giving Scott any further time to recover several streams of fire sprouted from his wings and they flowed intelligently directly towards Scott. Before he could dodge he could feel the pyre pierce his skin as if they were made of metal however there was no blood due to instant cauterization. Darruis once again outstretched his arm and a few small trails of fire pushed into the concrete above Scott's head. Darruis then brought his arms down and the linked fire pulled down on the concrete bringing a large chunk crashing down on Scott's head. This dissipated the fire that was in Scott's body as it disappeared into the kicked up dust and bits of stone.

"How truly disappointing, I was jesting at first but it seems you really haven't grown any. In fact it seems safe to say you've taken several steps back." Darruis chimed as he walked forward still covered in the conflagration.

"I'm sorry I didn't mean to mislead you." Spoke Scott from under the rubble, a small shift was all that was seen before Scott arose with no visible physical injuries. Scott flashed a quaint smirk at Darruis as he brushed dust from his pant leg. He then reached up and placed his hand on his neck then tilting it a tiny cracking noise could be heard. Then his smirk turned into a cold sober stare.

"I wouldn't say I haven't grown any, I was just waiting..." He trailed off as he looked at the flames covering his opponent's body. "I was waiting for my turn."

Chapter 4: Growth

Standing proud in front of his opponent he kept an almost invisible smile and a confident glare. He reached up and pulled the fabric apart and let it fall silent to the ground. This revealed the pair of goggles that hung around his neck which he now placed on his eyes. He started to step slowly towards his confused foe as his stride now emitted a sense of pride.

"I got a son to get back to. So i'm gonna make this quick." Scott chimed out and brought his hand up and used his fingers to beckon Darruis towards him. Darruis's body still ignited in flames took a leap towards him. Scott swung his out stretched arm to the right. Darruis only had time to turn his head slightly to see a car slam into his body. Him and the car continued to tumble until slamming into a stone pillar. The only sound heard was a faint car alarm going off.

"Lets get some light in here." Scott one again spoke out raising his right arm towards the sky the concrete that was left above him lifted up completely letting the dim sunlight in. The various pieces of rubble still danced in the air as if attached to string and hung from the clouds. Then Darruis was able to stand up with a look of sheer curiosity.

"Whoa whoa whoa! This is where little Ace has been able to get to. That car hit me pretty hard you little disrespectful brat." He shouted at the hero who still stood firm with the same expression he had during Darruis's lunge. "I may have underestimated you but-"

"Look I already told you, I was going to make this quick." Scott's voice broke in over Darruis. Which make him grow furious. The flames on his body quickly aligned together into a sphere. Then bring his arm up Darruis clenched his fist and the ball of flames condensed. He then madly brought his arm back along with the ball and snapped his arm forward with the force of cannon. This shot the ball in Scott's direction and as Scott put his arms up to guard he felt it whip past him. Turning around he glared at the projectile rushing at the hospital behind them. As the ball breached the wall of the building Scott could hear Darruis mumble 'mission complete.' with a smug voice.

Within seconds an intense glow pulsed throughout the hospital then a deafening boom shattered the buildings windows. Then shortly a explosion completely engulfed the building making it vanish in a ball of pyre. Seeing the carnage Scott clenched his teeth and balled his fist to the point of small drops of blood dripping from his punters from his nails.

"Don't you get mad at me. I bet some made it out alive. I doubt I'll get full pay, but I won't hold a grudge." Darruis spoke with smug as his body released the flames that surrounded him revealing his unburned cloths and appearing in perfect condition. "You have a son to get back to correct."

Just as Scott went to open his mouth he could feel a subtle presences behind him, turning around he saw a completely cloaked figure. "Scott, I found your child. He's in a safe place now." The figure spoke with an exhausted voice, no facial features were distinguishable through the hood.

After hearing the statement Scott turned back towards Darruis. "Uh oh." Simply spoke Scott. The figure that had appeared now had vanished without a word, the assistance would help Scott finish what he started. The air continued to hold it's density as a small gust of wind pushed through the busted up structure.

"I've done my job. I don't need to be here any longer." Darruis said as he stepped back begging his retreat. Just as he turned to run he could see another vehicle lift up and fly towards him. Putting his arms up in defense he could feel the steel pushing him back. In the window he could see a vague reflection of another car

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approaching from behind in attempt to sandwich him. So Darruis ignited his feet and created a blast of heat from him propelling him out of the middle of the two cars.

Under him the cars slammed together as Scott stood silent concentrating on the objects he treated like puppets. The two masses of steel sent glass and twisted metal as the collided. Darruis twisted his body in the air and used his feet to once again ignited and jetted at Scott. Bringing his arm Back Darruis collected a ball of fire that turned blue as the flames intensified. Scott readied in a battle stance feeling the heat as Darruis got closer to him. Just before the flames touched Scott he grappled Darruis's arm stopping the advance. With a chuckle Darruis unleashed the fire in a cone the covered Scott causing him to back off.

Scott used his hands to smother the flames over his body and immediately went in for a counter assault, he swung his left arm which made Darruis flinch and while Darruis's attention was still on Scott's left hand he brought his right arm into Darruis's stomach lifting him slightly off the ground. He could feel the air escaping from His foe's lungs as he continued pushing his fist up further, after his arm reached it's apex he watched as Darruis flew back.

Darruis fell back landed holding his stomach, with the wind still knocked out of him he attempted to create a flame but nothing came forth. With a small smirk Scott took note of his inability to make a fire.

"It seems you can't use you're power when you can't take in oxygen, even for the shortest period of time." Scott spoke with a mock as he stepped towards his defenseless foe. Jumping forward Scott landed with a crushing headbutt which he followed with a knee into Darruis's stomach once again leaving him unable to breath. Stumbling back Darruis felt a left hook pushing against his face which forced him to spin around. He saw a shiny car now in front of him and felt Scott's foot push him onto it.

Once again before he could take a breath he felt the car move as if someone floored the gas pedal. But instead of driving straight it lifted and flew in a diagonal no doubt from Scott's control. As he was still flying with his body pressed to the hood he managed to take a small inhale of air and could feel the oxygen surge through his body. He focused on the gas tank intensely and sure enough seconds later it exploded into a ball of flames. Covering Darruis and the car all Scott could do was look on and wonder what was next. The flames seemed to be causing a vortex around where Darruis was, they weren't dissipating any just hanging in the air.

"Are you out of your damn mind!?! You insolent, insignificant arrogant child!" Screamed Darruis as the flames around him compacted more and more, the lifeless carcass of the chard car fell from the ball as if it's use was overused. "I don't care how much trouble I get in. I'm going to burn the great Ace until all that remains in his blackened bones. I'll show you what a real Abomination can do!" He blurted out further as Scott could only stand and watch. Reaching his arm to his side Scott saw a mini van and swinging forward it became a violent projectile but as neared Darruis it incinerated and it's gas tank exploded only feeding Darruis current flame.

Darruis floated in the middle of the air, slowly putting his hands before him he watched Scott standing still below. Darruis took a breath in, then another, then another without exhaling any of it. The ball of flames surrounding him seemed to breath with him. All the flames started to shift and act as if they were alive dancing around Darruis. All that by standers could see at this point was a broken parking complex and an enormous ball of fire hanging in the sky.

The flames grew malicious as if they themselves hungered for Scott as they reached out to him. Darruis seemed to be struggling as he flexed his arms closer to his chest. Scott could feel and incredible heat coming from the ball even at their distance it felt as if he was right next to him. The surrounding pressure began to increase as the ball of flames changed from a faint orange hue into a deeper red. The heat further increased making Scott begin to sweat as he watched the red flames further intensify into a brighter blue. Turning Scott

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could see the plastic on the rest of the cars and other vehicles around him melting off. The paints seemed to become a liquid under the waves of heat.

Scott could feel it in each breath he took, the flames intentions burning his lungs. Looking up he could faintly see Darruis put his arms to his side and tilt his head back as the flames tightened up now only covering Darruis. Finally Darruis let out a long seemingly endless howl as the flames quickly turned from blue into an almost pure white. As they turned white they exploded outwards into a large ball that was approximately twenty feet in diameter. The pressure wave from this transformation made the concrete crack apart and ignited surrounding vegetation and even was enough force to lift the melting cars off the the ground quickly.

"Soon you will be nothing but fuel to me!" Shouted Darruis in almost a demonic shriek as the ball tightened up and kept doing so until it was like an armor surrounding his body. The pure heat seemed to distort the reality around Darruis, making the clouds and air wave from the heat. Darruis then charged at Scott using an explosion of flames behind him as he previously had but these pushed him fast enough that it blurred Scott's vision. Before he knew it Scott could feel an unbelievable heat right next to him. He almost couldn't open his eyes as he could feel Darruis land a hit right dead center in Scott's chest.

The heat instantly tore his skin apart as he back away feeling his flesh searing off. Grabbing at his chest he could feel blood dripping out from where he was hit. He wanted to yell but the heat in his lungs left him feeling helpless so he limited his inhaling as much as he could.

He knew all he had to do was to inhibit Darruis's ability to breath shortly and he could gain the upper hand. But this was much more easily said then then done. Anything he threw at him would be destroyed by the heat instantly and any melee action would be even less intelligent. He kept his hand on the wound in his chest feeling as his skin accelerated his healing. He could dimly watch as Darruis put his arm forward with an open palm, Darruis smiled as he shot a stream of white flames towards Scott that acted almost like a liquid from a fire hose. With only second to react Scott rolled out of the way as the stream passed right by him, he could feel his goggles melting onto his face.

Unable to resist he let out a shriek as he clawed at the melting plastic burning into his skin. He saw another line of fire coming at him so he opted to jump over it and watch as under him the fire effortlessly sliced through the rock burning it's path through the whole structure. He anon saw a series of flame like bullets flying towards him. This attack that earlier Scott was able to just take full force would now rip him apart if he was even hit by one. He immediately brought his foot down with enough force to break the concrete under him. Falling into the level under allowed him to dodge all of the shots.

He noticed a small change in climate, it was a little easier to breath without the constant burning. At this point Scott had already accept the complex and it's contents as acceptable losses. By now the building would have had to been evacuated. No humans, no worries. Bringing his foot down he fell another level, then another and another. He knew Darruis's patients was running thin as he stood on the levels above waiting for Scott to resurface.

At last Scott stop at what he assumed to be the level above ground level looking around it was hard to tell there was anything going on above, apart from the hole he fell down from of course. He quickly thought of a plan to outwit Darruis who he could here chanting for him to come out. An idea formed when Scott realized the overwhelming number of cars surrounding one. He forced a car to levitate and saw inside the head of a dog peak up from the back window.

"You've got to be kidding me." He spoke letting the car down and picking up another car. Whipping it out into the open he threw until he was sure Darruis could see it. Then Scott clenched his hands forcing the car to close in on itself as the metal scrapped together until causing a spark the lit up the gas tank causing it to convulse. Darruis hearing a crack come from behind him he turned around to face it. Then below Scott threw another car and once again closed his fist while Darruis turned to observe this explosion.

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Scott did this with other cars, vans and assorted types of vehicles on his level. Darruis turned to look at each crackle as he heard them keeping and eye out for Scott. Car after car flew and fell victim to the same end. Finally on the floor below Scott climbed into the drivers seat of one of the cars. He shot a car behind him out and let it keep flying. Then he pushed the car he was in out in the opposite direction. Darruis remained vigilant above as he saw the first car fly out then he heard an explosion behind him.

Looking back at the small ball of fire he remembered the car before and how he heard to explosion. Turning back to it he watched as it kept on it's path. "You're not escaping Scott!" Darruis shouted as he collected some of his flames into a ball of decent size. He drew his arm back failing to notice that in the smoke of the car that had exploded Scott was emerging. Flying right towards Darruis, Scott took a deep breath and gritted his teeth to prepare for the pain he was to endure. Darruis brought his arm forward and shot it towards the car, then he felling something was off he turned just in time to see Scott impact into his back.

Scott kept the pressure on feeling the white flames burning into his skin as his abilities to heal tried their best to keep up, but they were fighting a loosing battle. Through the pain Scott saw a small lake that normally would be full of people but due to the fight the surrounding area had been effectively abandoned. Pushing down he shot Darruis and himself into the water as the unbelievable heat given off by Darruis evaporated the body of water in a flash. This completely shrouded Scott and Darruis in a dense cloud of condensation. Darruis began a wicked guffaw impressed by his own flames completely disintegrating every drop of water.

"You wanted to douse me!? Ha look what that got you!" Taunted Darruis to a calm standing Scott. Darruis went to take a breath in to ignite his flames once more. But all he felt was the condensation enter his lung. He panic on rolling on the group attempt to start his fire with all the oxygen vacuumed out from the massive amount of sudden evaporated water. Darruis looked at Scott who in return just shrugged. Arching his arm back Scott brought his fist hard down into Darruis's stomach causing a shock wave to branch out.

The wave of pressure from his punch forced the raising condensation away from them giving Scott room to breath. His body still recovering from the burns all over his body he looked at a knocked out Darruis. He was breathing too now but wasn't conscious enough to keep the fight going. The hit left the ground under Darruis cracked and battered and the area around the once lake seemed as if hit by a small bomb. Looking up he saw a small mushroom cloud of steam reaching into the air as the light of the sun wrapped around it. He heard the rolling of tires to his side and turned to see a black van roll and several well dressed men stepped out. They walked towards Scott all wearing sunglasses and each indistinguishable from the other.

"Scott Lannon, you have knowingly intervened with a mission giving out by 'The School' and for this will be put on trial." Spoke one of the taller men as another one walked over and picked up the body of Darruis. "Well will continue to look into the matter and once a verdict is decided we will contact you. For now we recommend you turn around and go home." The man stated turning around and stepping into the van as Darruis was put into the back. The doors were then closed and it took off just as fast as it appeared. Scott weak and hurt turned around and shambled away too weak to fly now. All that echoed in his head was "Go home."

Chapter 5: Commonplace

His eyes opened slowly giving time for his pupils to adjust to the direct sunlight coming from his window. For a moment all Jamie did was look up at his white ceiling. Bringing his hand up he placed it on where he remembered a knife digging in. He felt no scar, he couldn't help but question if his own sanity had just made it all up into a dream.

He sat on the edge of his bed and combed his hair with his fingers straightening it out as he peered at the clock. School was in an hour, and knowing himself he knew he had no time to shower. Standing up he walked over to his dresser and pulled out a simple blue shirt and his favorite pair of jeans. Signed by several of his friends with hearts and smiles. Walking into his personal bathroom he ran the water to brush his teeth and splash water on his face. Looking at himself in the mirror it was like he could see clearer, as if in high definition.

Blinking a few times he shrugged it off and accepted it without much question. He quickly rubbed himself with deodorant in the needed areas. Exiting his room he grabbed his backpack and swung it onto his back, trotting downstairs he instantly saw his father making breakfast of some sort.

"Good to see you back up. You got home and just passed out yesterday. Thought you were in a coma." Scott spoke to his son with flair to show he was just kidding.

"Are you sure? I had a dream I went to the hospital... it was incredibly realistic." Jamie said in return as he took one of the muffins on the table and bit into it. All Scott did to retort was pointed towards the newspaper on the counter. Picking it up Jamie's eyes were drawn to the article about a recent explosion cause by a gas explosion. It detailed on several eye witness accounts that dictated there were two 'abominations' fighting it out. He chuckled a little as he continued to read. It must have just been a dream, he'd just have to accept that there was no way he was omitted to a broken hospital. "Some people's imagination." He spoke as a general statement towards the reports.

He looked over to his father who just chuckled and looked at the watch on his wrist. Looking over at Jamie he tapped on the watch.

"Yeah I get it. I'll see you later dad. Loves" Jamie said finishing up the muffin he was scarfing down.

"Love you too, try to go to all your classes today." Scott retorted as Jamie walked out the door. Leaving the house it was easy to tell the fall was fast approaching. The air hung with low temperatures. Jamie thought about heading in to get a coat but he felt comfortable enough to not need it so he continued. Normally he would head to catch the bus but he didn't want to stand around waiting so he opted to just walk. It was nice, peaceful kind of feeling as he walked down his street. The wind every now and then gently pressing up against him, he watched as it brushed through the trees the towered over him.

Every now and then the wind would be just enough to pull a weaker leaf from the tree sending it to the harsh reality of a thousand footsteps. Jamie looked above to see one of the leaves falling towards him. Putting his hand out he felt the light vegetation land on his palm. He stood for a moment to observe the green healthy looking leaf, he pondered why sometimes the strongest leaves were the ones to fall first. Feeling another gust of wind he watch the leaf fly off and land in the street only to be run over by a passing car. He quickly lamented the poor thing and then continued to walk.

Everything was silent like the world around him was on mute, he liked it that way normally too much noise got to him and gave him a headache. Keeping a steady pace it wasn't too long until he saw the uninviting building

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that was his school. He watched his peers billow into the building like there was a punishment for not squeezing through the doors like an idiot. He would probably just wait until the crowd had dissipated enough for him to get in without touching anyone else.

Stepping in he could feel the absence of the air conditioning that had been on yesterday. Walking through the mess of students he weaved his way to his locker. Quickly shifting his lock around reciting the numbers in his head he took it off and opened the thin metal door. Putting his backpack in he unzipped it to grab the books he needed for him next class. Shutting the door with books in hand he placed the lock back on and walked into the classroom that was only a few doors away from him.

Walking in he quickly scanned the room and the other students that were already in their chairs talking amongst each other. He felt a slight temperature shift stepping in, the type where you couldn't tell if it was hotter or colder you just knew it was there. He found his empty plastic chair and setting his books on the wooden desk in front of him he sat down. The teacher as far as he could tell was still out which would explain the chatter behind him. Stretching his jaw to let a yawn out he leaned forward placing his heads on his hands.

"Hi honey!" A voice called out as Jamie was shifting into a world of thought. Snapping out of it he could feel a pair of arms wrap around him. The voice was that of a man, but in inflections impeded were that of a woman's.

"Must you do that? Can't you just say hi?" Jamie said pulling his head under and out of the grasp of the arms. He turned to see his closest friend Damien Presscott, a rather eccentric individual. He kept his blonde hair short enough where you could see most of his forehead. Enough was showing to see his pierced eyebrow. He wore a long sleeved purple shirt, but the left sleeve had been cut up to the normal length of a regular shirt. His black pants were decorated with several chains and various clipped on emblems.

"But it just wouldn't be as awkward for you boo." Damien joked as he sat down next to Jamie. "So all that hospital stuff, pretty crazy huh? How could one pipe leak take down an entire place. And what's with all the black vans that people saw after it all. I think aliens" He spoke again with a laugh that Jamie joined in on. Jamie turned to tell Damien about his dream but as he did he could hear the door close. Grabbing his attention Jamie turned to the front of the class to see his principle standing in place of their usual teacher.

"There will be no morning announcements today. But I wanted tot talk to you all. This whole thing about yesterdays accident. All rumours about the event need to be stopped here and now. It wasn't aliens." Barley spoke in a commanding voice looking at Damien who slouched in his seat. "Nor was it an act of terrorism and it certainly wasn't two Abominations with some magical powers fighting it out. You all need to extinguish these rumors when you hear them please." He continued and grew silent as he looked at the class to see if they were even paying attention. The collective of students preceded to nod their heads. And with that principle Barley turned and exited the room. Without any morning announcements the class would just be sitting there for a few minutes left to their own devices.

"Just because someone is different we label them as abominations or freaks..." Damien spoke looking down at his desk. His life was always a plague to him. Even from a young age he knew he wasn't like most of the other guys, he had different hobbies and interest. He seemed to connect more with the girls around him the he ever did with anyone of the same gender. Tormented for his homosexuality, to the point where he believed it to be a illness.

"Freaks or Abominations as they are. They should never loose face and always stand proud as freaks." Jamie said with a smile towards Damien who returned the smile. Ever since they were young they were the closest friends. Through anything. With that being said Jamie hated watching him go through the hell people put on him. He hated knowing what Damien always kept a sleeve over his right arm. Just as their smiles faded the bell rang that let them out of their home room classes. They both stood up without a word and walked out the

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door. "See you at gym." Jamie said to Damien as they walked separated ways. Jamie walked again through the sea of his fellow students. He was deep in thought, Damien was right. There was no way one pipe would destroy the whole complex and certainly not the near by parking garage. And the paper said they wouldn't let anyone near the lake. No of it really added up or made much sense in fact the more outlandish explanations seemed like the more logical ones.

Deep in his contemplation Jamie was unaware of Damien who walked to his class thinking about how his friend seemed different. Looking up he saw the figure of a peer only slightly taller than him stood in his path. The man was Alan Pine, one of those archetypes who took part in every sport the school offered and thought himself all the better for it. Damien stepped to the side and Alan immediately followed this action blocking his path again.

"Excuse me." Damien spoke softly trying to step in the opposite direction this time only to be obstructed again.

"Are you coming on to me?" Alan spoke disregarding that the statement itself held no reasoning to it. Damien already saw it coming, what Alan was doing.

"I get it hah, I'm gay. Fun joke but I'm going to be late to class." Damien claimed stepping forward with hopes Alan would move, but as expected he didn't. Damien looked at his classmates who ignored the confrontation completely.

"Alright seriously move." He spoke in a more commanding voice.

"Or what? You gonna tickle me?" Alan snapped back with an unnecessary amount of rage caused from a years of performance enhancing. Ignoring this Damien turned around and decided to take another path to his class. Seeing this Alan reached out and grabbed Damien's shoulder forcing him to turn around. Damien simply shrugged out of his grasp and started to walk away once again. "What's the matter? You don't like me you little faggot?!" Alan blurted out. Damien stopped in his tracks, that word. Everyone threw it around that word. He hated it beyond all description. That word.

Turning around with fire in his eyes he brought his right arm to swing at Alan. Which was quickly obstructed by Alan's enveloping fist, all the while Damien still had such a fire in his strike. His anger could be felt through his fist, he was shaking. Alan grabbed the collar of his shirt and pressed him hard against the metal lockers.

"I can't wait until karma finds it's way to you." Damien struggled out between breaths. Alan smiled at his remark and brought his arm back and balled it into a fist while still holding Damien up. As he brought his arm forward it was stopped short. The hand of James Barley held tight on the kids arm.

"That's more than enough Alan, I'd be honored if you could pay a visit to my office." Barley calmly interjected. The hand Alan was using to hold up Damien became limp. Damien fell to the group and stood up shortly. Alan turned around to face Alan and after flashing him a dirty look he walked away silently. "Are you alright?" Barley questioned Damien who nodded in return. "It will get easier, eventually. I promise." He said with a smile turning away to go to his office to have a talk with Alan.

Mean while Jamie sat in his math class listening to the teacher attempt to drill equations and formulas into his head. He watched as the white chalk stained patterns into the black board. Half of the students weren't even paying much attention, yet they would still complain when it came time for a test they knew nothing about. But for Jamie the information was actually sticking, he wasn't sure if it was just an easy subject or getting enough rest. But this stuff was easy for him, he could do every step in his head. The teacher shortly handed out a piece of paper and asked for it to be done by the end of the day. He finished it within a matter of a few

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minutes. The numbers, the sequences were all just familiar like he had done this hundreds of times before.

He handed his paper in and watched as his peers struggled with it. He stood at the front of the class as his teacher graded his work. His teacher outstretched his arm with the paper graded with red pen. "Good work." The teacher spoke as Jamie grabbed it. The paper was void of any marks to indicate incorrect work or any wrong answers, Jamie stood there dumbfounded. All the rest of the classes were the same. History, sciences and even in art his brush flowed effortlessly to craft a masterpiece. Grabbing the paper he balled and crumbled it up into his hand and tossed it into the trash. Not that he held any sense of shame towards it, he was just confused. He look around mildly bemused as the sound of the school's bell rung into his head. Standing up he walked out of his room without so much as a word to anyone. He had a few friends in that class but today he distanced himself.

Walking through the halls he held his books to his chest, it wasn't too out of place to have a good day, but he was just never really that smart. He quietly walked to his the gym room, he was in no hurry. He was always late regardless so he stopped bothering to make the effort. Stepping into the changing room as the last of them left. Looking around he didn't see Damien, he just figured he was already changed and waiting downstairs. He walked in front of the large mirror near the shower stalls. Remembering the scar from his dream he began to lift his shirt up and over his head. He looked at himself and brought his hand up to his chest where his memory served the knife. He felt nothing, in fact his skin was smoother then he remembered. Pressing into his pecks he felt a firm resistance of built up muscle. Then he saw it, looking at his whole body he could see a new build over his whole being. He just stood speechless as his whole body looked like he had done a years worth of work out regiments in just one night.

Slipping on his shirt for gym he remained confused and overwhelmed with questions. He pushed open the two large wooden doors leading into the large gym room where he watched Damien and Alan walk in with the principle behind them. Barley walked over to talk to the gym teacher. Damien walked over to Jamie and didn't say a word while he held his right arm covered in a long shirt over his regular gym attire. Barley then proceeded to leave the room while Alan stayed behind. Jamie looked over to observe several red balls placed neatly in a line across the middle of the room.

"We're just playing a simple game of dodge ball today. I'll make the teams." Spoke the teacher who followed to separated the room in half. Jamie and Damien stood next to each other while the other students on their side were spread out. Across the room Jamie peered at the ever confident Alan who returned the look. "Damien come on take the long sleeves off, you know that's not permitted for gym." The teacher spoke making Damien reach up to his arms and hold them while looking at the floor. "You don't want me to call your mom again right?" He spoke again as he voice boomed through the stadium like room.

Damien reluctantly reached to his shirt and dragged it up and over his body to reveal his jersey like undershirt that he always wore for gym. And on his right arm, several scars and damaged patches of skin could be seen. This always made Jamie cringe but what made him furious was the two fresh looking marks on his arm. Damien looked up at Jamie and then shifted his eyes over to Alan. Jamie almost instantly understood like a spark ignited in his head, he could feel his muscles tense up. Then the teacher blew the whistle and the students rushed to the middle of the room picking up whatever ball they could get their hands on. Damien and Jamie just stood there watching, they always did. The game carried on as person after person got out. There was no coming back in if someone on your team caught the ball. The teacher hated that rule, if you failed you don't deserve to play the game he always said.

Finally the teams were twiddled down to just Jamie and Damien on one side and Alan and three other students who's names Jamie couldn't remember for the life of him.

"Mine as well get used to this!" Alan shouted with a chuckle as he whip a ball that slammed into Damien's chest. Damien got up and looked at Jamie. Looking into his eyes Jamie couldn't stand how empty they looked,

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like they had given up. He watched as Damien walked to the benches on the side and sat down. Looking across the room Jamie saw the four jock archetypes standing there sadistically, it was like they couldn't identify this as just a stupid game.

Just as he was observing the four he saw one of them whip a ball at him that was clearly intended for his face. Jamie brought his hand up and caught the ball inches away from his face. "You'll have to forgive me, I'm having an off day." Jamie spoke calmly as he watched the kid who threw it walking to the side. Alan and the other two still left on the floor picked up a ball for each hand. Alan flashed a cocky little smile in Jamie's direction. Jamie stood in place tilting his body to the side to dodge two of the balls and then outstretched his arm that was still holding the dodge ball and used it to deflect another ball. The other three were way off their target and just bounced off the wall.

Jamie couldn't help but smile as he watched Alan and the other two looking around their side of the court for any remaining ammo. Looking at his side he could see it littered with those plastic red orbs. Kneeling down he picked up another one and set his sight on the nameless guy on the left. He brought his right arm back then snapped it forward. The ball traveled at an angle as if it was going towards the wall. Then the amount of spin Jamie put on the ball kicked in and like a bowling ball on its lane the ball curved and headed straight for the kid. It dropped slightly hitting him in his legs taking them out from under him. While he was falling Jamie shot the ball in his left hand straight forward which projected the ball into the jocks stomach before he even hit the ground. The force was enough to make him slide back on the ground a few inches.

"Oh hell!" Screamed Damien excitedly as he stood up. The room was full of silence other than that outburst and a few mutters. Jamie just looked at his hands and wondered how he even did that, how did he know the ball would curve like that, how was he even able to put that much force behind it. He looked up at the other two who were a bit taken back.

Jamie picked up another ball as the two balls he used to get the other guy out were thrown at him, he dodge them without much of a thought. He stood back up with the ball and observed the ball in front of him at his feet. He brought his foot up behind him and delivered a powerful kick to the object sending it flying to the kid next to Alan. The kid then caught the ball and began to laugh from his accomplishment of getting Jamie out. Of course he just made himself look like an idiot since a kicked ball isn't a live ball, so Jamie remained in play. And with that Jamie shot another ball forward but the kid deflected it upwards with the ball in his hand. He once again smiled as if he was just crowned king.

"It's still live." Jamie told the kid as the ball started falling after reaching it's apex. The ball lightly tapped the top of his head as his eyes grew wide. He dropped the ball he was holding and scuffled over to the side lines muttering something that is probably unacceptable on school grounds.

"So what you have some stupid tricks, I'm not gonna fall for them." Alan boasted as he picked one of the balls up that laid on his side of the field.

"If you throw it I'll just catch it, I promise." Jamie confidently replied as he too picked up another ball. He looked over at Damien and glared at the scars on his arm. He once again felt his arms clench up and he looked back at Alan. "You know what? It doesn't matter." Jamie snarled as he brought his arm back and swung it forward with all his might. The ball exploded out of his hands flying forward. The ball landed directly on Alan's face sending him falling back, a few teeth could be seen flying out of his mouth with a small trail of blood. Alan's back pounded on the floor as he grabbed his face and rolled around cry and moaning through his hands.

Damien stood up and let out some sort of cheer and something along the lines of 'whose the fagot now?!' Jamie couldn't hide that he was happy but at the same time he was just as confused. The bell rang as Jamie just remained standing there. The school day was over and he was to go home. He didn't know much about

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what was going on. But maybe his dad would have some answers.

Chapter 6: Melony

General Davis sat outside the slowly wearing down building which had clearly been forgotten about. The sidings had been falling off, the roof was barren of any shingles and the paint had been stripped in several places. Stepping up to the first wooden step leading to the porch he could feel the splintering wood under him begin to give way.

"Are you sure your information was correct about her being here?" Davis asked as he looked back at the two well armed guards behind them. Their armor was similar to that worn by the guards of one James Alics. After his defeat at his compound the armor was found by the investigation team and handed over to Davis' division where it was studied and re-manufactured. They optimized on mobility, flexibility and protection so they were naturally ideal for his needs, despite costing a fortune to make.

After speaking he heard a shattering crash from behind, turning his attention to it he saw the entire front of the house exploding outward as if a car crashed through it. In the midst of the rubble there was a young girl appearing around nine years old. Her long blond hair was shaggy and hanging over her face. Through the strands of hair her bright green eyes burned with insanity, accompanied by the snarl expression she wore. Her clothing was torn and the colors were pretty much indistinguishable from each other. Her fingers arched as if they belonged to a beast and she stood with a hunched demeanor.

"Pretty sure it was right." Spoke one of the guards with a shuddering laugh as he and the other guard stood unaffected by the girl's appearance.

Davis turned around again, facing towards the two as he stood for a few moments looking at them. "Well, lets all just stand here!" He shouted sarcastically at them. They nodded in understanding as their armor started to lift them off the ground by the two thrusters on their backs. This technology was also first tested at Alics' compound. It was able to lift a heavy mass, so lifting a light weight soldier was effortless. They un-clipped a small modified assault rifle off their backs, they were slick and aerodynamically proficient. They fired rounds that seemed to work on someone's nervous system, this was perfect when the target needed to be subdued and not killed.

Leaning forward their thrusters slightly increased their output, pushing them forward without having to touch the ground. The two soldiers spread into different directions towards the girl. As they readied their guns she let out a monstrous scream, arching her back and spreading her arms. She set her eyes on the man approaching her from the right. Leaping in his direction she attacked. He attempted to avoid her but soon felt the harsh claw press into the chest plate of his armor. Then he was sent spinning into the fence across the street, uprooting it from the ground. He groaned as he stopped spinning. Standing up to catch his breath he saw the little girl standing right in front of him.

She raised her arm to prepare for another attack but was halted when she felt the stunning ammunition pelt her from behind. She turned to face the other guard, who had his sights still trained on the girl as he emptied the clip that was in; and replaced it with professional timing. This gave time for the guard closer to her to back away a few feet and raise his sight on her too. Slightly paralyzed the girl turned to face the guard that had just backed away from her. She was gritting her teeth and snarling at the both of them. They weren't sure if she had enough intelligence to the point where she was formulating a plan, or is she was far enough gone that this was just the animal instinct of being backed into a corner.

Davis looked down at the clipboard he was holding and quick read over the sheet. "Bethany Moore is it?" He said softly as the girl turned her head in a mild reaction to the name. "We're here to help you darling, just come with us and we'll make it all better." He said in a tone that he thought would appeal more to the child.

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Instead the girl began to charge without warning, giving no reaction time to the guards. Davis watched as the beast approached him with pouncing speed. Calmly he reached to his side and pulled out a rather heavy side arm and pointed it at the girl. Pulling the trigger a bullet similar to the rifle's ammunition blasted out of the barrel. The bullet hit her directly in the middle of her forehead, causing her to quickly twitch then fall still to the ground.

"Target 'the friend' has been neutralized." Davis recorded into a small device as the guards came over to him. Without any dialogue one reached down, picked the woman up, and carried her over to the car they came in. Walking over behind the guards Davis noticed a middle aged man that was looking on from a distance who had presumably observed the whole ordeal. Davis smiled and gave the man a friendly wave, when without any movement from the guards the man's head dropped dead from a bullet wound, staining the ground he stood on. Watching the body drop Davis turned his head towards the car and his smile disappeared. "Let's get going now." He sat in the driver's seat and waited for the men to get the girl in the back seat with restraints. Once they had, Davis drove off leaving the destroyed house and the dead civilian in his wake. However all he could do was smile...

In the gym room Jamie watched as his classmates began heading to the changing room so they could get home as fast as they could. He followed them out the doors, up the stairs and down the hall into the changing room. It all felt so surreal to him, he was confused. One of his acquaintances said something to him but he was too zoned out to understand what he asked, so all he did was nod to him. Once he was back into his regular clothing he stepped out and began his trek to the front door followed by Damien.

"That was amazing, what, I mean how did you even do that?" Damien excitedly asked Jamie.

"I... I don't know." Jamie replied with his eyes staying forward, attempting not to meet anyone's line of sight.

"Puberty must of hit you like a ton of bricks man, that was the most amazing thing I've ever seen." Damien said through several chuckles as his mind replayed the event. For a while Jamie didn't say anything as they walked silently through the hall.

"I have to go to my locker, so I'll see you tomorrow." Jamie said, breaking the silence. Damien got slightly concerned by Jamie's attitude so he decided it was better not to keep pressing on the subject. He just nodded and headed off in a different direction to the bus that would take him home.

Finally alone Jamie walked to his locker, entered his combination and reached in to grab his backpack. He swung it around to his back and proceeded to close his locker, lock it back up and give the dial on it a little spin as if it really did anything. The bus that went by his house had no doubt already departed from the lot so he headed for the front door. The school was much more empty now as a few walkers traversed the hall, and those who had after school activities were rushing around. He was in no hurry, he wasn't even sure if his father would be home. He had always had the most obscure work schedule Jamie had ever seen; without warning his dad would rush off and come back hours later.

Stepping out the wooden doors once again the only sounds he could hear were the distant mummings of his peers and his feet pelting the stone beneath him. Throughout the school day the climate had dropped a few degrees but it didn't bother Jamie too much, even in his short sleeve shirt. The cold never really bothered him, he preferred it much more to the warmth of summer. He took the same path that he took to get to school earlier that morning. It's wasn't exactly the fastest way but it was the way with the least amount of turns so he preferred to just get home faster. The sky was much darker this time around and the trees seemed more barren then before, like the leaves on them simply gave up.

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After awhile he returned home, walked up the porch and opening his door he went in. Closing the door behind him and setting his backpack down he scanned the downstairs rooms quickly. "Dad?" He shouted and waited momentarily for a reply, but wasn't surprised when he heard none. Walking into the kitchen he took note of the small piece of paper taped to the fridge that told him his dinner was in the microwave so he could heat it up whenever. He wasn't exactly hungry at the moment so with a sigh he walked to the living room and crashed down on the sofa.

Sitting there he observed the seconds on the clock seeming to slug along, he pondered if the reason they appeared to be going by so slow was because he was watching them. He remembered his science teacher once told him that the mere observation of an experiment could greatly alter it's outcome. Did that apply to things that were mundane? Not a test, but just something you walk by every day failing to notice it. Then one day it catches your eye and you turn to it only to notice it doing something out of the normal. What if every single being on the earth turned away from all clocks at the same time. Would time cease to function or would it carry on as normal? This would mean time in itself is just an illusion. If that's so, then what does that say for the significance of the human race who depend solely on that illusion to order them around everyday.

Or does it vastly increase humanity's significance if they have the ability to completely alter a situation through mere observation. This chained him into thinking about what was behind him, not so much what was there but the validity of the objects themselves. Without a doubt no one was looking at them for the moment so did they even exist? Why would they, for the time being that had no reasoning to be mentally processed. Without perceptive interaction from a human or animal then there was no clear evidence that they were there. His mind was swimming with several logic and supernatural debates, like his brain was arguing with itself. Is space infinite simply because we can't give a definite end to it? Everything has to stop as some point, right? If there was an end to 'space' what would exist beyond it?

He thought about science and how when it couldn't fully explain how something worked they'd create a hypothetical force and slap the word 'dark' in front of it. Dark matter, dark flow, dark energy and so forth. Those who believe in and trust science accept these forces as factual even though they are unseen and incapable of completely proving. Yet these same people will bash things like religion! The idea of a deity is just another unseen force similar to science. This meant that a human's morals were crafted on belief of one thing or another, nature versus nurture. If someone were raised under absurd beliefs would their morals be absurd even if they were given an otherwise perfect life? Just how strong is the brains ability to believe?

Did the monsters we believed in as children exist in a physical realm because we thought of them? Is that why they no longer bother us when we're older and realize how ridiculous the idea is. What if someone grew up to continue believing in them, is that where manifestation proof of such mythical beasts comes from? Surely all of those photos and various subjects of study can't all be hoaxes. It's unreasonable to assume as such. If enough humans were to believe in any one thing would that give the idea enough strength to become part of our dimension? Is there an unseen lurking force that haunts us from every corner, every dark hall way or every closed eye? Thinking about all this made Jamie slightly paranoid, causing him to sit up and look around to affirm that behind him was still there.

The room was still apart from the small specs of dust that glimmered from reflecting the sun's light. The furniture behind him remained notably untouched, not just today but as if no one had sat on them in weeks. With the raise of an eyebrow he turned back around to face the television in front of him. Reaching towards the remote he pushed on the button so the T.V. lit up. It was already turned to the channel that more often than not was playing some sort of news program. The feed was from a helicopter observing the reconstruction of the recently destroyed hospital. More striking was off in the distance he could see that the lake was full.

If reports were true of it being completely drained then how was it back to being full? There's no way to completely refill a body of water in that amount of time without anyone noticing it. Turning it up all he could hear was the yammering of the reports of how much the reconstruction would cost and the injuries of those

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involved. He could vaguely see near the wreckage of the hospital a lonesome black unmarked van. He sat up and moved to the edge of the couch to try to see it clearer. Squinting his eyes he got closer, when the feed cut off it sent his screen into static with the loud noise accompanied with it. He jumped back from the sudden change; just then he heard the front door unlock and he turned to face it.

The door swung on its hinges and let a gust of cool air waft through the immediate area. The glowing silhouette of Scott stepped into the room with a troubled look on his face. He was dressed in the only suit he owned, the last time Jamie remembered his father wearing it was when he was at his grandmother's funeral. Scott looked over at Jamie and smiled softly as if nothing was out of the ordinary.

"I'm going to go get changed and you and I are going out to eat." Scott said, and continued to walk up the stairs. After he disappeared into the second story Jamie picked up the remote and flicked the T.V. off. He looked over to the stairs with mild worry, he never asked much about his dad's job. He just didn't need to know as long as he was still bringing home money. He stood up and paced over to his sneakers that he had taken off only an hour ago. Placing his feet in them, he reached down and laced them up tight.

He noticed a black briefcase on the floor that hadn't been there. His father must have brought it in. Jamie was curious as his eyes focused in on the little silver latches securing the contents. Reaching over, he ran his finger on the top of the cool metal and debated between opening it or leaving it alone. Lifting both of the shining pieces of metal he saw the front of it fall open but where he was expecting to see several documents he saw one slip of paper. Its back was facing him so he couldn't yet read anything on it. He silently reached in to grasp it when he heard a floor board above him creek.

Slamming the case back shut he felt his skin pinch between the two interlocking parts. He stood up and waved his hand around as if it would help any, while grunting through his teeth. He looked up the steps and saw his father looking down on him. They exchanged glances as Scott raised an eye brow at him. Jamie returned the look with a mild grimace.

"Right." Scott jested as he walked down the stairs, fixing the blue collar on his shirt and patting the dust off his dark jeans. "Let's go." He stated as he walked out of the still open door being followed by Jamie. They walked off of their porch and approached Scott's prized black Lamborghini that sat glossed in the sun. Jamie knew a car like that was far beyond his father's budget but he didn't complain, his dad dropped him off in that at school. Nothing to whine about.

Walking around the car he opened the passenger door and sat inside it. Hearing the slam of the door next to him he placed the seatbelt across his chest. Resting his hands on his lap he looked over as his dad got in and flashed him another smile. He buckled up as well and turned the key to start the car. The vehicle shuddered as the purr of the engine vibrated through it. Such a settling sensation Jamie would never get used to. He had hundreds of questions he wanted to ask as they started to pull out, but for now he would relax in the surreal. He didn't know how his father got it but he knew why, everything about the car lulled him into a state of security. The smell, the feel, the sound of the road, the soft hum of the radio and the smooth ride all worked together to make you feel at home.

After a while of elapsed reality, they arrived at one of the restaurants that was hard to pronounce so everyone called it something different. They both were silent as they stepped out of their respective sides. The air was cool until they entered through the fancy glass doors. The sounds of chatter and clanking silverware were instantly present as they peered around at the cloth set tables. Each was dressed with delicately folded napkins and a single lit candle. It was the kind of place where you were careful not to move too much while eating because the atmosphere was just so fragile. They waited several minutes to be seated; standing there they observed the others, there wasn't anything better to do.

Finally they heard a sweet little voice say "Lannon." Turning, Jamie saw a petite girl that appeared around his age; her hair was long, black, and pushed out, held in place by a pink hair clip. Her eyes were a soft delicate

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hazel but it seemed as if another color was behind them, contacts maybe? She looked at Jamie and smiled at him "Right this way" She said so low Jamie almost missed it. Walking behind her Jamie once again scanned the restaurant through their new angle as they walked further to the back.

The lady stopped and directed Scott and Jamie to the small table next to them where they both took their respective seats. The seats were soft and lulled you into a relaxed state. The smell of the burning candle was vague but potent enough to change the atmosphere. It was a pleasant feeling, all the effort they put into making everything work together, from the dimmed lights to accent the candles to the smooth white cloth on the tables themselves. Jamie picked up the glossy laminated menu. It listed off every mixture of meat and every combination of soups and salads.

Reading through he eventually came across the meal he wanted, the menu had no pictures. The way the food was described was so vivid that the taste seeped from the words. The woman came back after a few minutes had passed to take their order. Jamie got a steak meal complete with potato and corn, Scott got some sort of pasta dinner. They sat mostly silent, every now and then striking up conversations about school and other useless topics. Jamie knew what he wanted to talk about but figured it was better to wait until the food got there. Sitting in his chair he just watched his father, who despite trying to relax looked on edge. Jamie's suspicion was beginning to grow, he just kept thinking back to the piece of paper.

He wondered if his mother knew anything about it, she'll be back home from her business trip in about five days depending on the flight schedule. He also was curious if his father was on to his thoughts, if he knew that he thought something was up. The waiter came back and placed their ordered drinks in front of them and flashed another smile and walked away. Leaning forward Jamie took a sip of the water he had, he thought some carbonated drink would ruin the first class meal. Jamie and Scott's head turned towards the sounds of shattering glass against a hard floor.

"Hope that wasn't our food." Scott joked and looked to the other patrons whose attentions were also grabbed by the event. He let out a slight chuckle when they felt the presence of the woman next to them as she placed their food on the table. "That was fast." Scott noted, looking at his food then to the woman whose eyes were on Jamie as she placed his plate down. She said something to Jamie but between the other conversations and sounds of the kitchen he only made out two of her words "See, later." He was going to ask what she said but she quickly turned away and vanished into the kitchen as he watched her. He swore he had never seen her before, yet she acted as if they'd met or... will meet.

"Wow! Try to be more obvious." Scott said, laughing at Jamie gazing at the woman. He twirled his fork into the meal and brought it to his mouth, biting in he ate it with the delicacy it deserved. Jamie couldn't help but laugh too, caught within his embarrassment. He cut off a piece of meat with the dinner knife they had supplied and taking a bite he instantly realized why this place was held in such high regard. It was tender but not soft, there was this smoky heat that came off it that filled his mouth and blanketed his tongue in its robust flavor.

They ate in silence for awhile. Well, silence wasn't the correct term. They still were surrounded by the usual sounds they were used to at this point. Jamie looked up at his father as his meal was slowly vanishing. He hated the awkward silence of eating, when all conversations normally halted.

"Uh, so about my dream." Jamie said nervously breaking their shared silence looking up from his plate still.

"Yeah?" Scott said through his small sips of his now almost empty glass; he was just working through the watered down liquid at the bottom.

"It was super realistic, and on the news with the hospital being destroyed and everything...." Jamie replied after another bite of his meal.

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Scott looked up from his plate and looked Jamie in the eye, slightly concerned. Not so much about Jamie finding out, but how it would go down in such a public place. "Yeah it was destroyed Jamie, so how would you have been there if it blew up? It was just a dream, leave it alone." He spoke, moving the final noodles on his plate around.

"Yeah, no yeah I get that..." Jamie trailed off looking outside as the day was slowly dissipating. "But today has been weird. I keep doing things that I shouldn't be able to do."

Scott nervously adjusted in his seat, he was full but he almost wanted to start eating just to avoid the conversation. "That's odd, like what?" He spoke, playing stupid, but he already knew. Even just looking at him he could tell that the changes had already started. In all honesty Scott always hoped that Jamie took to Cynthia's side of the family.

"Like, okay this whole stupid-dodge ball thing. I was chucking those dodge balls out like it was nothing. And I just feel different. Like I'm invincible!" Jamie shouted out of mild excitement, hoping to get through to his father. "And don't you dare tell me it's that point in my life where 'my body is going through changes.' because I swear I'll hit you."

Scott couldn't help but laugh at the thought of Jamie thinking he could even scratch him. "I don't know what to tell you I..." He looked out the window and spotted a stationary black van. Looking to his son for a second he peered at the van to see if anyone was in it. "We have to leave." He said reaching across taking the last bite of Jamie's meal. "Let's go." Frantically he spoke, grabbing his coat and pulling Jamie up from his seat, while he placed the needed money for the bill and his tip down.

Jamie didn't have much to say as he was rushed towards the door. Opening the door he heard its chime ring in his ears. They walked across the large parking lot. Scott's eyes were dead set on his car doors, he could feel the tension in the situation that Jamie just couldn't decipher. Finally after what felt like a lifetime they made it to the car. Placing his hand on the car door he looked at the glass of the window and saw the faint reflection of what he least wanted to see.

"Mr Lannon." Spoke a well dressed figure that Scott could remember addressing him at the lake. Next to him was a figure covered completely in dark clothing, including a black straight jacket with a white blank mask of the person's face hiding any sense of identification; but Scott knew who it was. "We're here to talk about your trial, seems you've been ignoring us." He spoke once again this time turning to face Jamie, giving him a sinister smile.

Scott was speechless, he couldn't believe the timing of it all. All he could help to do was turn to face his son who had already been looking at him. Their eyes met as Scott stood, running hundreds of scenarios through his head. Nothing amounted to a reasonable exit, all he could do now was accept whatever this man told them, he thought looking back at the masked figure. Or if need be, kill them.

Chapter 7: Closer

Scott looked at the silent masked figure, unsure if he would make a move or not. He could feel it, he was outnumbered by people he'd have trouble fighting one on one in the first place. This chips did not fall in his favor. If he fought to win too many lives would be at risk; that's assuming him going all out would even be enough. Not to mention that would mean bringing Jamie into the fight, he would no doubt participate and die. Seemed like the only possible way was to just accept things as they are. That, however brings it's own problems- Jamie might not respond to it well.

Scott went to open his mouth but heard the faint ring of the restaurant door opening and shutting. He turned to see the girl who had been their waitress. She looked at the four of them standing there. "My manager wanted me to come out here to make sure everything was okay. You know, costumer relations." She said, throwing air quotes around 'costumer relations.' She then reached up to pull the hair out of her eyes to show her quaint smile towards the group.

Scott felt himself relax, certainly they wouldn't assault him in front of this sweet girl. He had his way out, his safe exit. Well, that's what he thought until turning back to John, whose stature had not altered any from the interruption. He stood confident with the same intense gaze. He brought his arm up and snapped his finger; then pointed in the direction of the girl who responded by backing up a bit. She felt her back press on the glass door as she inhaled deeply. The masked figure without a word or show of hesitation turned and charged towards the innocent waitress. The masked figure's arms still remained behind its back in the straight jacket but the running strides were fast and powerful.

The waitress turned her head and brought her arms up in defense. She squinted her eyes at a car and watched as a faint light appeared under it. Her eyes grew wide again as she saw the light intensify. The masked figure was merely inches away from her when the car erupted as if C-4 had been strapped to the bottom of it. It lifted into the air with the fire of the explosion trailing behind it. The waitress turned to see the masked figure had halted its assault to observe the car. Everyone seemed to be looking at it, or looking for the source of the explosion. The car fell to the pavement with a crash as bits of metal scrapped on the ground.

Breathing heavily, the waiter looked out towards the others as another car went up into the air in a similar fashion. Scott was unsure of what was happening but he saw his chance. He grasped Jamie's arm and pulled him to the passenger side of their car while John was distracted. Jamie got in as Scott slid across to the driver side door and got in. Once the car revved up, it caught the attention of the masked figure who began to rush toward them; but as it did the same faint light appeared under the masked figure and John.

"Well that's annoying." John spoke as he was overtaken by the explosion, flames and heat; the masked figure remained silent as it was engulfed as well. The waitress watched as Scott and Jamie took advantage of the distraction. She then retreated back into the restaurant, walking through the crowd of people observing the incident outside. Jamie looked back at the billows of smoke that covered the masked figure and John; turning around he gulped and exhaled in relief. Looking at his father he wondered what to say, but he was still confused about what just happened.

They drove home with only the hum of the car for them to hear. Questions, that's all that swelled in Jamie's head. It felt like it took so long just to drive a few blocks. Jamie was, however, looking at the clock the whole time as it counted across the minutes. As his father slowly pulled in, Jamie unhooked the seat belt he barely remembered putting on; and stepped out of the car locking the door behind him. He rushed to the front door and pulled out his keys. Fumbling with them momentarily, Jamie placed the needed one in the lock and twisted. The door pushed open, letting the hot air from the heater take him over.

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He walked in and sat on the couch as Scott walked in behind him, taking his shoes off. They exchanged looks for a moment, then Scott walked to check if anyone had called; but it was only a collection of bill collectors. Scott walked into the living room and sat in the chair across from the couch.

"Do I even need to ask?" Jamie asked with a sense of rushed anger. He was tired of his father avoiding whatever he could.

For a moment Scott didn't move, he only looked at the floor. "They were just... business partners." he said hesitantly in a monotone voice.

"Are..." Jamie began speaking but then placed his hand on his forehead. "Is that a joke?" He spoke again in rage this time, standing up and pacing shallowly. "Do you just assume I'm mentally handicapped? That I'd believe that? If those were business partners you need to tell me what business you're in, cause that was..." he said louder with his hands wrapped around the back of his head.

"Jamie, just drop it!" Scott's voice boomed as he stood up as well. "Where I work and what I do, do not concern you. Do you understand that?" He spoke with authority and his finger pointed firmly at Jamie.

"I'm not a fucking kid anymore!" Jamie retorted rashly. As he did he placed his hand on the arm of the couch. He swung his arm across, lifting the couch right off the floor. It spun quickly and fell to the floor, leaning against the wall. For a moment Jamie just stood there looking at the couch. "What am I?" he asked of no one in particular.

Jamie felt the warm arms of his father wrap around him. He looked up to see his father's face. "I love you son. Make me proud." Scott spoke softly. Before Jamie's confusion could kick in he felt his father's arms tighten around him. Then without warning he felt his body go numb and his vision black. Next thing he knew he was being awakened by the tweets of the birds outside and the sun pressing on his face.

"Dad!" he shouted, sitting up in bed breathing heavily. He looked around and only heard silence. Pulling his covers off Jamie dressed himself quickly in simple jeans and a long red plaid shirt. He still felt dazed and everything was out of focus as he trudged down the steps and into the kitchen. He became melancholy as he saw his father sitting at the kitchen table drinking a cup of coffee. It appeared as if he hadn't slept any since yesterday.

Scott turned to Jamie, smiled slightly, and went back to sips of his black coffee. Scott felt like all he needed to say was said yesterday, so he planned to sit in silence. Jamie took a look at the clock, turned away, and once again walked out the front door and headed to school. The walk didn't feel special or calming, it didn't really have any effect on him this time around. He was just there. Like everyday he walked up the shallow steps, in the big wooden door, through the halls to his locker, unlocked it. He got his stuff, went to class, and sat down.

He watched Damien walk in the door with a smile on his face. Suffering through his daily hug he kept his eyes looking forward. Damien knew his place and decided to remain silent as he looked ahead as well. He watched Principal Barley walk in once again and read through the seating chart.

"Seems we have a transfer student joining our class for the rest of this year, so just bear with me for a second." Barley spoke as he wrote down a few notes on some pieces of paper on his desk. He looked over to the door as it slid open and watching the new student walking in Jamie sat up in his seat. Part of him wasn't surprised seeing it now. That girl walking in, that waiter. "This is uh... Melony Zain. You can sit right next to Jamie." He said pointing to the empty seat.

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"I know Jamie." Melony spoke with a smile as she skipped over to her assigned seat. Sitting down she placed her backpack behind her, it was some sort of bunny but the eyes were torn off. She then leaned forward to look at Damien at the other side of Jamie. Damien then also looked over to look at Melony with a smile. "Hi I'm, Jamie's girlfriend." She spoke reaching her arm out to shake his hand.

"What?" Jamie said peering at her arm that was decorated in several different bracelets.

"Wow he never told me he had a girlfriend!" Damien excitedly played along also reaching out to shake Melony's hand. "I can't believe you two-timing me Jamie!" He said giving Jamie a playful nudge with his other hand.

"I'm in hell." Jamie mumbled as he sat back in his seat. Looking up at the clock while Melony and Damien conversed with each other he counted down the seconds. He could hear them coming up with 'embarrassing facts' about him that weren't really facts at all. Finally he watched the clock hands reach the needed time and the bell sounded for the students to get out and walk to their next classes.

Standing up Jamie grabbed the books he had with him he looked over to Damien. "See you at gym man." He said as he walked away. After a while through the halls he noticed that Melony had been following him the whole time. He stopped in his tracks and turned to face her. "What are you doing?" he questioned.

"I'm in your next class with you. In fact." She said pulling a slip of paper out of her backpack and began reading it quickly. "I'm in all of your classes! And looks like the only seats available in all of them are next to or behind you." She cheerfully remarked.

"How did you know that without looking at my schedule?" He replied looking at her with curiosity.

"Uh." She stuttered for a brief moment bringing her finger up to her mouth and tapping it on her lips that Jamie had just noticed being stained with red lipstick. "Lucky guess?" She said trying to pull it off with a sweet smile. The exchanged looks for a moment until Jamie simply shrugged it off. He didn't really feel like it matter that much, why let minor details eat at him right?

He turned around without a word and trudged towards his next class where he sat down and watched Melony sit next to him. She placed her bag on the floor once again.

"So how's your daddy? Things got pretty intense yesterday." Melony whispered in Jamie's direction. "Those two people... do you plan to fight back." She snarled at his twisting the pencil she now held in her hand.

"Fight back?" He replied ignoring the first question entirely. It was the way she spoke the latter sentence. He couldn't explain it but it was like his bones were shaken. She said it as if some undeniable force was after him, or rather his father. He thought back to how out of place he thought those two figures were, so abnormal for them to just interject on their day.

"What will my hero do?" She said leaning closer to him making Jamie lean away a bit.

"Okay, what the hell are you talking about?" He spoke in mild irritation. Like this all wasn't confusing enough as it was. Now this chick shows up and threatens to change the normal life he was happy with, well content at least.

"You seriously don't know?" She said with a giggle. Almost with a tone of mockery, it belittled Jamie. As strange as that sounds. "You my dear Jamie, are in the middle of A much bigger picture now." She said holding a smile in his direction. All the while the class was in progress but it was as if it was only Jamie and

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Melony in the room. That's how Jamie felt anyways.

"Whatever, I don't really care. I just want to live the normal. Finish school, get a job and finish college to get a better job. That sounds nice." He said shifting through the pages of his notebook.

"I think we all wish that dear"

Jamie looked up at her with mild remorse. "Why are you pulled to me, you don't even know me." He said to her continuing to read through his papers.

"I'm attracted to men with power. That's it."

"I really don't think we'll ever be together. Sorry"

"I bet you will." She said with a smirk that wasn't directed towards him or anyone in particular.

"Alright, wager?" He said merely to entertain the idea and himself, this wasn't exactly his favorite class.

"Uh... something simple. Ten dollars." She said reaching her hand over the desk with A smile.

Jamie reached back over and shook her hand. "Deal." He said returning her smile. The rest of the class was rather quiet. The lesson was dull and uninteresting so he only sketched down minor notes. Most of the time he watched the world outside of the window. His eyes observed A family of birds nesting on a branch outside. Happy.

The bell pulled him from his attention. He had two classes left before lunch. Then another class and then gym. Lunch was all he cared about. Desperately needed the quick nap he'd get from it. And getting some food in him wouldn't hurt either. Standing up he walked through the crowd and was surprised when Melony took A different route to the same class. Unless having all the same classes was a bluff. He almost missed the companionship of having someone to talk to through the halls.

But sure enough as he rounded into his next class, he sat down and saw Melony walk in and sit in a seat in front of the class where as his was in the back. What's she doing he thought. The class preceded as normal. He had forgotten they had a test previously, getting his paper back he saw a big red "A" on it with 'great job' written on it. Was he in middle school? The class dragged on, "blah blah blah" Kind of stuff you'd expect from an English class. After about forty-five minutes the bell once again sounded. It all seemed so routine and Jamie hated every moment of it, this being his last year didn't take the pain of it away any.

He waited till the shuffle of students was diminished until he himself stood up and gave the teacher a nod walking out. He next class followed the same formula except this time with "Blah blah blah." Science stuff. Something or other about the earth's various geological features. Why would any of this matter to him? What's the point in learning it. He left the class the same walk and made his way to the lunch room. Which was larger than all three of the gym rooms combined. Coincidence?

He grabbed his food and sat down in the same place he always had. A stool on the wall that basically said "You must be lonely." Then he heard A stool next to him slide out and looked over to see Melony taking a seat.

"Hey stranger." He said trying to be heard over the chatter of the surrounding peers, which was no easy task.

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"Hi." She replied seeming to avoid the conversation entirely. "I want to help, but you need to listen. I'm about to tell you what your father has been hiding for years." She muttered out through a bite of the cafeteria pizza.

"Fine I'm all ears."

"Your body isn't hitting a growth spurt or anything normal. You're starting wake up. I told you I'm attracted to men with power. And you have that in boundless amounts, rather you will." She spoke turning over to look at him to make sure he was truly paying attention.

"So what, my body is randomly juicing up?" He replied with true curiosity. Also nibbling on the poorly made pizza.

"It's too far beyond that to really rationalize in human terms."

"So I'm not human?"

"You are... you're just. You know about the food chain right?" She said and waited for Jamie to nod in reply. "Okay so humans eat everything, even things that should be our predators we devour. So there has to be something above humans. That's where you come in. If we weren't bred to believe we were humans chances are we would hunt humans... some of us do."

Jamie for a moment was silent as he took all the information in. It was silly but the way she said it and how she used the words held him convinced. Or it was at least listing too. Then his eyes grew wide with intrigue. "So I'm a vampire?!" He exclaimed out loud ignorant of the people sitting right behind him.

"Seriously?" She said with a glance that instantly made him hunch back in his chair.

"Sorry."

"Whatever, no you're not." She said rolling her eyes. "You hold the powers to be a very good person, or a devastatingly bad one. If you had the power to rule the world who would you be Jamie?"

"I'd just be what this world deserves. So these powers, what are they?"

"I'm not too certain of yours. I'm unsure if you'll follow your father's blueprints or your own. But you've seemed to already develop the inhuman strength gene of it." She explained as she polished off the rest of her meal and looked towards the clock above them. "To a degree all of the people like us have increased strength and resistance to damage, I'll explain later. Lunch is over."

He hadn't even noticed that the time had gone by that fast, he barely touched his meal. Not to mention didn't get the nap he so desperately wanted but such is life he thought as he began standing up. Before he could say anything Melony was gone in the crowd of students leaving. The next class was the same as the others, Melony sat away from him again. What was up with this chick? He at least found time to sleep thanks to a very unobservant teacher. The bell was the only reason he woke up and managed to drag his face off the desk in front of him.

He stumbled as he got up and for a moment his vision remained hazy as he grabbed at his books. Leaving the class he made his way to his locker once more to grab his backpack with all his gym clothes in it. He walked his way to the gymnasium. He quickly changed and walked through the gym's wooden doors, the gymnasium was always unnaturally cold. To inspire movement perhaps? It was annoying none the less.

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Walking in he saw Melony and Damien had already started talking to each other. Damien spotted Jamie walking in and eccentrically waved him over, like Jamie was going to walk to somewhere else. Before any further conversation could start their attention turned to the doors Jamie had just walked in to see the principle walking in. It was rather surprising, none of the students really knew him to very athletic. Not to mention that means two teachers he'd cover for seeing as their normal teacher was nowhere to be found.

"Let's start with some warm ups. Everyone on the ground and do... just twenty simple push ups." Barley spoke. All the students got on the ground and did the recommended amount. Some struggled more than others. But Jamie preformed them effortlessly in seemingly no time. Barley watched him with dismay. "Mr. Lannon. Do twenty more." He spoke. Hearing A grunt from Jamie he watched as Jamie did the task just as easily. "How many can you do?"

"No idea Barley." Jamie replied his arms stilled extended holding his upper body away from the floor.

"Well lets see." Barley said pulling a chair up behind him and taking a seat. The other students all sat silently looking at Jamie.

Taking a deep breath Jamie began working through sets of twenties. He passed hundred before realizing it. Then two hundred with no sign of fatigue. Barley walked over to Jamie and knelt next to him. "That's enough." Barley said placing his hand on Jamie's shoulder. When he felt Barley's hand he could feel his entire body give out and his arms collapsed under him failing to the ground with a slap. Barley looked at Jamie with grimace. "Early dismissal." He spoke standing up and walking away.

Jamie laid still on the ground panting as he watched all but Damien and Melony stand up and walk away. Then his two friends stood up and walked to him, reaching down they helped him up to his feet.

"I told you Jamie, you're inhuman." Melony said in his ear making sure Damien remained oblivious about it. Jamie just looked back at her and without a word got himself free of the two and walked towards the front of the school. Melony and Damien just exchanged looks with raised eyebrows.

Jamie walked out the front of the school uncaring that he hadn't changed out of his gym cloths or that he had forgotten in books in the locker room. They didn't matter. He wasn't sure what specifically did matter other than the walk home. The walk felt as it always did. The pavement under his feet felt as it always did. The wind as it always did. His heart as it always was. His mind as it always was.

He walked for a few minutes and took the day in and now that he thought of it. It seemed almost like Barley was taking an interest in him. This piqued his curiosity.

Turning at his destination he saw the front of his house. Dropping his arms to his side he looked at the gaping hole in his house. Like a car had smashed through but left leaving no evidence. The wind picked up and from his father's broken suitcase he watched the piece of paper fly through the air. Reaching out he caught it before it flew pass him. Unfolding the paper all he saw was one deeming word written in large bold letters. "Guilty."

As it always was.

Chapter 8: Believer

Jamie stood looking vacantly at the carcass of his violated home. His fingers pranced over the thin sheet of paper in his hand. He could almost taste the dust being expelled from the house's wound as the wind pushed pass him. He looked around quickly pondering why no cops were called or anything. As if this was just another day. Then he saw A black van parked A few houses away, it's engine was clearly running.

He started walking towards the van as he saw the back door push open to reveal his father and the same masked figure from yesterday. His father looked at him and slid out of the van putting his hand to his side stopping the masked figure from exiting too.

"Jamie, go to your friend's house for a while." Scott spoke out over the vibration of the van behind him.

"What? This is too much. What's going on, seriously?" Jamie replied clenching the paper in his hand into A ball.

Scott stood for a moment as he saw his son wouldn't take any more beating around the bush. He let out a sigh putting his hands into his pocket. "You're so stupid." He lamented.

"Excuse me?" Jamie shouted as he lurched back from his fathers comment, out of all the things he expected him to say.

Scott closed his eyes for a moment and then look stern towards Jamie. "Go to your friend's house. Now."

"No."

"Jamie. Listen to me!"

"You won't be telling me what I want to hear."

"Jamie!" Scott bellowed out. It was almost as if the whole area around them jumped from his voice. Jamie could even see the van's tires leave the ground for a moment. As he stood there Jamie could hear Melony's words echo through his thoughts 'You hold the powers to be a very good person, or a devastatingly bad one.'

Jamie stepped towards his dad. Determined, as he walked he noticed that the masked figure was holding it's left arm and it's mask was chipped. Also the damage from the house seemed to scar out into the street. "I really am tired of this dad. I'm going to get my answers here and now. What's going on?" He spoke fiercely letting his intentions be heard.

"What's going on?" Scott said his eyes becoming cold as the sky set along with the mood became darker and polluted with gray clouds. "What's going on is if you take another step... I won't hesitate to knock you through the street."

Jamie was taken back, he didn't expect nor had he ever seen his father like this. Like he's in an instant become someone else. Looking over at the figure he'd seen yesterday it seemed like it wasn't even interested in the situation. Was it confident that Scott could handle it. Then Jamie remembered that Melony mentioned the possibility of following in his father's footsteps. That meant that his dad had developed the same way. Only for longer.

The only option he saw was to back down. Something about the way his father spoke shook him to the core. It felt like he could indefinably back his words up. He eased up and step away from his father while lowering his head.

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"Do what you need to, I won't stop you." He spoke solely as he turned away from the car. He knew his dad said 'sorry' he just wasn't listening enough for it to actually matter to him. He could barely see the van as it pulled away with his father inside. What just happened? Why is everything going in such odd directions lately. He found himself wishing Melony was around, maybe she could explain some more things. Or maybe he just wanted the company. But from her? He hated her. Why does he hate her? He didn't even know her. He could feel his head going all over the place once again. At least it was for rational reasons.

Slowly he turned his head to his now mortally wounded house, pieces of wood still dropped from the gaping hole. "Looks like we're both falling apart buddy." Jamie spoke sympathetically to the object that yielded no responds. Slowly he walked to the house wishing he never had to stop walking, that the first step up never came. But it did none the less. Reaching out he touched the handle on the front door and twisted. As he did the door came off it's hinges and fell inwards smacking the ground. He let out a simple sigh and walked over the door feeling it balancing out from the knob of the door pressing on the floor. Once inside he knelt down and found the pins that should have been in the hinges. Once he had them he picked the door up with general ease and held it forward.

Walking slightly forward he carefully lined up the hinged pieces on the frame with the ones on the door. When he had he used his right hand to press it in place so it wouldn't fall. As his left hand reached for one of the pins that was in his mouth and took it. Placing the first pin in the top hinge he relaxed his grip ever so slightly as he knelt and repeated the process with the lower hinge. Once they were both in he swung the door back and forth to make sure it was secure once again. After confirming that is was he closed it and stepped back. Turning his head he looked at the large hole in his house. It wasn't going to be so easy to fix that's for sure.

He should get some rest or even call the authorities about what had happened but he already knew that would do no good. Rest would be right now, but right now he wouldn't rest easy with such an exploit in his home. He walked to the kitchen and grabbed a handful of garbage back and made his way to the hole in his living room. He even snickered at the coincidence of the only thing in the living room intact was the television. He reached down and began picking up the various debris of the broken home. Shoving them into the bags beside him as the floor slowly revealed itself. He wondered if his dad made the hole of that person in the straight jacket. Not like it mattered but he needed something to keep his mind busy or he'd go insane.

He couldn't feel any sign of fatigue. Even if he was just fit he'd feel himself getting tired by now but he felt just as he did when he first woke up. Every now and then he'd notice someone walking by looking at the house or a car slowly driving by. God forbid anyone offered any help right? Whenever he'd pick up a piece of splintered wood he would just chuck it outside. After about an hour he had most of it cleaned, all that remained was sweepable. From there he knocked loose pieces of wood from the hole. Finally he stepped back and pondered what to do from here.

He saw a red pickup truck pull up to his out and stop. Out of curiosity Jamie walked through the hole in his house and made a shallow jump onto his lawn. The driver side door of the truck pushed open. Jamie was mildly stunned to see his principal stepping out.

"Jamie, what uh... what happened here?" Barley spoke in mild interest as he stared at the house behind Jamie.

Jamie turned around and looked at the house almost reassuring himself once more that he wasn't going crazy. He turned back to Barley and rubbed his hands together. "I don't think you'd believe me if I told you." He spoke nervously. It was always weird seeing your teachers outside of school. Now more then ever.

"Something tells me you're right." Barley replied with a slight snicker placing his hands on the roof of the truck. "Well I'd hate to leave you helpless here. I used to be a carpenter so if you want. Hop in and we'll hit up the department store to get some supplies. It'll take a while but we should get a decent fix by tonight." He said

with an alleviating smile.

"I don't want to waste you time."

"I got nothing but time."

Jamie stood for a moment and with a shrug he walked towards the red truck and observed the empty truck bed. It looked as if it had been cleaned just a few hours ago. That kind of noticeable sheen in color when something has just recently touched water. Maybe he just got out of a car wash. It wasn't any of his business anyway. Why was he so paranoid?

Opening the passenger side of the truck he expected the screech you hear from most trucks but it was noticeably absent. It was pleasant not to have to squint in reaction to the noise. He climb in and sat down on the soft leather seat, it reminded him of his fathers car. It had a really nice dashboard, something you wouldn't expect to be in a truck. He pulled the door close and looked over to see Barley peering at him as if waiting for something. Jamie giggled slightly as he reached over and pulled the seat belt across his chest.

Barley then looked forward and started to pull out and stopped only pulling forward a few inches. Stopping the car he put his hand on his forehead. "If we leave who's going to watch you house?" Barley questioned as both him and Jamie slouched in their seats with a sigh.

"I'll do it!" pierced the voice of Melony in Jamie's ear making him jump in his seat.

"Holy hell!" He cried in reaction "Where did you come from?" exclaimed Jamie after rolling down the window on his side of the truck.

"I got worried about you. I just wanted to make sure my boyfriend was okay." She innocently replied lowering her chin onto the window of the truck and looking up at Jamie. "Don't be mad please."

"I said to stop calling me that!" Jamie shouted but Melony only giggled at him as if she found it cute.

"Well perfect your girlfriend can watch the place." Barley joked with a smile. "Well only be a few minutes Melony, thank you!"

"She not my girlfriend!" Jamie pleaded as Melony continued giggle. Barley only shrugged as he once again started the truck up. He pulled forward as Melony skipped towards the house and sat on the living room floor with a smile. For a while they were silent. The department store was only about four to five miles away but twisting through the residential streets made it seem like a lot longer.

"That girl." Barley said finally breaking the silence and gravitating Jamie's attention to him.

"I said she's not my girlfriend."

"No not that. I advise you stay away from her." Barley spoke as his eyes concentrated on the road turning the headlights on as the day started to ease into the night.

"She seems innocent enough. Weird maybe. But she's been nice to me." Jamie spoke mildly surprised that he was defending her.

"Melony Zain." Barley whispered out before his voice trailed off. "She is a transfer student for a reason. All I'm saying is be careful."

Saint: The first halo

How odd, that he'd bring her up Jamie thought. But it only made sense that he'd know what Melony was transferred. He had to review her before letting her in the school after all. But if that was the case, why let her in at all? Did he know the things Melony knew about him? He wasn't acting like he did. Did it have something to do with Barley was taking over more and more of his classes? He knew he couldn't ask any questions to show a sign of suspicion. Then he thought of just the way to beat around the bush.

"Mr. Barley."

"Call me Zack outside of school."

"Okay, Zack. Is this your only truck or car?"

Barley raised his eyebrow feeling slightly blindsided by the question that is he didn't really expect anything along the lines. "Yes, why?"

"It's just. I'm normally watching out the living room windows. I've never seen your truck before. Not even at school now that I think of it." Jamie spoke attempting to avoid potential eye contact with his teacher. For a while there was a silence. As he expected. Zack didn't have to tell him anything. Maybe it was just coincidence. A lucky one at that since otherwise Jamie would be fixing the house all on his own.

Zack however knew he had to say something he just was unsure of how to safely say what he wanted. "I was just out for a drive. I didn't even know that was your house but I didn't see anyone else stopping to help. I'm glad it was you actually, I'd prefer not to let a stranger in my car with me." Zack said with a smile hoping he avoided any further prodding.

Jamie nodded slightly even though he knew Zack wouldn't be able to see him. He could see them approaching the lit up sign of the department store. Zack turned the steering wheel into the lot and found a place to park. "I just remembered. Your dad dropped this off this morning." Zack said as he reached over Jamie's lap and unlocked the glove department. Once in opened Jamie saw his wallet. Suddenly surprised Jamie patted his pocket, he hadn't even realized he was missing it.

Reaching in he picked it up, he couldn't help but notice that it felt heavier than what he remembered of it. He quickly disregarded the thought as he observed Zack leaving the car. Not wanting to keep him waiting Jamie stuffed the wallet into his pocket and unbuckled. Stepping out of the car he was hit by a wave of chill air. He hoped Melony found a blanket to cover up with or something.

Zack had already started walking to the front of the store, quickly turning around Jamie ran to catch up with him. As they settled into the building the air changed to a more heated atmosphere from the building's heaters no doubt. It was certainly welcomed to both Zack and Jamie. "Just follow me Jamie I know what we need." Zack spoke as Jamie nodded in agreement. They went from isle to isle gathering several different types of woods, panels and assorted building tools. The cart they had was quickly filling up and Jamie had no idea what any of it was for. But he did notice that the store either smelled like saw dust to tire rubber as if that's all the store was selling.

Every now and then Jamie would notice Barley look over and smile at him and he couldn't help but smile back. Was he actually having a good time? A while later they a bounty of wood and other unidentifiable things. Reaching the checkout the clerk looked at them for a moment and pulled out a scanner. Reaching over the poor clerk searched for the bar codes on the items. After ringing everything up he recited some ungodly amount of money owed. Zack reached to his pocket and pulled his wallet own. Then let out a grunt. "I must have dropped my credit card in the truck." He let out another sigh looking at the door. "I don't suppose you have enough on you Jamie?" He joked.

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Jamie reached into his pocket and looked into his wallet. He was shocked when he saw a flourish of neatly packed bills. Reaching in he pulled out a handful of bills and shuffled through them while counting in his head and with a slight whisper. Once he reached the needed amount he out stretched his arm to the clerk who took the money and gave back the correct amount of change.

Zack watched in silence slightly curious on Jamie's financial situation. "Jamie where does you dad work?" Zack questioned silently.

"Your guess is as good as mine." Jamie retorted grabbing the several chunks of wood lifting them out of the cart cradling them in one arm. He then reached over with his free arm and picked up sheets of siding. The clerk looking on with amazement clearly visible in his eyes. Zack and the clerk exchanged looks and Zack gave him a shrug. He picked up the bags of tools and smiled as he walked away following Jamie.

As Zack got to the car he saw Jamie unloading the items into the bed of the truck. He walked along the side of the truck and opened the driver side door and sat down placing the bag of tools next to him on the floor in between the his and the passenger's seat. He waited for a few moments as Jamie shifted the items in the back to be sure they wouldn't fall out on the drive home. As he finished he too opened his door and sat down too.

"Okay I'm ready." Jamie said once again buckling up and relaxing in his seat. Zack wasn't going to ask how Jamie had effortlessly carried all of that because he too had been avoiding questions.

The only sounds that really accompanied the ride home was the tires on the gravel and the occasional cough from Zack. Neither of them really wanted to be the one who would break the silence so they remained still, reminding Jamie how awkward riding in the car with his principal was. He wanted to reach over and turn the radio on but you never touch someone else radio. So he just sat wondering why his father had left him with so much money, or even where the money came from. They lived comfortably but were never considered rich.

He wouldn't let this go once he saw his dad again, if he saw his dad again that is. After a while he saw the truck's headlights pass over the front of his house, it looked like Melony had been sweeping while they were gone. She looked up and greeted the two with a smile. Jamie didn't pay too much attention to her as he stepped out of the truck. Zack reached down and grabbed his bag of tools and preceded to turn the truck off as he too stepped out and shut his door behind him. Walking to the back they both picked up the scattered wood and other materials that had shifted during the drive.

It was dark out now but it was only around six, lately it seemed the the sun went down as quickly as it could. They carried the supplies into the living room as Melony sat on the couch she had dusted off. She flicked the TV on and turned it to some channel that exclusively played music. Jamie couldn't help but be pleased, he hadn't heard any music since he was mugged. Now that he thought about it, it seemed like forever ago that it happened. He still questioned at times weather it was a dream or not.

As she finally settled all the building materials Melony disappeared into the kitchen. Zack knelt down and picked up a piece of two-by-four and placed it in the gap. He pulled out a tape measure he had off hand to see how many he'd need to reach to the top.

"Shouldn't we have done that before we left?" Jamie questioned as he watched Zack.

Zack for a moment looked at the ceiling as he calculated the numbers out in his head temporarily ignoring Jamie. You could see him mouthing the numbers as he worked out the entire gap in front of him out. Jamie watched in awe, he really was figuring it all out without writing a single thing down or making any other measurements.

"No we have more than enough." Zack said after finalizing some of the less specific numbers out. Then he reached down and picked up some nails holding a few in his mouth he went to work. Jamie watched only

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every now and then being instructed to do something like hold a piece up or nail something down. Zack seemed to know exactly what he was doing as a wall slowly formed in front of him.

"Why are you helping me? Really." Jamie asked hoping to clear up some suspicions he had in his head.

"Let us all be brave enough to die the death of a martyr, but let no one lust for martyrdom." Zack spoke eloquently as he continued to work away.

"I'm sorry what?" Jamie replied simply.

"Gandhi said it." Replied Zack continuing to hammer nails deep into the wood in front of him. "There doesn't really need to exist a true reason behind one's actions. Whether they're good or bad. It's just an extension of who we are as humans. I showed up by chance and decided to help out." He continued to mutter out through the nails in his mouth.

"Yeah I guess." Jamie acknowledged as he watched Zack's finger point him to a screwdriver laying on the floor. He bent down and picked it up. Raising his body back up he saw Melony appear out of the corner of his eye. He was startled when all he could see her holding was a rather large knife, with that smile she loved to show off. Further putting her in his peripheral he let out a sigh of relief as he noticed her holding a plate as well.

Trails of steam were billowing off the plate, he'd forgotten she worked at that fancy restaurant. It smelled so good whatever it was. She bent over and sat it on the ground furthermore turning around to walk back into the kitchen. She walked in with another plate and a glass of whatever soda they had in the fridge. After one more trip to the kitchen she sat down in front of a plate.

"Please take a break. I don't want you two passing out." She spoke out sweetly looking down at the meal she prepared. Zack and Jamie exchanged glances and then looked at the wall. They'd made decent progress and shouldn't take them more than an hour or two to finish up. Hopefully.

Sitting down the both dug into what seemed to be some pasta dish but whatever it was Jamie found it delicious. He wondered why Melony worked as a waiter instead of a cook, or maybe she was just covering someone else's shift. Melony ate her food slowly making sure not to spill anything onto the rug, she always had the smile though. It was almost unnerving like she was trying so hard to just appear happy to them.

After a few minutes they finished their meals and got back to work on the wall. Zack went outside and put what seemed to be drywall up, he'd screw it onto the wood they had placed repeating this process until outside couldn't be seen. Coming back in through the door he put gloves on and packed insulation between the wood and would put another piece of drywall up and nail that in. Once that was done he went back outside and put some sort of siding up so it wouldn't appear so atrocious anymore.

"Okay so just paint this wall and that should do. I'm sure you can handle that, right?" Zack joked as he walked back into the house. Jamie nodded and after exchanging thanks Zack left as soon as he appeared. Jamie looked at the wall that formed in only a few hours. He felt incredibly lucky that Zack showed up when he did, maybe he had no reason to feel suspicion towards him. Just someone doing a good deed he thought.

"Um. I can maybe spend the night?" Melony spoke as innocently as she could behind him as she was still sitting on the floor.

"Yeah I guess. You can take my bed." Jamie replied as he walked over to turn the TV off. He watched Melony practically skip up the steps and he could hear her jumping onto his bed. Something he wished she didn't do. Looking down he saw a hammer and a few nails laying on the ground. He remembered Melony saying

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something about having increased resistance or something like that.

Reaching down he picked up the hammer and a nail and walked into his kitchen and sat at the table. He laid the back of his on the the table and shivered slightly as the cold branched throughout his body. He put the tip of the nail onto his palm and clenched slightly so his skin would wrinkle to hold the nail up. He took the hammer and took a deep breath and brought it into the air.

His arm remained still for a moment as he looked the nail, he attempted once to swing down but stopped short. He brought it back up and took a few shallow breaths and mentally prepared himself for it. He then brought the hammer down and missed his mark slamming the slightly rusted metal onto his pinky finger. He knew instantly that he'd broken the bone under his skin as he hunched forward onto the table and clutched his hand. He gritted his teeth through the urge to scream but somewhere in his mild panic he noticed it didn't hurt anymore.

Out reaching the still shaking hand he observed himself balling and opening his hand back up as if he never hit it. In amazement he picked up the nail and placed it in his cupped hand. He had it so the tip was pressing on his palm while the head was also braced in his skin. He then slowly balled his fist tighter and tighter only feeling a small prick. When he opened his hand again he watched the crumpled up steel roll out of his hands pinging on the kitchen floor.

He looked down at it hands that looked the exact same as they did before he got into the kitchen. And with wondrous potential in his eyes he simply muttered out under his breath. "No way."

Chapter 9: Mad cap

He continued to sit at the table in slight disbelief, then started to think about what he would do with it. These abilities. He hadn't actually seen anyone use their powers before except for at the restaurant. And that saved him, who or whatever is was. He stood up and went into the living room just now noticing that the couch was missing. It was most likely damaged and removed by either him or Melony but he couldn't really remember. Instead he walked down into the attic and noticed the two recliners that had been put down there when they got the couch.

He picked up a chair with relative ease, something that had finally stopped surprising him. He repeated this again to grab the other chair down there, he then sat down and turned on the TV. He watched the glow of it dimly illuminate the surrounding room. He sat watching the news, the various natural disasters and different crimes that had been committed. He watched and watched as he absorbed this information. No one cared to help those in need, so those in need did what they had to for survival. And were punished for it.

Humans are animals yet they're treated like kings. When a lion kills for the sole purpose of its young being able to survive. It is not punished nor locked away. This process only serves to further that human's innate desires. Locking someone up won't change that person, only the way his opinions on those around him. Then there are those in positions of power who destroy more lives than any petty thief could and yet they walk away unscathed. Jamie turned the TV off and walked up stairs. Trying to be quiet on the wooden steps. 'Trying' being the key word as it seems in the dead of night the acoustics of the stairs is as if they were hooked up to an amp.

Turning into the short hallway he quickly reached his room and leaned on the wooden door frame. He watched the figure sleeping his bed covered by his heavy blanket that moved up and down as the moonlight bounced off it. She seemed at peace with herself, like she had no regrets about who she was or the things she did. And for a moment, just crawling in that bed with her almost felt like it wouldn't be the bad.

"You're totally falling for me." Melony jested as she felt Jamie's presence in the doorway.

"Shut up and sleep." Jamie replied turning around and retreating back down the stairs falling onto the chair. For a moment he just looked through the dark at the newly formed wall in front of him. Then he felt himself fading in the night, starting to wish he had grabbed a blanket before he sat down. Before he knew it he could feel his eyes prying back open. The sun now had stained the textures inside his house. From the kitchen he could learn movement and the air was palpable with the taste of eggs and possibly bacon.

Melony stepped in with a plate in each hand as Jamie sat up and took the one she was reaching out for him. "Thank you." He spoke as he placed the warm plate on his lap. "So are we not going to school today?" He said reaching down for the fork digging into the eggs that were prepared for him.

"I figured some time away from there would be nice. I'm sure Barley will understand right?" She said as she too dug into her meal. Reaching over she pressed the TV on and immediately some commercial for a new action movie popped onto the screen.

It was this film where it portrayed the end of the world and followed some man who searched for the cause of the catastrophe. It looked B-rate but was saved by the highest billed actor. Trevor Sikes, the kind of guy whose name just screamed 'famous'. No one knew where he came from but if you wanted a film to hit number one you had to bill him nowadays.

"Did you know he does his own stunts." Jamie said swallowing the rest of the food in his mouth.

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"No."

"Oh... he does his own work."

"So I've heard." Melony said with a chuckle as she quickly finished the rest of her food. Standing up she casually walked over and took Jamie's finished palate as well and returned it to the sink. Jamie could hear the faint clinking of the dishes touching as they fell into the porcelain sink. She looked up at the sun shining through the window about the sink. She felt happy, something she was unsure would be possible.

Walking back into the living room she took a quick glance at Jamie, he seemed uncertain about anything. Afraid of what was before him and she knew how it felt, she was still feeling it.

"Jamie come into the back yard with me please." She spoke turning around and walking to the back door stopping a second to make sure she could hear Jamie starting to move. Once she heard the TV click off she pushed the door open and stepped out into the cool air. The wind sent shivers through her body by the heat of the sun pressing on her body was like a sheet that just got out of the dryer. Pivoting her body in reverse she watched Jamie walking out of the house, something about the light made him look angelic. The pressing sun seemed to dawn a halo on his scuffed hair.

"What are we doing?" Jamie eventually spoke out as he noticed the silence had been running out for just a little too long. He looked down at the ground and noticed the walkway had a blotch of dark red in the cement walk way. He had almost completely forgotten about that day even though it had only been a few days ago.

"Well you're still in your development." She said reaching into her backpack pulling out two fingerless gloves. "We're going to see what you're capable of."

"I'm not about to hit a girl."

"I promise, you won't be able to touch me." She remarked pulling the gloves over her fingers.

"So are your powers the same as mine? I mean you're gifted too right? I never asked, I just assumed because you seemed to know a lot." He said trying to stall any confrontation. He'd never hit a girl before, he was just that kind of guy. And now with his inhuman strength the moral only stands stronger.

"Yes I am above the title of human too. But no strength isn't my virtue, but when your effected you gain increased physical resistance and strength. Not to the extent of you and your dad but it's still there."

"Virtue?"

"It's the term we've universally accept to describe the abilities of an Abomination or Light." Jamie stood for a moment further confused, one question answered led right into another. Melony looked up from her gloves and let a sigh out as she show questioning face of Jamie.

"Abominations are what you'd call a super villain. Lights are the 'heroes'. Even though it's all relative really. Just labeling to know who you want to kill and who you don't."

"So what am I?"

"That's not up to me."

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Jamie stood hushed as he thought back on the things he's seen in his life and all the hatred he's witness from man. Looking up from his empty gaze he saw Melony battled readied. "Okay." Is all he manage to mustered out, he was in fact so lost in thought he almost didn't feel Melony's fist pressing onto his face. Once he came to realizing the impact he was surprised at how strong she was. Maybe stronger then he himself. He watched the lawn turn into the sky as he fell onto his back.

Putting his hand onto his face he could feel blood dripping from his nose, putting his hand in view he watched the blood trail down his pointer finger. It was slightly comforting to know that he could still bleed and that he was still human.

"Stand back up." Melony harsh spouted. "And maybe this time fight back or at least dodge. If this was a real fight you'd be dead." She snarled at him furiously. It wasn't hard to tell he wasn't taking it seriously as he continued to lay on his back looking at the clouds pushing over sunlight above them.

He looked at his feet to see Melony standing as her patients wore out. "You really want to fight?" He spoke. She modestly nodded with her arms folded waiting for him to get back up. "Are you sure you can take the hits?"

"Would you just shut up. I'm going to beat you regardless. And I promise not to use my Virtue, okay?" She alleged to him as she watched him pulling himself up from the ground. Small bits of dirt fell off the back of his shirt as a miniscule dust cloud was kicked up.

"You're confusing you know." He mumbled looking off to the side. "Just yesterday you seemed to act like you felt something for me. Now you're belittling me and attempting to fight me."

"It's my caring for you that has brought this on. I don't really know what type of girl I am or how to deal with all this. But I know that getting you used to what's going on is priority. To know that you're safe because you're able to fight back, I need that." She gently spoke into the wind. Almost too quiet for Jamie to be able to pick up, he even missed a few words here and there. But her face filled in the gaps. The way she avoided eye contact but he could still feel her focusing on him.

"Okay, I'll play along." He said remorsefully, not meaning for his words to dig that deep into her. Stepping back he braced his back foot for a moment to solidify his resolve in the training. Then he began stepping forward as Melony's arms uncrossed and she prepared a battle stance with her right arm stretched forward only slightly bending as her left was folded at her side. Rushing forward he curved his arm back and tensed his muscles up. He thought it'd be a little harsh but maybe if he hit her hard enough the training would end right there and then. She said that she shared accelerated healing as well so wouldn't be anything more then a few minutes of healing up.

Once he reached his desired proximity he advanced his arms and prepared for the impact. But within an instant Melony's reflex echoed as she swayed just dodging the hit by an inch or two. Jamie attempted to readjusted his body to go for another attacked but only felt his momentum taking over. It sent him into the chain link fence a few feet behind where Melony was standing. He was slightly surprised even though part of him had expected it.

He wasn't used to raw power like this, any punch he had ever thrown before easily paled in comparison to what he could do now. He braced himself back up and turned to face her again. Once again he went through the motions of a punch, he had no real form to it. Just pushing his fist forward is all he thought was needed for it, but yet again she just sidestepped him as he started to fall forward, and he landed on his face. Jamie could feel his aggravation towards himself building.

He swung at her again and felt the swing carry through his body forcing him to circulate. While his back was facing Melony she jumped up and pushed her feet out in front of her pounding into his back. Feeling the

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impact Jamie fell forward on his face again while behind him Melony twisted her body in the air to land on her feet.. His hands grabbing the grass under him he clenched ripping at roots and dirt.

"Just control yourself. You do have the capability to throw a punch with all your strength you just have to figure out how to handle it. Sadly I can't pack that kind of punch with my fist. So I have no idea how to do it." Melony spoke as she watched Jamie laying on the ground in front of her.

"How does dad do it?" Jamie questioned as he once again drug himself up from the ground to stand on his feet.

"I'm not sure. But i've seen your dad throw punches that could blow mountains apart. Yet he suffered from no momentum. He could throw a punch like that standing in one spot."

"That's incredible."

"Wow, a compliment?"

"No, shut up." He panted out through breaths charging at her once more. He prepared another punch and lined it up. Melony stood confident ready to dodge once more. As she did she saw his left arm immediately followed up. She had to jump back to avoid any damage. More surprising was the small gust of air that emitted from the force of his punch. That would mean he hadn't held any of his strength back. Without wasting too much time Jamie braced his foot and propelled himself toward Melony who was just now landing back on her feet.

Melony felt the momentum of the jump carrying her backwards leaving her no time to react. She only had time to throw her arms up to guard her chest, but she felt the impact of Jamie's fist on her stomach taking her breath away. The pure aptitude of the punch sent her flying back pressing her back onto the corner of the porch. She fell spinning to the concrete, and took a moment to try and catch her breath.

"I'm so sorry!" Jamie pleaded as he started jogging over to help her up. He could see a small trail of blood trickled out of her mouth.

"No, that's perfect." She retaliated with a smirk, lifting her arm up and wiping the blood dripping off her chin with her hand. At this moment she rose to her feet and charged back. "Block!" She shouted as she jumped up and brought her left foot forward. Jamie reached up and grabbed her foot and observed as she hung in the air for a second. Continuing the fluidity of her attack she bent her left outstretched leg to bring her closer as she rose her right leg above Jamie's head. Jamie could see the shadow of her leg casting over his face, in reaction he let go of her foot and started to back away. "Too predictable!" She snickered out as she brought her right leg down heavy on his head. Jamie could only look helplessly at the ground as the force of the hit make him bow over. Melony, however, was using the drive to flip her body so she'd land on her feet.

Once able Jamie lifted his head to peer at Melony who stood confident. He was starting to figure it out, how to throw these punches but it was still touch and go. Just because he knew what he had to do didn't mean he knew how to perfectly execute it.

"Fighting is all about split second decisions. There are countless choices for ways to approach your foe. And in those are the countless considerations of how your foe is going to approach you. It's all complicated. But eventually it feels like second nature. Like it's hardwired into you. That's where we need to get you." She explained cracking her knuckles. "Round two coming up." Dashing forward she watched Jamie prepare himself for another assault. However she was caught off-guard when his defensive stance altered while she was only a few feet away. His arm shot out forward as she brought her arm up and smacked the side of his arm with the back of her hand to stop the attack. She saw his left arm following up so she opted to grab his

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wrist to stop it.

She pulled her arm back with a firm grip on his wrist, he was pulled forward and could feel a hard crunch of her pushing her forward into his. As he stumbled back Melony stepped forward and landed two more into Jamie's chest. On the second hit she grabbed his shirt and pulled him forward again landing a finishing blow on his face. He fell hard onto his back as he could feel his broken nose and ribs literally healing themselves. He had no idea that bones could regenerate too, or that it would hurt so bad.

"Okay I think that's enough for today." She said with slight empathy as she looked at Jamie sprawled out on the ground. She walked over to him and sat down placing her head on her knees.

"I got some good shots in, right?"

"You hit me once." Melony teased with a chuckled looking to her side at Jamie. Only one session and he's learned how to control his punches, maybe he will be incredible sooner then expected.

"You said I wouldn't be able to land a hit at all." He spoke closing his eyes feeling the wind pressed against his face.

"I didn't even use my Virtue."

"Yeah, what is yours by the way?" He questioned as he got to a sitting position and looked her in the eyes. "You're... wearing contacts?" He stated noticing the tint of another color behind her hazel eyes.

"Yeah, I guess." She said shyly but relieved that the question of her Virtue had been avoided for the time being. She couldn't help but avoid eye contact now that attention had been called to her. She never really liked people looking into her eyes. She'd even avoid direct contact with the mirror if she could.

"What's your natural eye color?" He said almost overly excited for such a simple conversation. Maybe he thought he was contributing more to the conversation if he seemed more into it. There was a moment of silence where Melony continued to look ahead of her. "Well?"

"They're purple." She spoke out remorsefully, she lamented the color of her eyes since birth. They always made her stand out and would draw some weird form of attention toward her.

"Oh? That's so cool." He added as he got to his knees and crawled over to be sitting right across from her. He leaned forward getting his face closer to her's as he tried to look into her eyes. She averted her eyes to the side while Jamie looked intently. "Wow they really are. That's awesome, purple is my favorite color." He backed off when he noticed her blushing. Funny normally she was the one pressing him, maybe she was just like the other girls after all. It didn't seem like Melony was the type to have insecurities.

For a moment she looked back into Jamie's eyes, that smile he had was so comforting. For a moment she thought of that kid, Damien. No wonder he was his best friend. That smile...

"Do you want to do something. I don't want to sit home all day."

"Sure. I have to get paint for the wall anyways." He pronounced, rising to his feet and noting the dirt on himself and Melony. "We should probably change first." He snickered. He outstretched his hand to her and she lifted her to him. Pulling her to her feet she began walking into the house and up the stairs. Jamie walked into his while Melony stepped into the bathroom. He room and pulled open his dresser and realized that his clothing would be too big for Melony.

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"I uh, don't have anything you can changed into." He called out into the hall.

"It's okay, I brought my own cloths." She stated ruffling through the clothing in a small gym bag she brought over. Pulling cloths out she shut the bathroom door and began changing.

'You planned to stay all along?' he thought to himself in slight irritation. Soon forgetting about it he began changing. Melony stood looking at herself in the mirror. She pushed her hair out of her face and ran her finger down to her chin feeling all the things she considered to be imperfections. She looked deep into her contacts that were slightly off center. She looked over at the closed door next to her where she knew Jamie was just a room away. Turning her head back to the mirror she lifted her fingers up again. Separating her eyelids she forced the green contacts out of her eyes and listened to the tap of them hitting the sink. She looked down and noticed the lack of anything blocking the drain. So she turned the faucet on and watched the twisted down the drain forever lost.

Peering back up at the mirror she looked at the vibrant purple of her eyes, how they showed indefinitely in contrast to her hair. After a few moments of reflection she reached down and finished changing. She fixed her hair and washed her face and exited the room to see Jamie waiting for her. When he saw her hair parted and those eyes showing he couldn't help but smile at her. When he did he could see her cheeks turn red as she looked away. Reaching up he grabbed her chin and turned her head back towards him.

"How am I supposed to see those eyes if you're always looking away." Jamie chuckled out.

"Sh... shut up." Melony turned around still blushing as she walked back down the steps hearing Jamie giggling behind her.

"I said shut up!" only serving to make Jamie bellow out more.

"Wait for me!" Jamie shouted as he pranced down the stairs. Looking back Melony could see how happy he was. She was glad too.

Moments later they were walking silent block after block in the slight heat pressed by the sun. The stopped by some store that carried only paint, just paint. Jamie thought it was weird when your whole clientele was people who needed to paint stuff. What if people stop needing paint? He looked around with Melony for a color that would fit nice. After a while they picked out this red that was impossible for them both to not look at.

He carried it by the handle along with them while they walked looking for a place to sit down and eat. After a while they came across this small place that Jamie remembered from his childhood. It was this place where you could order inside then go outside to eat the food. They both ordered simplistic meals, hamburgers and something to drink.

They were both silent as they continued scarfing down their food, fast food always felt better after a lot of energy had been used. As the both sat their attention was grabbed by the loud shrill of a woman behind them. Turning around Jamie's eyes grew wide as he rose from his seat accompanied with the sound of a tire's screech.

Finally getting out of school Damien shifted the contents of his backpack as he stepped through the slowly hollowing halls of the school. He kept to his own as he walked straight. The day was hard without Jamie around, it made him realize just how alone he was. But the day was over now so all he had to do was get out and he was home free. He kept looking down at his feet watching the laces smacking the ground with the plastic Aglet making a thud. He should tie them up but watching the laces was keeping his mind off simple matters. While he watched the tiles passing under his feet he stopped when he noticed a pair of stationary feet

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blocking his path. Looking up his plans of simply leaving were foiled in the worst of ways.

"Looks like your friend isn't around." Alan mocked with grim laugh and a crack of his neck.

The second Jamie saw that woman who had fallen in the street and that beat up car that was heading towards her without any halt, he could feel his body moving. Feet pressing against the pavement he knew even with his increase in speed it'd be a close call. He felt the woman and instantly picked her up and tossed her out of the way. He would have just carried her but as the impact of the fender on his legs shows, he wouldn't have saved her.

He felt his body press onto the hood of the car and slide his back into the windshield hearing it crack behind him. The driver pressed hard on his break causing Jamie to slide back forward landing on the pavement. It didn't really hurt so much as annoy him. While still laying on the ground he looked over at the girl, she was hurt but she'd be fine. Nothing to loose your mind over. He placed his hand on the hood of the car and pulled himself up. Looking through the cracked windshield he recognized the driver instantly. Or rather he noticed the ear buds hanging around the mans neck. Jamie's eyes grew furious as he started at the man sitting behind the glass.

"Small world, huh?"

Chapter 10: Education

Jamie placed the palm of his hands on the hood of the man's car, watching as the man slid himself further into his seat. Melony looked on in curiosity but she knew she'd never seen Jamie's eyes the way they were now, it was like they were filled with pure madness. Jamie's spread fingers began to curve in as paint chipped under his fingernails. He took his balled up fist off the hood and flashed the man a smile. He then lifted up the car's hood and looked for the engine block through the rust and dirt.

Placing his hands under the hood he reached in and grasped his hands around the engine block. Pulling up he watched the engine worm loose while the wires holding it in place snapped. Once the block was free he let it fall to the ground cracking the pavement with a thud. He closed the lid and smile at the man who sat motionless in his seat. Trailing his fingers along the rusted paint Jamie made his way to the driver side door. The man inside reached to the lock as the tumbler activated holding the doors from opening.

Jamie shook his head at the man while mouthing 'tsk-tsk-tsk.' He put his right hand on the top frame of the door. Pulling back the top crumbled while the rest of the door ripped off it's hinges. Letting his grip loose when his arm had stretched backwards the door was sent flying. Almost hitting a couple that didn't even attempt to dodge it as they sipped on their coffee. The man in the car began retreating into the passenger side door.

In the crowd of onlookers some just watched while others attempted to phone to the authorities. Jamie climbed in and grabbing the man by his collar he pulled him out of the car. He then pressed the man up against the rear door still holding his by his collar. Using his free hand he pulled on the white cord revealing Jamie's Ipod from the man's pocket. He held the Ipod in front of the man "Do you remember me?" Jamie questioned watching the man nod his head in reply.

"I could have died because of you!" Jamie shouted as his anger towards the man festered inside him. He started pushing harder as the glass of the window behind the man began to crack. The man said nothing as his fear increased looking into Jamie's eyes. "You're are such a waste of oxygen." Jamie couldn't explain what he was feeling. It was like he was standing next to himself. Like a movie he knew what was going to happen next, yet he was powerless to stop it. "That ends today."

Jamie let the Ipod drop to the ground as he raised his free arm up to the mans face. Placing his palm on the man's mouth he used his thumb and pointer finger to plug up his nose. For a few moments there was nothing, no actions or words. Then Jamie saw the man's eyes go wide as his legs kicked up and his arms brought themselves up to Jamie's hands to try to get free. As the seconds when on the flailing got more severe but Jamie just watched the man's eyes as they frantically searched for any form of salvation. A few people screamed for him to stop and a few more even tried to pry Jamie away. But Jamie didn't hear or feel anything. He just watched as the life in the eyes in front of him slowly slipped away. He could however feel the tears from the man rolling down his hand.

Then he was brought back to reality when he heard Melony calling out his name. He realized that the man's flailing had stopped entirely and his eyes were now still as his eyelids slowly closed over them. Letting his grip up he watched the man fall lifeless to the ground. Looking around Jamie saw all the eyes on him, they were all looking at him like he was a monster. What the hell did they know? Jamie looked back to the man ferocious.

"This... This was your fault!" Jamie shouted slightly shaken. "If you just left me alone you'd be fine. You idiot!" He continued to plea his case out as Melony looked on in sympathy.

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Elsewhere, fast yet professional footsteps could be heard through an empty hallway. That footsteps were that of the man titled Paladin. His long blonde hair hung over his back curving around the two-handed sword sheathed on his back. His clothing themed white with blue stitching with a patch on his right shoulder that simply said "Professor". His bright blue eyes were set ahead of him as his stride remained at the same pace. He reached a door that was decorated with a series of numbers. Swiping a key it opened to what appeared to be someone's room with a bed and other living arrangements.

"Keen, please follow me. You're needed." Paladin spoke firmly as the mess of blankets on the bed shuffled revealing a kid seeming to be around seventeen. Without a word Keen got up and walked over to Paladin who then turned around and began walking through the halls again. "Sector twenty-seven has received multiple reports of hostile activity. We aren't sure who it is. Just go there and report what you see, then engage. We are also unsure of this person's ability so call for back up if needed." Paladin explained as they both walked to the dead end of the hallway. "You'll be using Thorn to get there. Is this all understood?" Paladin addressed.

Keen nodded as they reached the end of the hall where they could only see one door now. Paladin knocked on it and after a second it slid open. The room was dark but when they stepped in they saw a mostly vacant room. However in the middle of the room there was a throne with a person sitting on top of it. He wore clothing that was reminiscent of what monks would wear. His hair was almost as blue as Paladin's eyes. The hair hung over his eyes so it was surprising that he could see them walking in at all. He sat with his head resting on his balled up fist as his elbow rested on the throne's arm.

"What do you need Paladin?" Thorn questioned calmly quickly shifting his gaze to Keen.

"I just need you to put Keen into sector twenty-seven." Paladin replied. There was a quick silence. Then Thorn raised his hand and beckoned for Keen to come to him. Keen nervously walked over and stood in front of Thorn. As Keen stood there Thorn pointed his finger at Keen and outstretching his arm he placed his finger on Keen's forehead. There was a quick flash of red and before he had time to think, Keen found himself looking at Jamie several feet away.

Standing for a moment Keen smiled. "No need for report." He said as he looked on at Jamie. Then he began his approach, walking at first he increased his step. Melony turned her head and noticed Keen running towards Jamie, she rose out of her chair and started running right away. "Damn it Jamie." She thought to herself. She made it to Jamie when Keen was still a few feet away. The two stood still and looked at each other.

"Why the hell is she here?" Keen said to himself as he pulled his phone out of his pocket. After pressing the needed digits in he heard Paladin pick up on the other end. "Core is here. Send back up, whatever is available." Keen spoke quickly afterward closing his phone and placing it into his pocket once more.

"Keen. I wonder how long you can hold me off. We both know how long it takes for him to send another group. Not to mention I already know your Virtue." Melony remarked towards Keen.

"I know your Virtue as well. Not to mention mine completely makes yours useless." Keen replied as he took a battle stance.

"I'm a lot different than I was then." Melony began a hastened stride towards Keen. She stopped herself inches away from Keen who retaliated by throwing a punch. Bringing her arm up Melony blocked the swinging fist and shot her right arm forward causing Keen to withdraw. Melony hopped ahead and twisted her body using the circular momentum she delivered a kick that was stopped short in the same fashion she stopped Keen's punch. Keen attempted another blow by Melony countered with her free foot.

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As Jamie looked on at the two fighting he realized she had been holding a lot back during his training. Him trying to help would only be a hinder to her at this point. Melony jumped back creating distance between her and Keen. After a second of silence she charged again and plowed a powerful fist at Keen. Seeing that blocking would cause injury he opted to jump back. Right as his foot hit the ground he jumped to his left where he was caught off guard in mid-jump by Melony's fist landing in his chest. He fell back onto the ground to look up at Melony as she stepped over him.

"Keen, that's a synonym for perceptive, correct? So you can perceive potential dangers. However you can only see them when they are set in motion. Otherwise how could you know of a danger that doesn't exist yet. Right?" Melony explained as she stood over the crumbled Keen.

"Where are you going with this?"

"It's your flaw. You can only see plans that are already in motion in the physical realm. But in my head, I can plan out as much as I want and you'll be none the wiser. Knowing this. I just play the pieces of my attack like they were separate as opposed to a whole."

"Please elaborate."

"You're just buying time, but whatever. When I rushed you as hard as I could I knew your Virtue would tell you to jump back. Then I knew your Virtue would tell you to jump either left or right to dodge my Virtue, most likely left as you favored your left hand for combat. Knowing that, I simply canceled my Virtue as soon as it started and caught you where I knew you'd be. And then it was check-"

"Mate" Keen said cutting her off. Melony's eyes grew worried as in an instant she saw nine other people appearing around her. They all varied in appearance. Glasses, skin tone, hair, clothing and even body language. However somewhere on their person was a badge that read 'Student'. Before any words could be exchanged one of them thrust what seemed to be a lance at her. Spinning herself she dodged the attack only to be greeted by the swing of a short sword which she evaded by bending backwards. Only a small bit of hair was cut from her bangs. The person with the short sword quickly shifted the sword's direction, knowing they did so Melony rolled forward out of the path of danger.

Turning around she could now clearly see all ten of them in one frame of her vision. One of them was helping Keen up as he dusted himself off, some girl with blonde hair that Melony couldn't recognize. "Just ten students? Has Scott been giving you trouble?" Melony mocked at the group in front of her.

They only stood silent. It was possible they were told not to release any information regarding Scott. Melony didn't care much but she knew Jamie would like some info, whether he'd admit it or not.

Paladin continued to walk through the various interconnecting hallways, he really hated days like this where he couldn't get a break. He came to another door which slid open at another swipe of his card. Walking in two large monitors could be seen displaying the world in some map format. "Stupor I need you to wipe the memory of anyone without a Virtue in sector twenty-seven for the last ten minutes. Choke I need you to block the vision of anyone without a Virtue in the same sector so they cannot see anyone with a Virtue" Paladin commanded to the figures in front of the monitors.

"It shall be done." Both figures called out simultaneously. Paladin nodded and exited the room. The door closing behind him he stood there looking at the white wall across from him. "I wonder, will you show up?" Paladin questioned to himself.

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"What does 'The School' Want here anyways?" Melony asked after none of the group replied to her last question.

"We received reports of violence, which I believe to be from the boy over there." Keen spoke as he pointed over to Jamie. Jamie looked around and noticed that everyone seemed to be going on like nothing was happening now. Just a few minutes ago there was a crowd of people watching the confrontation.

"Okay so why just one student? I thought the higher ups responded to emergency calls."

"The reports weren't too severe. We certainly didn't expect you to be here." Keen exclaimed. He spoke with more confidence now that his backup had arrived, he believed the fight would be easier now. Laying on the ground Jamie could suddenly feel a great deal of pain in his forehead. He turned his head to Melony and could see a vague shadow standing behind her.

"Melony Zain, what in the world are you doing here?" The figure behind her inquired.

Slightly startled Melony quickly turned to see the figure that stood behind her. She didn't hear or feel his presences there at all. "Reaper? I could easily ask the same thing!" She quickly remarked. Reaper simply turned his head to Jamie who was now sitting on the ground.

"You may see me Lannon." Reaper spoke as he peered over at Jamie. When Jamie heard him speak he could see his focus returning. He looked at Reaper a few feet away. His head was hidden in a jet black armored helmet. It seemed more robotic than metal and where his eyes would be were two red horizontal lines. The clothing he wore was also the same color, it seemed to have thin bits of padding where you would expect there to be. His left shoulder was draped in short red shoulder cape. Once his vision cleared up Jamie could also see two other figures to the left and right of Reaper. They wore attire similar to Reaper but without the stripes on the helmet or the shoulder capes.

"Seriously, why are you here?" Melony questioned trying to keep her eyes on both Reaper's ground and the students.

"I was asked to keep a close eye on Scott's boy." Reaper replied looking past Melony at the group from The School. "But I see I wasn't needed. You could wipe them all out in one go, right Core?" Reaper questioned Melony. He watched her eyes quickly twitch to Jamie and then back to him as she reached up and grasped her arm. "Ah, I see." Reaper said walking forward past Melony while his two guards followed him. "How interesting, representatives from two of the three main groups are here. All were missing is 'Stellar'."

"Yo!" The voice boomed from where all the tables of the restaurant were set up. A man with short dark red hair was holding up his cup of coffee. He had a flashy wrist watch and sunglasses on. His clothing seemed to belong to any average person aside from the fact his jeans were also red, which complimented the blue tee-shirt in a weird way. At the same table sat a woman with black curly hair that went down a little past her shoulders. One of the strands of hair was dyed green and was the only hair that hung in her face. She wore a blue dress that had sunflower patterns printed all over it. "Solus and Terra at your service!" Solus spoke with a eerie grin as he lowered his coffee.

"Unprecedented. Kaliber, The School and Stellar all in the same place, gives me that warm feeling inside" Reaper spoke to no one in particular. Jamie was working hard on memorizing all the names he had heard. Looking around he attached these names to faces. Then he remembered hearing Keen and Reaper calling Melony 'Core'. Did they all have cover names? Like most superheros he had read about.

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"Jamie whatever happens you need to stay completely still." Melony spoke as she clenched her fist. She counted fifteen total fighters. She had information on who had what Virtues. There were some that she knew she had no chance against so if worst came to worst she make temporary allies. Melony looked at some kid from the collection of Students who appeared agitated. Without warning he broke the group and charged at Reaper. Melony recognized it was the one who attacked her with the lance.

"Oh?" Reaper simply asked as he watched the young student charging at him. The white lance seemed to materialize of thin air. The figure to the right of Reaper leaped forward intercepting the Student. Reaper's guard put his hand out and placed it on the forearm of the Student. Instantly as Reaper's guard did this the Student dropped dead to the ground only inches away from Reaper. "Thank you Hug." Reaper said to the guard who nodded in reply.

Melony looked on in amazement. She knew Reaper was on a different level but with one touch his guard killed a Student. What was Reaper's other guard capable of. Reaper stood confident with his arms behind his back as Hug returned to the right side of Reaper. The tension in the air hung thick as everyone continued to scan the others. Melony didn't know the abilities of the other Students but they shouldn't be too much of a threat. Yet if given the time they could call in greater foes. Reaper and his two men could easily dispatch and attacker and might pose the greatest threat. Then there was the two sitting at the table. Melony had heard stories about Stellar but never about the actual members. But she knew that 'Solus' was a play on solar, so he represented the sun. And Terra was a play on earth. So they weren't just some lackeys they must be high ranking members. But she still had no idea what their capabilities were, or their Virtues for that matter.

One of the Students reached in his pocket and pulled out a cell phone, he dialed it and put it to his ear. As he did vines began sprouting out from the buttons and the mouth piece until the phone completely cracked open. "We don't need any of that now dear." Spoke Terra as she took another sip of her coffee while Solus let out a quaint laugh.

"Reaper is priority." Keen said to the other Students behind him. Then about three different Students charged out. One of them was the guy with the short sword that also attempted to attack Melony. As the Students got closer Hug once again stepped forward but felt Reaper's hand on his chest. With a nod Hug and the other guard stepped a few feet backwards.

The guy with the short sword got to Reaper before the others and swung the sword at him. Without stepping out of place Reaper brought his hand up and caught the blade. With a twist of his wrist the blade snapped in half, with the broken piece of blade in hand Reaper folded his arm just a bit and swung back placing the shattered blade in the Students neck. The Student fell to the ground clutching his wound. One of the other Students charging at Reaper hand began to glow bright yellow. The Student swung his fist and Reaper caught him by the wrist nearly an inch from his face.

"This glow. When you charged it makes your punches or kicks more powerful right? That could have been useful if you practiced your approached more." Reaper remarked as he lifted the Student up by his wrist to see the other Student covered in a crystal like substance closing in on him. In one fluid motion Reaper delivered a swift punch into the Student he was lifting up chest's. Then tossing that Student aside Reaper brought his foot up into the chin of the charging Student completely destroying the crystal structure. Both Students fell to the ground without must resistance. "Melony you should come at me. I'd really like to fight you." Reaper said cheerfully as if he hadn't just killed three people without any effort or his Virtue.

"I'll have to pass." Melony replied looking at the girl who was sitting at the table. Those vines must have belonged to her. She didn't even move when they grew though so she could do it without any requirements. How scary. Not to mention Solus's power was still in the dark.

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"Everyone forget Reaper." Keen spoke as he looked over at Jamie who sat still in a daze. "Just kill him." Keen finished by pointing at Jamie. Melony readied herself, Reaper stood still and the two at the table were only paying attention to their coffees. The Students began their charge but were stopped by the sound of a nearby voice.

"Hey Jamie!" Shout Barley as he stepped out of his truck after turning it off. Waking forward he said excuse me to the Students as he stepped through the group of them. All eyes were on Barley as his courage carried him through the the group and up to Jamie. "I was just on my way to bring you the homework you missed, I got yours too Melony so don't get to excited." Barley joked as he reached into a black brief case he was holding. He preceded to pull out a few sheets of paper which he handed to the still confused Jamie and Melony. They took it and scanned it quickly then looked back at Barley."

"Thanks." Jamie said after his time of silence.

"No problem. I expect you in school tomorrow though." Barley said with a smile. He looked around at all the people who were standing in the streets. "What's going on here anyways?"

It seemed like no one wanted to talk or say anything. Jamie couldn't figure out what was going on. "We have no choice, fall back." Keen said to his remaining group. Stepping back they began walking away leaving their dead behind. Melony looked on as the group of Students retreated.

"Is the fun over?" Barley questioned seemingly arrogant to the serious nature of the moment.

"We'll be taking our leave as well." Reaper stated as his group too turned and made their way from the situation. After they had gotten pretty far away Jamie watched as they completely vanished from his sight.

"That sucks." Barley complained. "I guess I'll just go home then, sorry to ruin your fun kids." He retorted as he walked to his truck and got back in. Turning the key he felt the engine start as he drove off. Melony reached down and helped Jamie to his feet. They both looked at each other unsure of what to say to ease the tension they both felt. Instead they walked over to where they were sitting before and began to pick up their things.

Once Jamie had gotten his things he stood up and turned around to come face to face with Terra. "That man, Reaper was it? He called you Lannon, right?" Terra probed to the shocked Jamie.

"Yes." Was all Jamie could muster out in reply.

"So you're Scott's kin then?"

"Yes ma'am. May I ask why you want to know?"

"No you can't. I was just wondering anyways ways." Terra talked with a soft face, the kind that you could loose track of time looking at. She lifted her hand up and Jamie could see a dark red seed pushing out of her skin. "Eat this." She said to Jamie outstretching her hand to his face.

"You're really going to give him that?" Solus scoffed watching Terra and Jamie's exchange. "Do you think he can even handle it?"

"I remember Mars asking me the same question back when I gave one of these to you." Terra echoed with a smirk. Jamie reluctantly reached over and picked up the seed. He put it up to his eye and twisted it around to look at it as the sun glowed through the thin skin.

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"What is it?" Jamie quizzed still examining it.

"That dear, is my Hellion seed."

Jamie hesitated as he brought it to his mouth. 'It couldn't be too dangerous if one of her allies has eaten it.' He thought to himself. Opening his mouth he placed the seed on his tongue and swallowed it. He felt it running down his throat but lost the feeling of it after it passed his chest.

"What does it do?" Jamie grilled putting his hand on his stomach.

"That's the fun part. But, you'll know when it grows." She turned around and gave a quick glance to Solus who with a sigh started walking away. "Adios." Terra called out waving her hand as she and Solus walked away. Jamie observed the sun going down as it painted the sunset over the horizon.

"Let's go home too Melony." He said turning to her. He had questions, but they can wait.

Chapter 11: Paint

The walk was long and filled with silence. Neither one of them wanted to be the one to break it. The day had filled Jamie up with so many questions he didn't know where to start. Or if starting at all was a good idea. Melony just didn't know what to say to him, she felt as though she owed him an explanation but would that really be enough? As the day ended and night began to creep up on them even the sound of their shoes on the sidewalk was different.

Jamie couldn't help but remember the people who showed up only an hour ago. The talents he saw were amazing, could he ever even compete with that? Even Melony. Reaper said Melony could have taken care of that whole group in one shot. What kind of Virtue is she hiding? He knew what he wanted to say but his lips wouldn't move. He knew what he wanted to do but his body just kept walking. Maybe he was getting in over his head, hiding was the best option. Just a thought.

After a while they arrived at Jamie's house. The walk home seemed like it took longer than when they left that morning, but that's how it always was. Stepping in, Melony headed straight to the kitchen and turned the faucet on to clean her face. Jamie walked to the living room and set the paint can down on the floor next to him. Letting the warm water run onto her palms and through the cracks of her spread fingers, Melony began letting herself lose track of time. Jamie walked into the kitchen and opened up a drawer by the sink. Reaching in he pulled out an old frayed paint brush. He looked up at Melony who was still standing, eyes fixated on the flowing water.

"Are you okay? Did you get hurt at all?" Jamie sympathetically questioned. She really went to bat for him today, with all the questions he had the words 'thank you' somehow got lost.

"I'm fine." She replied softly, pulling her hands up to her face washing signs of dirt away. She left the water running for Jamie as she turned around and made her way to the living room. Jamie rested the brush under the water, watching the steam rise up from the sink. After it looked clean Jamie turned the faucet off and ran paper towels along the bristles of the paint brush. Getting back to the paint can Jamie bent over and placed his finger on the rim. Pushing in, the metal dented popping the lid up and off the can.

Jamie once again vanished into the hall and up the stairs where Melony could hear several thuds as Jamie shuffled through his closet. Jamie descended the stairs with a long rug he used to have on his room's floor until he got his newer one. He placed the carpet by the living room wall so any dripping paint would land on it instead of the floor.

"Don't you need primer?" Melony pried as she sat on the couch watching Jamie.

"The can says it's both." Jamie replied, looking at the side of the can quickly to double check in case he had read wrong. After reassuring himself he dipped the brush into the can shallowly. Bringing it back out he watched a small trickle of paint from the middle of the brush. He kept it hanging over the can for a moment, letting whatever loose paint drip free. He then carried the brush over to the wall and moved it up and down in even strokes. He had watched his father do it plenty of times to have a general idea of how to do it right. He continued to watch his hand moving up and down on the wall and between the wall and the paint can. Slowly the white of the wall was fading into the red color he and Melony had picked out. She sat quietly admiring Jamie as he worked diligently. It had been about forty-five minutes since Jamie started and half the wall was painted now.

"I envy paint." Melony stated.

"How so?" Jamie humored Melony's break of silence. Giving her something to talk about might ease the tension. With any luck.

"It's just so easy to start over with. If it gets chipped or if it spreads unevenly or has any imperfection. You can just paint over it and start over. Like the imperfection never even existed. That wall just a few days ago wasn't even there. But here we are now watching it become better than it was before."

"But humans can't paint over their past no matter what, right?"

"Sometimes I just wish I could put a fresh coat of paint over myself. Then I wouldn't have to worry about my past catching up with me. I would be able to start new. New name and new look, just a new person completely

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free of judgment... or flaws."

"I don't wish that all."

"Why?" Melony shyly questioned as she balled her fist into her open hand on her lap.

"Because I never would have met you." Jamie said as he continued on the wall. Melony's jaw dropped slightly, feeling her cheeks tingle. "And in any case I wouldn't worry about flaws." Jamie ran the brush on the wall for the final time. Stepping back he admired the wall's rich color as it gleamed against the lights in the room. "From where I'm standing. You have a perfect coat." He turned around to look at Melony, who was deeply blushing.

"I really..."

"What?"

"I really do love you Jamie. I know I'm silly at times and I joke a lot but I do love you."

Jamie was admittedly shocked she'd come out and said something like that to him. "I know that." He said, walking over and sitting next to her on the couch. Maybe it wasn't so bad. Him and her being together. He put his arms around her as she buried her head into his chest just to hide her face. Exhausted from previous events, Jamie fell backwards letting his head hit the arm rest. Melony rested her head on his chest and curled her legs to fit on the couch. The last thing Jamie remembered was wondering how after such a long day, Melony's hair still smelled like fruit.

Jamie awoke to the heat of the sun pressing on his face through the only window still left in the living room. Carefully Jamie reached for the remote and flicked the TV on, instantly muting it so he didn't wake Melony. He growled as he saw the clock on the news station saying 'five twenty-three'. Setting the remote down he gently shook Melony and waited for her eyes to open. Her eyelids pried open and looked around for a moment. Then she looked up at Jamie and once she realized where she was her blushing returned.

"I'm going to go get ready for school!" Melony shouted as she jumped off the couch and started running up stairs. Jamie laughed as he sat up on the couch and watched the news report on five bodies found laying in the street. Jamie turned the TV back off, simply not wanting to hear about it. He too walked up stairs and turned into his room. All he could hear was the sound of the shower running and the vague chirps of birds outside. He pulled out a random pair of jeans and another red tee-shirt, along with fresh underwear and socks. He waited and listened on his bed until he heard the sound of the shower finally stopping. After another few minutes passed the door open and Melony walked out already dressed and drying her hair. "All yours." She said through Jamie's door as she made her way downstairs. Jamie walked into the bathroom, started the shower, undressed and then stepped in. He tried to make the shower as quick as possible, he figured Melony had already used up most of the hot water.

Finally finishing he stepped out, dried off, and dressed himself. He quickly brushed his teeth and rinsed his mouth out. Stepping out he ran the towel over his head to dry his hair, which never took very long. Stepping through the house he made his way to the kitchen where Melony handed him some waffles. She didn't really have time to make anything like she wanted.

They were both mildly bewildered that they completely forgot to do the homework Barley had handed them but really, who could blame them? It's not like Jamie ever did his anyways. Yet he always received the top marks in his class. Any test given too him he would flawlessly pass without any formal study or knowledge on the subject. His dad was the same way, endlessly brilliant. Jamie finished his food and placed the dishes away. Together Jamie and Melony stepped out the front door and began making their way to school.

"Most of the people I've met that had Virtues are rather... off." Jamie spoke refusing to let the whole walk be awkward.

"With above human abilities you're bound to get overly eccentric people. It's just how we are. How we distinguish ourselves from those without Virtues." Melony replied keep her eyes forward. She was so happy inside. But afraid to show even a drop of it.

"You don't seem that off thought."

"I'm no different." Melony kept her eyes on the ground now, wondering if Jamie would hate her if he knew what she was.

"Back then, Reaper was it?" Jamie looked to Melony who simply nodded. "He said that if you wanted to, you could have wiped them all out in one go. Is that true?"

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"Yes"

"That's incredible. So you're as powerful as my dad!" Jamie shouted in excitement.

"No, not even close." Melony said stopping in her tracks. "I not dare even challenge the likeness of your dad."

"But..."

"There are a few people in this world whose very name is a cause for fear. Your dad is one. You met another one yesterday. Reaper."

"Is he really that powerful?"

"He only used physical means to wipe the floor with three people in a matter of seconds."

Jamie looked to the ground and thought for a moment. He seen a lot of people he'd never noticed before.

"These three groups. If i'm part of this now can you please explain them to me?"

"It's only fair. First and most important there is 'The School'. It's this huge complex that holds most of the power. They exist to hand out missions if you will, like having a Virtue was a means of profit. They have ranks but the higher ups all seem pretty shady. Student, substitute-teacher, teacher, professor and principal. And then there are some specific titles. But they ranked by power and ability. Everyone at one point or another will have made contact with 'The School'."

Jamie watched as she explained. He remembered that yesterday Melony mentioned all those kids were Students. "So if you were in 'The School' what rank would you be?"

"Probably a Teacher." Melony spoke as if it really wasn't an accomplishment to her.

"You really are amazing."

"Kaliber." Melony harsh spoke barging right in to the next explanation. She noticed they were still this whole time and decided to start walking again, not wanting to be late for school. "Kaliber was started up by Reaper himself. From what I hear Reaper reached the level of Professor in 'The School' and left after a dispute. He then formed Kaliber. I'm not sure why. Some speculate that it's because he wanted a position of power. But nonetheless it has grown pretty big in number of followers." She looked over to Jamie making sure he was taking the information in instead of just ignoring it. "Okay, Stellar. Stellar is rather new. It's a group whose highest ranking members are based around our solar system and their powers are based off the gods their respective planets are named after. The rest of the group are just called Stars. I wish I knew more to tell you about them but I don't."

Jamie watched tentatively through the explanation, surprised that this was all going on without him knowing a thing until recently. How could all this be kept a secret. "That's pretty scary." Is all he found himself able to say. After awhile of thinking it over they reached their school. Everything seemed unimpressive now. After all Jamie had seen recently, everything else looked like it lost it's color, it's meaning. Maybe Melony was right, another coat of paint would do wonders.

The walked silently and separated to their individual lockers without a word to each other. Eventually he sat down in his seat in homeroom and watched Melony walk in a minute later. Barley then walked in and started reading over the seating charts checking to see who was absent. Jamie looked around as Melony sat next to him. He didn't see Damien anywhere, he was never the type not to be in school. He would always say it was easier to sleep in school. Tardy perhaps.

The day carried on mostly as normal other then how much more dreadful it was to Jamie now. Was this really his life before? Finally lunch time arrived and Jamie walked into the noise pollution that was the lunch room and began heading towards his seat.

"Jamie!" He turned around hearing his name to see Damien waving his arm in the air. Jamie looked on in relief until seeing the his other arm was in a medical sling. He rushed over to Damien and looked down at the arm.

"What happened?!" Jamie shouted, which shrouded by the surrounding noise still seemed like just a whisper. Damien didn't answer he just looked at Jamie smiling.

"I missed you. You weren't here." Damien replied still wearing his smile. From behind him Jamie could hear the faint laugh of none other then Alan. That smug laugh that he would throw out whether something was really funny or not. Jamie quickly pivoted and glared at Alan who must have felt the gaze because he too turned around to look at Jamie. Alan must have seen Damien behind Jamie, there's no way that arrogant face would show for any other reason.

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Jamie clenched his fist and paced his way towards Alan as Melony just started entering the lunch room. She looked around quickly then to Jamie rushing towards Alan.

"Jamie wait!" She screamed as loud as she could attempting to be heard over the noise. "Why is he here?" She muttered out as her head turned to the principal at the lunch line. Approaching Alan, Jamie pulled his fist out and swung it forward. Throwing the punch Jamie was astonished when he saw Alan block it like it was nothing. Without any reaction time Jamie saw Alan's fist push into his face sending him to the floor.

It hurt. It actually hurt? "I will not allow fighting on school grounds Mr. Lannon." Barley said as he loomed over Jamie on the ground.

Jamie's eyes glared in anger as the other students looked on like they just witnessed a car accident. "Forget this place!" Jamie cried out in the now silent room. "I'm easily the top student in every conceivable way! Everyone! Even the teachers are morons. Half the time their wrong!" Jamie brought himself up to his feet keeping his eyes on Barley. "Why should I even be here? It's pointless right? I already know everything your stupid school can teach me."

"Mind your tongue Lannon." Barely replied looking on at the enraged Jamie.

"What are you doing Jamie." Melony said under her breath hoping things wouldn't escalate any further.

"Why, what could a worthless piece of sh-"

"What would your father think?" Barley spoke cutting Jamie off.

"Oh no." Melony said pushing Damien back a little. "Please keep your distance." All she heard next was the shrill cry of pure rage from Jamie. She watched helpless as Jamie threw everything he had into his punch. A thud echoed throughout the lunch room as Barley stood still as he held Jamie's fist in his palm.

"I will not be made a fool of in my own school." Barley lashed out at Jamie who stood still stunned. After a moment of hesitation Melony charged through the crowd and into the small opening that the students had made around Barley and Jamie. She then somersaulted onto her hands and used her arms to catapult her into the air above Barley's head. "Maybe a lesson is in order for you two." He spoke reaching up as Melony swung her leg down at Barley's head. He grabbed her ankle as simply as he grabbed Jamie's fist. With both of them in his hands he looked calmly up at Melony who returned his gaze. "Class is in session."

Chapter 12: Failure

Barley pushed the arm holding Melony up and let cause making her spin and catch herself on the ground. He pushed the other arm holding Jamie forward making him stumble back. Barley looked over at the clock in the corner of the room while Jamie and Melony finalized their footing.

"Everyone But Jamie Lannon and Melony Zain Please go to your classes early." Barley chatted at the students that had been surrounding them up until this point. For a moment no one made a noise or moved. They all continued to look blankly at Barley. "My, my. Detention is going to be awful crowded today." He continued jesting as he watched the students raise up with mumbles scattered about. Melony, Jamie and Barley watched as the room slowly emptied. All that was left standing there was Damien. "You too." Damien turned around and took one last glance at Jamie then he left the room large wooden doors closing behind him.

Melony could feel herself shaking as she looked on at Barley. He acted so carefree. Did he really intend to fight them? She remembered telling Jamie about those certain people whose name alone could strike fear. Why didn't she just mention Barley then, there's no way Jamie could understand what this man could do. All Jamie could think about was how Alan was able to not only stop him but seamlessly counter-attack.

Barley walked over to the lunch room doors with a look of amusement on his face the whole while. Reaching up he secured two metal bracers on the top of the lunch room doors locking them shut. He then continued to step into the corner near the doors. Stepping on a chair he reached to the security camera that hung on the ceiling. Pulling gently he heard the little cord pop out of it's socket shutting off it's feed to the security center. He jumped off the chair landing on the tiles with a slight thunk.

"Jamie, I'm going to need you to focus and do your very best against this guy." Melony choked out through her stuttering and shaking. Jamie looked over at her, he could see she was visibly worried.

"What the hell is with you?" Jamie prodded

"Language." Barley remarked still at the corner of the room dusting his pants off.

"This guy, he's a challenge even for your dad." Melony bellowed out hearing herself echo through the almost completely empty room.

"I'm flattered, but I'm nothing compared to Scott." Barley interjected once again as he reached to his wrist taking off his watch and placing it on the table beside him. You could even hear the golden dial of the watch scrapping against the surface of the table as he set it down.

"Well what's his Virtue then?" Jamie questioned with haste as he watched Barley continuing his slow pace towards the two.

"There is no Virtue." Melony calmly stated.

"What the hell does that mean?"

"It means that he c-"

"Melony!" Barley shouted interrupting the conversation. Melony and Jamie both turned their attention back to Barley whose face was now stained with anger. "I will not tolerate sharing answers in class!" He further projected. He then took a deep breath and closed his eye. Upon opening them he seemed calmly confident

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again. "Cheating isn't fair. Right?" He rhetorically questioned.

Melony's face became stern. He really does plan to fight. She stepped back and scanned the room looking for possible advantages and tools. It will be hard when Jamie had no idea just why he was so scary.

"I'm coming now." Barley echoed out catching Melony off guard. She turned her head to see Barley was now only steps away from her. She let a -tsk- out as she swung her left arm for a hit that was blocked by Barley. She followed up with her right arm which was as expected caught by Barley again. She could feel he had a firm grasp on her hands. She quickly went over several options of further attacks in her head then she remembered Jamie only a few feet away.

"Jamie, what the hell are you doing?" She grilled through her teeth. Hearing her plea Jamie brought himself to attention. It didn't matter how scary this guy was, He's never failed a class in his life. Seeing that Melony had been able to preoccupy both of Barley's hands Jamie began his charge. Barley looked to the side as Jamie's footsteps rung in his ears. He swayed pulling Melony along with him until he was facing Jamie. Lifting his leg up Barley kicked Melony's chest letting his grip go he watched her fly to Jamie. Seeing her coming at him Jamie put his hands up catching her sliding back in the process.

"Thanks." Melony softly said feeling herself pressing into Jamie's chest. Jamie said nothing as started dropping Melony, he quickly bent down and cupped his hands under Melony's foot. "Jamie?" She questioned feeling his hands on the sole of her shoes. Her words didn't get to him, he was too busy thinking about what he had done in the dodge ball match a few days ago. Lucky for him Barley hadn't taken over that class at that point. Straightening his back he began lifting his arms surprised to find it didn't take much effort. Had his strength returned?

Melony felt her knees starting to buckle under her as Jamie was lifting her, it only took her a moment but she could see what Jamie was doing. She waited for just an instant until she felt Jamie reaching the apex of his lift. When she felt it she extended her legs lifting her out of his hands. She felt herself gliding in the the air towards Barley. Seeing Melony and Jamie pulling this off Barley kept his eyes on Melony until he realized their most likely plan of attack.

Looking down he sure enough saw Jamie charging at him. He was impressed but not much. The attacking from above and below formation is one of the more usual ones when it's two against one. He worked it out quickly in his head. At this rate Jamie would get to him before Melony did. Barley opened his palm in front of him as he prepared for Jamie's punch. His eyes grew surprised as he heard the squeak of the rubber on Jamie's shoe caused by Jamie sharply turning right. Barley watched as Jamie ran away. Did he really intend to leave his ally to fight alone? As the word 'ally' ran through his mind he quickly remembered Melony who was swinging her leg down at him now.

Looking up he quickly brought both hands up focusing them on Melony's ankle. It took more effort to stop her kick then he had planned thanks to him blocking it later from thinking about Jamie. That must have been their plan the whole time he thought to himself. He however was unaware that Jamie had his sights set elsewhere. Barley felt Melony shifting her weight as he second leg came down for another attempted kick. During that Barley heard a slight grunt from Jamie's direction. Turning his gaze towards him he saw Jamie grab a lunchroom chair and spin his body. Letting go Jamie threw the chair towards Barley who now felt only shock.

Without any other counter-attack options left Barley jumped back letting go of Melony's legs. He watched as he retreated backwards. He was speechless when he saw that Melony wasn't twisting her weight to try another kick. He watched as her leg came down on the chair that had just got to her. The kick virtually stopped its momentum. With her leg between the seat and the back rest of the chair Melony kicked forward as hard as she could. This changed the chair's direction sending it at Barley who was still mid-air from his retreat. He only

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had time to but his guard up as the chair crashed into him. Feeling his foot touch down Barley attempt to stop but the unexpected momentum of the chair added to his own was too much.

It wasn't long before Barley could feel his back slamming onto the wall and the chair press onto his chest. He arched his back in pain and let the chair fall to the floor where it bounced once and then rested. Melony as she was so talented in twisted turned over landing feet first on the floor.

"I have to say I am genuinely shocked. Though I should expect something like this from two grade A students. Not to mention the son of Scott." Barley reached up to the buttons on his suit and started unlatching them. "So I suppose you two don't mind if I stop playing around." Melony stepped back, she hated when people she was fighting revealed they were holding back. That meant her approach, her tactics, everything had to be altered to scale. "You can consider our last engagement studying." He finished the buttons and slid his arms through the sleeves and tossed the jacket to the side. "This is the real test."

Melony could feel her body begin to tremble, she knew he was just playing around but she didn't think he'd decide to actually fight. This man, his name struck fear for a unique reason then the others. She could feel the urge to retreat as her legs started backing away. Just then she felt a hand firmly placed on her shoulder, even though she could clearly see Barley she was still startled. She turned around to see Jamie smiling. How could he be smiling?

Melony and Jamie both watched Barley charge right at them. Just the act of going on the offensive showed that he planned to stop fooling around. Melony stepped up, just Jamie's smile seemed to make herself feel better. Barley swung his left arm towards her and as she went to block he halted the attack instead swiftly crossing her left cheek with his right fist. The impact alone lifted her off her feet. Barley took no note of this, all he saw was Melony was out of the way and Jamie was next.

Jamie opted to attack first attempting to land a punch which was stopped by Barley's palm. Barley quickly kicked Jamie's leg causing him to hunch a bit only reeling back feeling Barley's knee on his nose and mouth. He could already taste the blood in his mouth. As he started stepping back Barley took a hold of the collar of his shirt and pulled him back towards him. Melony quickly rose too her feet seeing the assault on Jamie. She grabbed the arm that was holding Jamie's collar, Barley turned to see the blood trickling down Melony's face. He looked into her eyes and all he could see was blind anger.

"Yes that's it! Show your true colors!" Barley excitedly called out as he started pulling Jamie in further. Jamie felt himself being dragged in and once he could see Barley's face again he whipped his head forward. He could feel the meeting of Barley's and his skull as their foreheads met. Barley fell backwards as Jamie began falling forward but was caught by Melony.

"He's a scary guy, huh?" Jamie said focusing on Melony as Barley dragged himself to his feet. "But in any case it's not like he'll kill us in cold blood. That'd be hard to explain to 'The school'." Barley listened to Jamie as he finally rested with both feet firmly on the ground.

"You said 'school' weird. Why is that?" Barley questioned noticing the inflection in Jamie's voice.

"That camera, I'm sure it doesn't go to this school's video feed. Rather 'The school'."

"Sure, but that doesn't matter I disconnected it remember?"

"I reconnected."

Barley felt a shiver run through his body at Jamie's reveal. "H... How!"

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"Back then." Barley thought back to when Jamie ran to the side and got distracted by Melony. He ran through it in his head, after Jamie threw the chair he didn't focus on him at all. Only the chair and Melony. He couldn't feel anything after that. Next thing he knew he was sprinting towards Jamie, he just wanted to hit him. Jamie put his hand on Melony and pushed her aside while that arm was stretched out he pounded down on a table breaking the corner off. Taking it firmly in his hand he pushed forward imbedding it into Barley's chest halting his advance. Jamie stood still as he watched the white shirt staining red, as he felt the crimson running along his hands.

She could only help to look on as Barley and Jamie stood still. The light shinning in for the windows. She could swear for just a moment in Jamie's place, it was Scott. How did Scott get here so quickly? The clouds cast over the glare of the sun darkening the room. Her heart stopped as she saw Jamie with the same look of determination as his father always had. He stopped him, he stopped one of these fearsome men!

"Jamie you won!" Melony cried out at the site of Barley's halted advancement.

"Won?" Barley quietly questioned stunning both Jamie and Melony. "You've won? I don't care about what 'The school' sees. Are you joking? My name makes that whole building quiver at once!" Reaching out Barley grabbed hold of the top of Jamie's head. Pushing his arm out he felt the piece of the table sliding out of his chest and once it had exited he pushed down with all his might. The side of Jamie's face crashed down into the tiles shattering them. Gripping onto his hair Barley brought Jamie's head up only to push it back down. He continued this not saying a word. Jamie struggled up it was useless, every time he felt himself loose he would just be pushed back down again. Small pools of Jamie's blood began forming around the small hole the impact was putting into the ground.

"That's enough!" Melony exclaimed as she started rushing to stop Barley. His head snapped towards her as he lurched forward landing his shoulder into her stomach. He ran with her like that for a few feet then stopped abruptly sending her to ping against the wooden doors. She felt the metal handles you would push to leave rooting into her spine. She fell to the ground paralyzed, the force must have damaged her spine enough that it wasn't reacting.

She watched as Jamie ran up to Barley from behind. Looking in the metal of the handles Barley faintly saw this advance. He balled up his fingers and swung backwards landing another hit in Jamie's face which was now covered in his own gore. While Jamie was still spinning from the hit Barley landed a bunch in the small of his back. He then ran in front of him and landed a barrage of blows to his face, chest and arms.

Jamie fell to the ground visibly exhausted as Barley walked over and picked up one of the steel frame lunch room chairs. He motioned across Jamie's face and caught him again swinging in the opposite direction. Dropping the chair Barley grabbed Jamie's arm and twisted it so Barley was now behind Jamie holding his coiled arm. Jamie felt the pressure on his bones and couldn't help but to let out a scream.

"Melony please! Use your Virtue!" He begged feeling slightly more pressure on his arm.

"I can't." Melony managed to mutter as she laid still on the ground still unable to help.

"I don't care what it is! Just use it!" More pressure.

"I'm telling you I can't!"

"Melony for god's sake please!" More pressure

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"I want to! I just can't" Listening to them Barley couldn't help but snicker as he pulled Jamie's arm back ever so slightly.

"Melony!" Jamie screamed out. Then he felt it. Something in his arm popped. At the time he couldn't tell where it was but something had just broken. Barley noticed it too when Jamie's arm contorted in an unusual fashion. It the visual cue wasn't enough. The seemingly endless wail Jamie let out was more than enough to know something had gone wrong.

Barley let go as Jamie fell to the floor, his arm fell almost as if it had nothing in it, just bones. Melony's eyes had welled up being forced to watch this, she wanted to throw up and if her body was responding she probably would have. He couldn't scream anymore. His throat felt dry, he could barely see past the blood dripping out of his several lacerations. He just laid there looking at the wall across from him. He wanted to see Melony but he didn't want her to see him, not like this at least. Barley just stood there looking down at Jamie as he remained motionless. Barley looked up at the camera and noticed the cord still detached from the camera. A bluff? He thought to himself. "How childish." Barley turned and stepped over Jamie's body.

"You're both gifted so lucky for you two, you'll heal. I'll be making your leave from school official Jamie." Barley spoke and stopped in his tracks. Turning around he bent over and got to Jamie's ear. "She doesn't love you the way you think she does Jamie." He said and rose back up to a standing position. "Clean up and leave." He said unlocking the doors and opening them and walking out letting them swing closed again behind him. Melony and Jamie continued to lay there without a word to each other. They had as long as they needed, the day was over now and most likely other students had left the building.

She doesn't love me I think she does? What the hell does the mean? Jamie brainstormed to himself. All he could do was think. Moving hurt too much or agitated the condition of his arm.

"Jamie, what did he say?" Melony questioned looking at Jamie's turned head.

"He told me not to mess with him, that's all."

Melony hesitated to say that she didn't believe him, that she knew he was lying. "I'm so sorry. I tried my best, I didn't think he'd loose it like that."

"Well he did. So what does it matter now."

"I can't use my Virtue around that gu-"

"I don't care." Jamie coldly prevented her from speaking. He could almost feel the cuts on his face closing up. The blood however remained on his face and in his hair. He could feel his arm attempting to recover but he knew it was struggling to do so. Melony could feel tears running down her face, she'd been crying so much lately. She hated crying.

"You where stunning Jamie." She pleaded. Hoping to somehow reassure herself that he wasn't mad at her, just the situation.

"How so? Every person i've come across so far has been able to handle me without an problem. Even when he said he'd stop playing around, he was still playing around."

"No he wasn-"

"Don't patronize me! You saw it too. Even you could beat me while you were still holding back so much! I can't do anything." Melony couldn't even think of a reply. She could feel the responds in her in her legs and arms coming back to her, but it didn't mean much to her now. Creeping up to her feet she stepped over to the

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other side of Jamie. She watched as his arm twisted itself, locked the bones in place and continued to solidify.

"So what's his Virtue anyways." Jamie questioned with Melony now in his sights.

"The reason he should be feared is unlike any other." Melony retorted continuing to watch his arm heal.

"Superhuman strength right? All my punches he blocked with out much effort."

"No. He neutralizes any Virtue he comes in contact with. So in basic terms. He brings everyone back to a regular human."

Jamie's couldn't believe someone like that existed. "That's insane, so even my father! Would be just another person fighting him?"

"Yeah."

"But he seemed unbelievably strong."

"He was in the service for most of his life. He works his body to the brink of unconsciousness everyday. But there's still something he seems to be hiding, that he doesn't want people to see. I only just figured it out when he lost it because you said you turned the camera back on. It's the same with your dad. I've sorta always wanted to see those two fight."

"I can see why."

"Yeah." Melony had seen that Jamie's arm had come to rest now. "Can you move it?"

"I think so." Jamie said as his fingers curled up and his arm stretched out, he didn't feel any sort of pain. It was rather astounding. He rose up to his feet and look around quickly. "I desperately need to wash my face." Melony couldn't help but chuckle. She stood up as well and took Jamie's hand.

"Follow me goof." She led him out the wooden lunch room door, around a few halls and into the men's locker room by the gym. "Alright now take your cloths off." She smile out.

"Leave."

"You're no fun." She giggled as she skipped out of the locker room. Getting undressed Jamie sat under the spray of water washing the sticky red mess out of his hair. In his mind he etched another name of someone he aimed to beat even if it killed him. Scott Lannon, Reaper and now Zack Barley. Turning the knob infront of him the water shut off after a few last drop hit the floor. He got himself dressed and noticed all the blood that had crusted onto his shirt. So buckling up his belt he left the shirt on the bench.

Exiting the room Jamie looked over to Melony as she began to blush at the sight of him. What other way could she love me? He couldn't help but think back on Barley's words. "I really do love you Jamie." Isn't that what she said, no way Barley, you're such a liar. Jamie reached over and took Melony's hand and pulled her along as she placed her other hand on over the blush on her cheek.

"I'm going to faint Jamie!"

"Shut up." Jamie laughed. They it took them only a few moments to get home. Jamie sat on his back porch. He heard an alarm ringing behind him as Melony rushed into the backyard.

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"I have to train." Melony said as she stood in the middle of the yard. She's insane. They just got done getting it handed to them by Barley, maybe that was all the more reason to train. Jamie looked on as Melony went through her regiment. She seemed like a completely different person, everything was so uniform yet free and unpracticed. Is this really Jamie's ally? She cycled through several different forms of punches, kicks and aerobatics. It was beyond reason the things she was able to do. In the middle of the air it seemed like she was able to completely alter her circular momentum and twist herself any way she wanted.

"So what is your Virtue? I think you can tell me now." Jamie asked again not really expecting any sort of answer.

"You'll find out in due time, I promise." She replied still working through her planned excessive training. Jamie watched for a few more minutes until he sat up and trudged over to Melony who stopped training as Jamie got to her.

"I need to get strong too." He mumbled out avoiding eye contact with Melony by looking at his garage. Melony smiled and readied a battle stance as Jamie took his as well.

"Here I come." Melony said as they began sparring. Melony made sure to hold back as she saw fit. Jamie focusing mainly on controlling the drive behind his punches. He was still uncomfortable with how much he felt himself dragging forward after an attack. They continued to work through the majority of the remaining day. They both lost track of time completely. Even more importantly then learning more on how to fight themselves. They both watched each other intently the entire time, learning how each other fought. If they knew that and got it down they would be unstoppable together.

Jamie could slowly feel the battle taking his toll on his body and he could still feel signs of pain exist still remaining in his arm. Melony felt complications when she contorted her body to change her direction mid-air, the pain in her spine was more then she first thought. They were both handicapped from the fight earlier but both refused to let up. Melony was still able to deliver devastating kicks which Jamie figured out was her forte. Jamie couldn't help when he figured it out, how to completely contain his punches.

It was hours before fatigue kicked in and rendered their bodies sore and unable to continue. The both laid on the grass next to each other deeply inhaling the night's air. Sitting up Jamie pulled out his wallet and peered into the bills his father had left him.

"I don't want anything that ties me to him." He said throwing the bills into a pile on the grass in front of them. Melony looked over at him curiously and he pulled a book a matches from a sleeve in the wallet. Bringing a match harshly across the rough surface of the match book the match lit them making the area around them illuminate. Jamie tossed the match onto the pile of money. Melony and Jamie watched as the flames dimly lit their face and the rising ashes stained the air, flames licking the sky.

"What will we do for food. Things like that." Melony wondered out loud as she found comfort watching the fire continuing to burn Jamie's tie to his dad.

"We'll take it. Whatever we want. We just take. That's who we are now. Regular people do it. So we'll just do it in grandeur."

"I like that." Melony said to him as she leaned over onto his shoulder as they watched the last of the flames flicker away and die. "Even the fiercest fire burns out eventually." They both watched the very last flame die out and disappear into a thin trail of smoke.

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"Jamie and Melony?" The shrouded figure on Jamie's house's roof spoke out of their ear shot. His eyes grew wide with interest as he watched the glow fading away from their faces. And a bad news smile crept across his face with the moon pressing on his back. "How magnificently interesting."

Chapter 13: Haven

Jamie woke up looking at the ceiling fan above him as its blades turned pushing a cool breeze onto his face. He looked over to see Melony cuddled up next to him. He checked to see what he was wearing and was relieved to see he still had all his cloths on. It was weird waking up and not having to rush getting ready for school. He felt for Damien but he couldn't stay there anymore, he just saw no point. With any luck Alan will have been suspended so Damien should get some slack, not to mention that there was only a few weeks left until summer break anyways. Rather graduation for them.

He just laid there without feeling much of a care for anything, it was odd that he'd taken a man's life just a few days but he felt nothing. If anything he was annoyed that a person like that existed in the first place. He looked around at the items in his room dimly lit by the rising sun. It was still so early, even this superhuman body was used to waking up for school. People change but it seems habits don't.

"Your hair is a mess." Melony said with her eyes only partially open looking up at Jamie.

"You're one to talk." He defended returning her gaze.

"What are we doing today?" Melony kicked her legs straight and her arms forward as she stretched and yawned shoving Jamie closer to the edge of his bed.

"Nothing sound nice." He hopefully responded.

"I think you owe me ten dollars."

"Nope."

"What?! We slept in the same bed."

"You said you could make me fall in love. I like you a lot. But the word love hasn't really crossed my mind yet. Sorry."

Melony looked at him with a scowl. "You're making this hard for me Jamie. Cheater."

"I said I like you, that's a start." Jamie said hearing the phone next to his head ringing. Reaching over her picked it up and looked at the number on the display.

"Who is it?"

"Mom."

"Oh! Mommy Lannon!"

"You're way to excited." Jamie said as he clicked the answer button and brought the phone up to his ear.

"Hel-"

"Speaker phone." Melony quickly interjected.

Jamie rolled his eyes and pressed the button for speaking phone and laid the phone on his chest while Melony looked on in pure glee. "Hi mom." There was a moment of silence on the other end of the phone. "Mom?"

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"Oh sorry hun, I was talking to someone." Chimed out the delicate voice of Cynthia Lannon. "How are you?"

"I'm doing alright, past few days have been a little crazy." Jamie said preparing to bait his mom into telling him if she knew anything about the life her husband lived.

"I feel you on that." Cynthia replied.

"So your flight back home."

"Will be delayed." Jamie's face wiped over with grimace.

"How long?"

"Wish I could tell you." Jamie smacked his head on the backboard of his bed shaking the bed slightly. "What are you up too?"

"Just hanging out." Melony said through her giggling.

"Is that a girl?" Cynthia demanded.

"No." Jamie replied

"Yes." Melony shouted over.

"Where are you two?" Cynthia again demanded.

"Not my bed." Jamie replied.

"His bed!" Melony shouted over. Jamie quickly shot a glance at Melony who just laughed and pulled the blanket over her mouth.

"She sounds nice." Cynthia joked. "Well honey I have to go. Tell your father I said hi. And please be safe." Cynthia said as she hung up the phone.

"Mom!" Jamie yelled hearing the click of the phone disconnecting.

"Oh my, now you're blushing." Melony jested as she took the covers away from her mouth. Jamie averted his attention and looked back up at the ceiling fan still spinning without a care. My father huh? He sat up and preceded to climb out of bed to slide open his dresser drawers in search of something clean to wear. For that matter a shirt to put on in general. He collected the cloths he wanted to wearing mainly black clothing. The lack of cloths reminded him that he had to go to the laundry mat. They used to have a washer and dryer but they had broken so him and his dad decided to get their cloths done else where.

Dropping to the floor he quickly did several sets of push ups and crunches and squats as Melony looked on. She had to go... home to get more clothing, she was running out. She honestly didn't think Jamie would let her stay as long as she had, maybe he was just lonely and needed the company. Either way she was more then happy to be staying with him. To be falling asleep knowing he was only a few feet away. Or when she was lucky, right next to her.

"Jamie I have to leave for a while." Melony said regretfully. As she stood up and walked to the door frame. "Under no circumstances should you look for me, Get it?"

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"What? How long?" Jamie questioned raising himself to his feet at Melony's proclamation.

"Not sure, Love you." She spoke waiting for a moment for a reply, when she got none she stepped out of the room and made her way down the stairs. Before he knew it she was gone, all alone in the house now everything seemed much more empty. Desolation. He went through his morning routine, everything seemed to take longer and it all felt like a chore. He walked downstairs and made himself something to eat, it didn't taste like anything. He turned the news on and watched some chick reporting on a dead body, apparently the murder was 'accidental.' How can a murder be accidental? He turned the TV back off refusing to acknowledge what he just saw even existed.

"Mom's not coming home for another few days most likely." Jamie looked around and was reminded no one else was there. "I should get a pet." He joked to himself as he continued to sit there. "What the hell this is boring!" He kicked his legs out and stretched them along the floor. He got up to clean his dishes and the others that were left in the sink. He heard the phone ring and picked it up after drying his hands off. On the other line was Damien, he had decided to skip school it seems. He said that Alan and his friends had pulled a prank on him. Jamie became irate but Damien assured him he was fine and told him not to take any action.

Hanging up the phone Jamie once again looked around, he really wished the conversation had lasted longer. "Okay that's it, pet it is." Jamie said throwing a coat over his shoulder and stepping out the front door. There was an animal shelter a few miles away. Which was quiet the walk but Jamie didn't really mind, he never got fatigue like he used to and he needed to last the time anyways. The weather was nice enough but it certainly would have been better without the wind constantly in his face. He observed many different people as he walked, some people were arguing, kids were playing while parents went along with their business barely paying any attention. And the funniest part of it all was none of them had any idea that walking by them was this inhuman being. To them he was just a regular guy.

A few days ago Jamie would've wished that was the truth and he could go back to being normal. But now he felt a sense of pride in who he was and the things he could do. This was a gift, possibly the best thing his father has given him. He wondered if his mother had any sort of Virtue, she wasn't always away like his dad was but when she left it was for longer periods of time. Weeks as opposed to days. She really was a lovely woman, you wouldn't expect by looking at her that she wasn't some sort of model. But one of those models that knew how to keep herself healthy.

He must have walked at least two miles by now, he was getting to that point where buildings were unfamiliar but he still knew where he was going. Turning to his head he could see a set of eyes looking directly at him through the shroud of a wooded area. Stopping for a moment he leaned over to focus. What he saw looking back at him was a Gray Wolf. "My you're way off course friend." He said to himself not sure if the wolf could hear him. The wolf simple whimper and laid down continuing to look at him. "Well try not to eat anyone." Jamie chuckled turning to continue his walk. He could hear the small pattering of feet behind him, four to be exact.

Turning around he saw the wolf following his every footstep not seeming to pay mind to anyone else. Jamie looked around to make sure the wolf didn't have any sort of owner or something but no one was paying attention to it. Jamie put his open palm forward "Stay." He commanded and the wolf followed suit without a second thought. Jamie turned around and began walking away looking back every now and then to see the wolf just sitting there. After a block or two Jamie stopped looking back, the wolf was almost out of sight anyways.

Another few miles of walking had gone by until Jamie could actually see the animal shelter. It only took a second for him to be able to hear it as well. The barking of dozens of dogs would be hard for anyone to just ignore. Walking into the animal shelter Jamie looked to the man at the front desk. He seemed rather interested

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in his job with his arms sprawled out against the desk where his face was firmly planted. Jamie walked up and stood there for a moment and after he wasn't paid any attention he smacked the bell next to the man's ear. The man shot up startled and upon seeing Jamie he rubbed his eyes. Those red eyes... Jamie remembered reading that generally people who had such eyes suffered from Albinism. But this man's short blonde brown would indicate that he didn't suffer from it and his skin wasn't that pale either.

"How magnificently rude." The man spoke as he looked on at Jamie who was still bewildered at the color of the man's eyes. "I was born without pigments in my eyes. So no color, just the blood shining through. Happy?" The man explained annoyed.

Jamie pointed to the bar piercing on the man's right eyebrow. "If you don't want people to wonder, don't draw attention to it."

"Very perceptive." The man replied as he shifted through some papers and neatly stacked them as they were before he laid down. He looked back up to Jamie and greeted him with a smile. Jamie just returned a confused face. "I'm supposed to smile." He said making the both of them chuckle. "My name is Jack, I'll be helping you..." He looked back at the chart and scanned it quickly. "Helping you find your best friend." He said reciting the words on the paper.

"Interesting." Jamie replied, the piercing on the man sort of reminded him of Damien, not to mention the short hair.

"Well then Jamie let's get started shall we." Jack confidently said as he pressed the clipboard to his chest arms folded across it. He began walking into a large corridor where the yelps of animals echo making the whole room one big mess of noise. Jamie looked at several animals, some laying in their cages while others pressed their faces to the cage to get attention.

"Why aren't you telling me about any of these dogs?" Jamie wondered out loud not sure if Jack could even hear him through the noise.

"My job is to find the best match for you." Jack answered continuing to pay no mind to all the dogs. He must have been desensitized to the dogs, after all he was able to sleep here. "Jamie Lannon, that's the kind of name that wants a well behaved animal." Jamie nodded. He indeed didn't want anything he'd have to train, he just wanted a friend. Jack stopped in front a cage that had a black Labrador laying on a plush bed gnawing on a bone. Jack unlocked the door and stepped inside beckoning Jamie to do the same.

Jamie nervously stepped inside as the dog lifted it's head towards his presence and perked it's ears. "Don't be shy." Jack horsed around. "He's a magnificent dog." Jamie bent over in front of the animal and put his hand out palm facing the dog's head. The dog stood up letting the gleam of the lights truly show the sheen on the dogs groomed fur. Walking over the dog placed it's head on Jamie's hand and nudged him. Jamie smiled as the dog's motion pleaded the want to be pet. Jamie ran his hand along the creatures body, he could tell they really took care of their animals here. Kept them healthy. "We refuse to put any of them down ya know? It's cruel to kill something that doesn't stand a chance. Don't you agree?"

"Not exactly."

"Pardon?" Jack looked on in curiosity at Jamie as he continued to groom the dog with his hands.

"Whether something can defend itself or not isn't really the issue. You see no one is innocent. But animals don't know what they're doing, it's not a moral choice when they kill something. It's survival. Human babies are the same in that regard, however I doubt many babies have killed." Jamie explained still intently focused on the dog in front of him.

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"That's an interesting way of looking at it." Jack vaguely replied as he looked down at his chart. "So the dog?"

"Yeah." Jamie continued to pet. "I really like him, you must have been working here for a while to be this good huh?"

"Actually no, I just started today. Few hours ago. I fell asleep for most of it as you saw. Slow day I guess." Jack replied softly looking at Jamie attaching to the dog.

"Well good work." Jamie said to solidify the man's confidence in his work, he really liked this animal.

"Ya know..."

"Huh?"

"I'm not sure dogs are completely innocent."

"How so?"

"They're a lot like my eyes. All that's there is blood." Jamie felt an odd chill course through him. He turned to Jack taking his eyes off the dog. As his focus was now on Jack he felt a sharp pain in his hand. Turning back he could see the dog's teeth dented into his hand. The dog looked mad now, insane, hungry. Jamie pulled his hand away but the dog refused to let go tearing the flesh as Jamie go free. Jamie fell back as his hand left trails of blood in the air following his frightened retreat. The dog was growling now and in a feeding position as his eyes looked directly at Jamie.

Jack grabbed Jamie by the collar of his shirt and dragged him out of the pen and shut the door behind him locking it. The dog returned to its plush bed and started feasting on the bone once more. "I'm terribly sorry about that Jamie, I've never seen him behave like that."

"Never? You've only been working here for a few hours, most of which you weren't even awake. What a stupid word to use." Jamie barked out at Jack.

"Yes, how silly of me." Jack said helping Jamie up to his feet. "You should take care of that soon." He said looking down at Jamie's wound.

"I'll be fine." Jamie snarled patting the back of his pants, no dirt. This place was spotless at least.

"I'm sure you will." Jack turned around and began walking down the corridor. Jamie chased after him as they exited the room with the animals. The noise died down when the door was shut behind them. "Once again I apologize about that. I assume the idea of a pet is a turn off at this point." Jack stated as Jamie nodded holding the bite mark on his. "Well if you should decide that you want a pet in the future, I won't fail again. I'll find your best friend."

"Thank you. I'll think on it." Jamie replied trying not to sound angry at the man, he was very polite. It was almost eerie how polite he was for that man. He left the building still holding the wound on his hand. He was a little shocked that the teeth penetrated his skin at all. But it was a learning experience, it didn't hurt but it still pierced. That's what Melony must have meant by increased pain tolerance. That's why he didn't pass out from shock when his arm was broken like he'd expect any normal person would have.

He started walking away from the building when he saw a girl run by him, her eyes had sheer terror in them. She turned only for a moment to look at Jamie but the quick glance seemed to last a life time as he looked into

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those dread filled eyes. She ran into the building he had just exited, he wanted to give chase but likely Jack could help her. He seemed like a nice enough guy. As long as he doesn't suggest any animals to her he thought to himself.

It was much darker now, he must have been in that shelter longer than he thought or he just lost track of time completely. He wouldn't make it home till late but it's not like it mattered. He had no father there to scold him and no Melony to welcome him. He felt himself sigh at the thought of a wasted day watching the moon climb the sky as he made his way. He saw a faint light in the distance but couldn't make out what it was. It took him a mile or two until he recognized what it was.

The light of the moon was reflecting off that wolf's eyes. It had been sitting here this whole time without moving so much as an inch. Jamie approached the wolf carefully as its tail began to wag on the sidewalk. In front of it Jamie knelt over and gently ran his hand along the wolf's fur. Pulling his hand back Jamie was startled when the dog lurched forward. To his surprise the wolf began licking the wound on Jamie's hand.

"You waited all this time." Jamie gently questioned the animal disregarding that animals cannot speak English of course. The wolf however let out an acknowledging bark. "Alright then... friends?" Jamie hopefully asked as he turned his hand over. After a moment of silence the wolf placed its paw on Jamie's palm forcing a wide smile to creep onto Jamie's face.

They began walking side by side through the thickness of the night, a dense fog seemed to be rolling in over them. Jamie's hand has already healed up so the discomfort had vanished from him now. He just felt right walking by the wolf as he ran through possible names for it. It had been a few miles that they were walking when Jamie turned to the wolf. "What should your name be?" Jamie questioned as the wolf cocked its head. "Name..." Jamie stopped for a moment as he felt a shiver shoot through his body. He turned back to look behind him as a fear took over his chest.

"How did he know my name?"

Chapter 14: Witness

The fog had now become so dense that even seeing the sidewalk under you made you strain your eyes. Jamie had lost where he was, he couldn't see any signs as to his locations. He could feel the moisture all around him. It felt almost as if he was swimming. He looked down to the wolf who now stood stern peering into the nothingness. A scowl painted on it's face as it continued to grow. Jamie knelt beside it and place his hand on top of the wolf's head.

"Hey calm down. There's nothing there girl." Jamie spoke running his hand along the animal.

"I'd hate to have to say you're wrong." Rung out a calm voice from somewhere in the mist. Jamie immediately stood up and looked around with his hands to his side. He didn't want to say anything as his eyes searched the fog but he couldn't see anything. It was like his own little universe and everything an inch away from him was static. He could barely even see the wolf standing right by his side.

"Who was that?" Jamie demanded shouting vaguely out into the crowd. He could feel his hair starting to be weighed down by the airborne water.

"You know you're quiet the hassle. Or at least that lady friend of yours. Do you even know what she is?" The voice taunted out as it seemed to be moving it's location so it couldn't be tracked.

"What does everyone know that I don't!?" Jamie angrily shouted now only looking ahead of him. All he heard in return was a chuckle and then silence set in again. It seemed like minutes before anything happened. But Jamie could hear footsteps every now and then.

"It would have been easier if you had just died when I sent my Students after you. I hate doing the dirty work myself." Jamie saw a quick shimmer of light a large blade swinging at his face. Just managing to jump back Jamie could see the glint of blue eyes. They were confident. Like this was just another day. Jamie instantly thought back to when he had killed someone. Melony said they were students.

"So you're a teacher?"

"Seems that whelk has taught you some things. But sadly no. I am a professor." Another blade reached from the fog with a thrusting motion once again making Jamie jump back.

"Well at least your name." Jamie said his eyes searching around him for the next attack.

"Just calling me Paladin will do young one."

"For curiosity sake. What is your Virtue."

Jamie heard a chuckle from inside the fog. "Does it have something to do with this sudden mist?" Jamie further questioned pass the laughter.

"Heavens no. This is merely the weather tipping in my favor. And in any case if it was. I wouldn't show it off so quickly. You see, a Virtue is like a trump card. You pull it out when the chips are down. Revealing it too quickly puts you at a disadvantage to someone who hasn't revealed theirs yet." The person explained through the heavy fog. Jamie though back to Melony and how she refused to show her Virtue, was she really trying to keep an edge of him?

Jamie saw the edge quickly approach his face, he dodged but could feel the blade grazing his cheek. "You should probably pay attention. It wont be to hard to cut your head off."

"You're pretty blunt."

"I don't have the time not to be." Another stab came out of the fog that Jamie comfortably dodge with a step back. "You're too accustomed to my attack patterns." Paladin instantly followed up with a swing to Jamie's neck. All Jamie could do was watch as the edge inched closer and closer to him. Then there was a violent thud and the blade drew back as fast as it had appeared. Whatever the impact was had been fierce enough to push the mist away from the impact point. Jamie watched his vision becoming more and more clear as the mist was pushed away from him. Eventually the mist had left a circular clearing where Jamie could finally see his feet. Looking up Jamie was beyond words. He could see his wolf sitting calming wagging it's tail as Scott pet her on one knee. He was wearing a black formal suit and a pair of goggles on his face. Standing there unable to say anything Jamie couldn't think of how overwhelming his father looked. Like he had everything under control. A professor was by them both yet he just sat there petting that wolf like it was nothing.

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"Hello Jamie." Scott let his voice be heard turning his head to Jamie who was still motionless. Scott stood up and looked out into the mist hearing footsteps coming towards them.

"So they let you out to play?" Paladin jested still hidden by the fog.

"I could ask the same of you." Scott replied effortlessly. His eyes were soft and stable. Jamie couldn't help but wonder if his dad was really strong enough to have such a stature. Jamie watched as Paladin appeared in the cleared circle with the same confident eyes as his father. Perhaps they were both just arrogant or unwilling to show weakness. Paladin brought his blade to his side and wipe the hair of his face.

"That blade can cut through anything. Correct?" Scott prodded even though he already knew the answer.

"Most swords can cut most things Lannon." Paladin mocked in return.

"I'm aware. But that sword exist as your Virtue. It's ability, is simply to cut through anything like it wasn't even there. Regardless of what the material is. I'm right?"

"I suppose."

"That's all I needed to know." Scott said with a smile. He pointed to his left and the wolf walked over to Jamie. Without warning Paladin ran forward and swung his sword. Jamie looked on as his father was not faced with death merely inches away. The blade halted as Scott's fingers had caught the sword by it's broad side. "It doesn't matter what this blade can cut. If it never makes contact it's useless." They both stood there as Paladin thought out his next move. Paladin jumped back and placed both hands on his sword as the blade gleamed through out the fog.

Paladin rushed in again swinging his blade as Scott jumped back Paladin continued swinging. Scott dodged every attempt while he watched Paladin's arms to see the angle the next attack would come from. Scott was comfortable with the pattern now. It was easy, he couldn't attack from the same direction twice in a row that would involve unneeded actions. Scott let out a giggle as he continued dodging the assault inside he mist. But Paladin seemed unaffected, he must have been planning something.

"Dad!" Jamie shouted out as his father continued back stepping and rolling to dodge the hit. Scott didn't reply or give notion that he even acknowledge his call to him. Suddenly Scott felt a pain etch across his chest. Looking down he saw his blood sprouting from a wound where the fabric of his shirt had been ripped open. He didn't understand, he knew he was able to dodge the next hit. He had calculated the probability of the direction of the next swing and the length of the sword. So the only variable was the sword. Paladin put the blade to his side with a devilish smirk as he relished the injured Ace before him.

Scott reached down and wiped his wound clean of blood to reveal the the injury had already healed. Looking up Scott scanned the sword. The way Paladin had the sword at his side Scott could tell it had gotten longer. It wasn't to far fetched to believe even an object based Virtue could posses multiple Virtues. The question was, what is the other Virtue it had. Scott stood in place waiting for the next attack to come his way. After a few moments of observation Paladin surely enough jumped in.

Scott stood still waiting for Paladin to approach and when the blade came close he stepped back slightly and with his eyes on the sword he watched it extend. Satisfied Scott jumped back temporarily taking flight to avoid any damage.

"So you can make your sword longer?" Scott questioned happy that he figured it out in such a short window of time. Scott and Jamie watched as Paladin stood there with an unsettling grin painted on his face.

"As always you impress me. But it goes further then that. Allow me to show you my Virtue's second stage!"

Paladin lifted his sword above his head with the grin still present. Before Jamie and Scott's eyes the blade above Paladin's head grew as the handle extended to confiscate for the increased weight. It had grown to at least four times it original mass. "Burn, Scott Lannon!" Paladin swung the sword down aiming to split Scott in half. Scott reached up with both hands and placed his palms on the side of the sword.

"What made you think I couldn't block this."

"I was confident you could." Paladin replied as the blade Scott was holding instantly reverted to it's normal size. With it's weight back to normal Paladin quickly swung the sword increasing it's length for a sure fire hit on Scott. Scott desperately flew into the air above the strike of the blade. As Scott dodged Paladin shortened the blade to the length of a dagger and once it was lined up with Scott, the blade and handle transformed into the fashion of a fencing sword. Scott felt the pressure of the blade pulse through his stomach.

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"Do you see? The glory of my Excalibur? It's ability to change into any shape, anything with a blade. And since regardless of the blade it retains it's ability to cut anything. I'm never left open for an attack. I'm invincible. That Scott, is the power of a professor." Paladin taunted as Scott was held in the air by the sword the was pierced through him.

"You are aware that I was a professor as well." Scott spoke and as he opened his mouth a small trickled of blood seeped out.

"Yes, but it seems you've lost anyways. This fog has created the perfect shroud preventing you from throwing anything around." Paladin confidently stated as the air still hung heavy with mist around them all.

"I never said I couldn't."

"The Pool concept. Remember?"

"I do."

"So you're bluffing. There's no way with all this you can move objects."

"I can." Paladin's began growing furious at Scott's jesting. He couldn't conceive it possible that Scott could truly manipulate anything in such a large Pool.

"Can you really?" Paladin spoke deciding to call Scott out on his bluff. For a while Scott said nothing as he hung there without moving his limbs. His eyes where shut, possibly even bloodless could bring down such a person as the great Ace, Paladin though to himself.

"Yes" Scott's eyes shot back to life.

"Imposs-" Paladin felt a harsh hit slamming his left arm as a broken street light hounded him. It lifted Paladin off his feet pushing him into the fog, the blade imbedded in Scott's chest slid out letting Scott fall back to his feet. Paladin staggered back into the clearing looking at Scott while clearly trembling.

"The Pool concept?" Jamie questioned inside his head. What was that and why would it prevent his dad from moving objects.

"That's not possible! No one exist with that much power! What did you do? What was the trick?" Paladin belligerently raged out. Scott looked down ignoring Paladin to check the wound on his stomach that had already healed up. "Listen when i'm talking!" Paladin lashed as he charged. Scott waiting to act as he looked directly into Paladin's eyes. Paladin swung the sword intent on cutting Scott's head but instead he felt himself stop.

There was nothing obstructing his path and Scott hadn't moved and inch since Paladin started the swing. Paladin felt himself quiver inside, they said something like this was impossible. Unless...

"No! If I can't beat you, i'll just end your son!"

"I won't permit it"

"I never said i'd play fair! Thorn now!" Paladin howled at the top of his lungs. Suddenly Jamie watched a fourth figure leap from deep within the mist. The figure outstretched his hand, curled his fist and let his pointer finger step out. Scott began stepping back but he still felt Thorn's finger press on his forehead. Jamie couldn't explain what he saw but he knew his dad was there one second and in the blink of an eye he wasn't anymore.

Paladin let out a sigh as Thorn chuckled. His attire was off, very Monk like it flowed well with his blue hair.

"Is that natural?" Jamie questioned Thorn.

"Is this kid joking?" Thorn asked leaning in towards Paladin who was spitting blood onto the floor. "Hey kid are you joking?" Thorn further questioned to Jamie. Paladin turned to Jamie and stepped over to him. Jamie decided to stand his ground, Paladin was already injured right? Maybe he stood a chance. Paladin stepped slowly over and once in range Jamie through a punch that landed right in Paladin's face. Paladin stood unmoved by the his, like it was just another breeze passing over his face.

"You're strong indeed. But you're not at the level where you could hurt me, so it's pretty useless to try."

Paladin blunty stated as he took hold of Jamie's wrist and removed it from his face.

"So was that the only reason I came?" Thorn pondered out loud making sure Paladin would be able to hear him.

"Yes, but please stay until i'm done here. I don't feel like walking back." Paladin replied ignoring the ignorant inflections in Thorn's voice.

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"I don't understand why you just didn't bring my sister. She would have been more suited for something like this."

"If I knew where your sister was I'd be killing her."

"Oh yeah, me too probably." Thorn spoke placing his finger on his lip looking into the sky slowly spacing out. Paladin looked back and shook his head at his partners empty mindedness.

"Excuse me?" Jamie interjected himself into their conversation. He hated being ignored, especially by two people he had never even met before.

"Oh right, I apologize Jamie." Paladin snapped his attention back to Jamie. Reaching out Paladin took a hold of his neck and licked him off the the ground holding his throat tightly. Jamie couldn't get any breath into his lungs, he delivered constant kicks to Paladin but even with his advanced strength they did nothing. Jamie looked deep into Paladin's eyes as they gazed at his soft and confident.

"Stop lo... lik... at" Jamie attempted to muster out through his closing neck as he felt himself blacking out.

"Sorry what was that." Paladin joked letting up slightly on Jamie's windpipe allowing him to speaking.

"I said don't look at me like that!" Jamie screamed to the foe only inches away from him.

"I don't understand." Paladin said curiously.

"Those eyes, everyone looks at me with those eyes. Like they're all better than me. Keen, dad, Melony, Barley and even under that stupid helmet I knew Reaper looked at me the same way. That look of pity. I really pisses me off, I don't need that!"

"Shut up." Paladin spouted as he shoved the tip of his sword through Jamie's chest with his other hand. He pressed the sword in all the way up to the hilt. Thorn looked on as Jamie's eyes closed and his legs and arms went limp.

"What a beautiful silhouette." Thorn passionately said. Closing his hands together he began reciting a prayer for Jamie's departure. Paladin continued to look on with soft eyes as he could feel Jamie's blood collecting on his hand. Maybe his father could survive such a wound but, such a young underdeveloped Abomination had no chance. Paladin almost felt bad. If he had time to grow he could have been an amazing Light.

"Thorn we'll be leaving n-"

"Are you deaf?" Paladin was interrupted by the choked out words of the lifeless body he held in his hands. Jamie's previously limp hand reached up and placed on the hand of Paladin who was gripping the handle of his sword.

"Wh... what?" Paladin said with a shaking resolve.

"I said don't look at me with those fucking eyes!" Jamie screamed as he opened his eyes. When his mouth and eyes opened up Paladin could see a green like substance flowing from inside. Once it exited it floated up and acted like a gas slowly dissipating into the air. Small traces of a tint of blue could be seen within the alternating shades of green.

Thorn halted his prayer and looked on in awe as he watched the green substance slipping out of the wound in Jamie's stomach. "Aura?" Thorn questioned as he looked on as the Aura lifting out of Jamie seemed to be wrapping around his body. Paladin quickly shifted his attention to Thorn hearing him mentioning Aura. Then back to Jamie to realize the Aura had now completely enveloped Jamie's entire body. It was hard to make out any colors underneath the blanket of the Aura on Jamie. It looked like a large green flame had eaten and is now surrounding Jamie.

"Not happening!" Paladin announced as he brought his sword out of Jamie's chest and started to bring it back forward. While Paladin was going in for another stab Jamie quickly threw a hit to Paladin's face just a little above his nose. They stood still for a moment. Paladin let a sigh out when he felt nothing different from the hit Jamie landed before.

"You're all blush." Jamie said causing Paladin to realize that blood dripping down his face. And with this came the realization that Jamie's fist never made contact, it hovered less than an inch away from Paladin's face still balled up. Paladin stumbled backwards feeling the blood pouring down his face he put his hands up to stop it from getting on his clothing. Jamie slowly descended to the ground still shrouded in the Aura the licked the sky. Paladin looked up with anger in his eyes and a scowl on his face.

"I like those eyes a lot more." Jamie noted as he stood arms to his side, he rose his hand to his face and looked at the green raising up from his fist. "This feels safe. Like a warm bed." He stated to himself continuing to

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look on dazed by the green flames.

"No matter, my blade cuts anything." Paladin reaffirmed as he rushed to Jamie and swung. As the blade got to him the Aura around Jamie seemed to collect to the point of damage. This act left the Aura on the rest of his body thinner. Paladin's sword touched the Aura and moved no further unable to damage Jamie by getting through. "The Aura is rejecting me!?" Paladin angrily noted as he put more force on trying to cut through the focus Aura.

Jamie reached his arm back and swung it forward with a might force. The Aura that had been at Jamie's defense now shifted and collected on Jamie's fist and it slammed into Paladin's chest. For a split-second there was nothing. The Paladin flew backwards at breakneck speeds through the fog. The punch had enough power to crack and rip up most of the concrete that was under them in the direction of where Paladin had flown and to push the fog completely away from the street they were on.

Scott floated in the air somewhere in a snowy mountain range. "Jamie."

Melony sat looking at the daunting building in front of her "Jamie."

Reaper looked passed the papers on his desk. "Young Lannon."

"Was that?" Spoke the gruff voice. "Yeah, it was that kid." Replied Solus.

The principal of 'The school' Turned his chair around to face the large window behind him. "Hmm" He hummed out loud placing his hands together.

"No doubt everyone felt that." Thorn spoke as he looked out at Jamie who in turn looked over at him. Thorn pulled out a small white piece of paper and waved it over his head. Jamie turned his head back to where Paladin had vanished in the distance. Hearing Paladin's footsteps Thorn turned to the same direction as Paladin came into view. Thorn and Jamie could see Paladin clutching his left arm or rather the lack there of. The fabric of the sleeve had torn and some where his left arm had been lost.

Half of his suit had been stained red, his hand was now completely covered in his own blood. "Thorn!"

Paladin screamed frustrated at his utter loss at the hands of a child. Thorn started running to Paladin and as Jamie saw this he began running as well.

"I can teleport in." Thorn said to himself as he ran to Paladin seeing Jamie trying to beat him there. "Three, two..." Thorn pressed a finger on his own forehead and with a jump reached out to Paladin "One!" Right as Jamie's fist got to Paladin's face he watched them vanish in front of his eyes. As they vanished so did the Aura that was covering Jamie. He looked at his hands and then rubbed where he had been stabbed to find that it was closed up. He heard the soft patterning of his wolf walking over to him.

"I did that all by myself. With out Melony or anyone having to jump in." Jamie said running his hands along the wolf's fur. He stood up as the wolf returned his gaze. "We need to get home, it's late." He said beginning to walk. Where did all that even come from he wondered to himself. He didn't mean for all that to happen with him. It just kind of did, beyond his control.

The walk home was just as long as the walk there, by the time they even got to his block the sun was already rearing it's head. The fog had now vanished. "The stars are gone now." He said to the wolf as he looked into the sky. After a few minutes he and the wolf walked into his house. He watched as the wolf ran around interested in every crevasse and every detail of the house. "This is your new home. You'll always have a place to rest your head." He said as the wolf sat in front of him wagging her tail.

Jamie heard the phone ringing next to him. He jumped as he had always forgotten they had a phone installed in the hallway. Looking at the display he didn't see the caller ID telling him who it was. With a shrug he took it off the hook. Picking it up he heard Damien on the other end of the phone.

"Hi man. Getting ready for school." Jamie questioned happy to hear a friendly voice.

"No, i'm dropping out." Damien mumbled on the other end of the phone.

"That's insane there's like five weeks left. You can handle it. And we can hang out whenever."

"Whenever?"

"Of course." Jamie cheerfully rung out. "You just have to promise me you'll see it through."

"Okay, so is later today good?"

"Yup I need to rest but I'll be up when you get out of school."

"I'll see you then." Damien said as the phone clicked off. Jamie put the phone back on the hook and pressed the buttons to bring the display up. The lights were working fine. "What's with this thing." Jamie thought back

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to when the wall was blown out. Maybe that had something to do with it. A bark from the wolf changed Jamie's attention to it.

"I just thought of your name." Jamie said leaning over to pet the wolf again. "How do you like Tyrant?" Jamie questioned. The wolf barked in reply and started to wag it's tail.

"Yeah, Tyrants' good."

Chapter 15: Gone

The water damaged stairs creaked and bent under the pressure of General Davis' footsteps. It was the kind of shaky foot that made him worry about them just giving way under him. One wrong step to send him spiraling down the several flights of stairs behind him. The air seemed particularly unhealthy, it hung heavy with particles of dust and god-knows what else. The windows that occasionally adorned the incline where the only source of light and had it been in the middle of the night he'd have no idea where he was in the stairwell.

"Independence I trust you are in position?" Davis spoke into the collar of his shirt that hid a miniature communication device.

"Yes sir!" Replied the guard labeled Independence. She was the long range specialist of the group. Her suit resembled the likes of her other two teammates that were able to capture 'the friend'. The variations in her suit include only one visual port instead of two for both eyes. Her suit also had deployable stabilizers to keep her in place while firing her custom sniper rifle. No one knew what caliber rounds she used. This was because anyone whose had the chance to see one was getting their head blown off.

Davis walked up a few more stairs and peered out the window at the building across the street. He could see Independence in position but only because he knew where to look. She'd be invisible to anyone else. Independence traced where she knew Davis would be even through the blind spots behind the walls. She was a top notch sniper, with a success rate of one hundred percent she was flawless.

"I'm here. Keep a bead on me and maintain radio silence." Davis said finally stopping at a door with a rusted '27' nailed onto the chipping wood.

"Hoorah." She quietly replied through her helmet as she laid eyes pressed stern to the scope. "Shit it's hot." She said as she shifted slightly scraping her suit against the rough surface of the rooftop. Davis knocked on the door with the back of his hand and stood waiting for someone to answer. He stood there looking around at the other doors that didn't fair any better then the one across from him. Davis heard no activity nor did anyone come to open the door, as Davis expected to be the case.

"Barnaby Price?" Davis questioned looking down at his shoes then back up to the door.

"I'm not really interested in girl scout cookies, sorry." Replied an overly exhausted Barnaby.

Davis chuckled for a moment. "I'll actually be satisfied with just and autograph. I'm a big fan of your work." Barnaby offered up a moment of silence that worried Davis for a moment. "Mr. Price?"

"Yeah, yeah. It's unlocked." Barnaby called out through the door. Davis looked down at the handle and turned it slowly listening for anything that might be behind the door. He heard the door click and he pushed it open meeting resistance of trash laid all over the floor. Looking down Davis could tell all of the trash was scraped and crumbled pieces of paper.

"A case of writers block?" Davis said noting on the pieces of paper the created a lake on the floor. There was no reply from Barnaby as he continued to sit there looking out into nothing. The sun from the window faintly cast over his five-o'clock shadow. His dark brown hair hung down to his eyes but didn't cover them, the hair however was a mess. He wore a long sleeved black shirt with fading blue jeans on. Looking around Davis could see several bottle of emptied alcohol laying around the room.

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"I don't get it. You're the best selling author... ever to exist. Each book you write sells millions over night. So why choose to live here?" Davis bashfully questioned as Barnaby continued looking on into the sky.

"I'm not a writer."

"I know all the fake names you publish your work under."

Barnaby tilted his head towards Davis, his first sign of movement since the room had been entered. "I don't write to become famous. I write because when I stop, it hurts."

"That's what I've come to talk to you about."

"Before you say anything else please close the door, i'm uncomfortable with your friend looking at me like that." Barnaby said pointing his finger at the building across the street. Independence shuffled around. There's no way he just pointed to me she thought to herself.

"As expected." Davis said stepping in and forcing the door closed behind him. "Barnaby you are the single most intelligent man on the face of the earth, I feel your talents are wasted here."

"I'm listening."

"I believe your writing prowess comes from something called a Virtue."

"I already know that."

"Well... allow me to nurture that virtue, you'll become unstoppable. And meet some very interesting people. You'll always be writing." Davis looked on as Barnaby placed a pen to his lips thinking things.

"Very well." Barnaby replied tilting his head towards Davis who gave him a smile. Davis opened the door and looked out across the street nodded to Independence.

"Two down, two to go." She said getting herself to her feet and disassembling her sniper rifle. "The Scribe huh?"

Jamie struggled waking up as he felt Tyrant's paws pressing on his back while she was running all over the house. He'd fallen asleep on the floor in front of his bed. He didn't even remember getting up the stairs, he thought it was weird waking up without Melony. He came to a sudden chance realization that she might never come back. Maybe they were all right, she didn't really care about him. Looking over Jamie checked the time printed on the clock near his bed, Damien would be getting out of school soon.

Forcing himself to his feet he brushed his hair with his hands straightening the strands out as he listened to Tyrant running around. "I'll have to remember to pick you up some food huh?" He questioned knowing the animal was unable to answer. "Well, I'll be heading out. Keep this place safe." Jamie said as he walked out of the door. He and Damien hadn't made plans to where they would meet but they never really deviated much from what they always did anyways. Heading out the air was brisk like last night, they must have been hit with a cold front or something. The weather sure was acting up lately.

He walked thinking about yesterday, that weird substance that surrounded him. Paladin and that Thorn guy referred to it as "Aura." He didn't know what that meant in the confines of gifted people. He couldn't explain the strength he felt when it covered him. Or how it reacted to the threats and his offensive attack. It was like it took on a life of it's own to save him. If he could he'd thank it.

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Eventually he found himself at a small park, it didn't have enough but it still saw enough traffic. There were a few swings and a weird playpen thing where kids could explore different tubes that connect to each other. That's where Jamie and Damien first met each other. Jamie walked over to the set of swings and sat on one of them. He closed his eyes shallowly moving the seat back hearing the creaking chains connected to the swing set. The wind gently ran down his face as the wind chilled it. Eyes still closed Jamie reached up and with his finger wiped the tear of his face. "Why am I upset?"

"Hi cutie." Damien said sitting in the swing next to Jamie. Jamie snapped his eyes open and looked over to Damien.

"Jesus man! I didn't even hear you come up." Jamie laughed slightly startled by his sudden appearance.

"I'm a ghost!" Damien said leaning over and putting his hands up like they were claws "Boooo!" He continued to mock. Jamie reached over and gave him a gentle shove.

"How was school?"

"Boring as always. You know how it is, sometimes it's like you're not even there. No one seems to 'be there' in that school." Damien said looking down at his shoes. He twisted his feet to the left and right watching the laces slap onto his shoes.

"Wow your arm healed fast!" Jamie shouted noticing the sling Damien had on was now gone and he was gripping the swing's chain.

"Oh yeah, guess it did." Damien replied looking over at his arm as well twisting it around the chain. Jamie only for a moment thought it could be possible Damien was gifted too. They grew up together and he always connected to him through some odd affection.

"Has Alan bothered you anymore." Jamie questioned trying to find any other clues in the situation.

"Not really, he barely even looks at me anymore. Maybe he feels bad but he still seems the same guy."

"What was the prank anyways."

"Can we not talk about that?"

Jamie looked down at the dirt under him that had been made soft from the dense condensation from last night. "Of course, I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry!" Damien shouted leaning over and wrapping his arms around Jamie he lurched in the other direction. Jamie chuckled and attempted to push Damien off of him.

"Stop, people are staring at you." Jamie continued to chuckle pushing Damien off him.

"They're look at you." Damien said with a giggle as he sat back onto his swing and began kicking his feet.

"God you're so weird."

"You love it." Damien quickly retorted as he continued kicking his feet never gaining too much height. Jamie began doing the same as they watched an innocent looking woman approaching them.

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"Sorry to bother you but are you okay." The woman spoke as she got to the swing set. Jamie looked over to Damien waiting for him to say something but he just continued with his shallow swinging. "I asked if you're okay." The woman repeated herself causing Jamie to look at her. For a moment he looked around wondering if anyone else was around them.

"Uh, yes?" Jamie said to the woman who looked at him with concerning eyes. He couldn't really think of what would make anyone assume that he was troubled or anything. Maybe he had a scrape somewhere that he hadn't notice. The one shook her head at Jamie.

"Very well." The woman said turning around. Jamie and Damien watched as the woman went up to her kids and walked them away from the playpen. Jamie turned over to Damien who kept his eye on the woman.

"What the hell was that." Jamie questioned to Damien as he halted his swinging and turned to Jamie.

"Chicks are weird." Damien said looking to the sky he leaned back and kept a grip. "Speaking of chicks where's that Melony girl?" Damien said letting the breeze waft over his face.

"She left, told me not to look for her."

"Tell you when she was coming back?" Damien asked turning his head to see Jamie shaking his head back and forth. "Ah well, who needs um. Trying to take you away from me." Damien joked. He liked Melony but he could see Jamie was upset over it all.

"So mind coming shopping with me?" Jamie asked not wanting to sit on swings all day. And he didn't want to starve Tyrant. He could just picture the wolf sitting at the door wagging her tail waiting for Jamie to get home. Damien stood up off his swing and looked over at Jamie.

"I love shopping." Damien claimed excited as ever. He started running off through the park ahead of Jamie shouting "Follow the yellow brick road!"

Jamie looked on as Damien continued to run. "You don't even know where we're going." Jamie said bringing his hand up slapping his palm on his face. He started running to catch up to the now almost invisible Damien who had his hands thrown in the air.

After Jamie finally caught up he forced them both onto the right track. It was a nearby pet store that was family run, it was a nice place but no matter what section you were in it smelled like dog bones. Jamie looked around at the various food options while Damien played with the owner's cat. If 'playing' was sitting there while the cat viciously hissed at him. Jamie looked over at Damien who was trying to ignore the cat and couldn't help but laugh.

"I wonder what a wolf would want." Jamie thought out loud as he looked at the isle of dog food in front of him. "Something with lots of meat I'm sure. But none of this seems like it has enough." Jamie pictured Tyrant wanting meat in the night and deciding to eat Jamie's face off. He stood there with a look of terror cast over his face. "Maybe I'll just buy meat then."

Jamie walked over to Damien and grabbed the collar of his shirt pulling him out of the store. The cat kept hissing at Damien until he stuck his tongue out and was dragged out of the store.

It only took a few more minutes for Jamie and Damien to get to the store, they searched several isles looking for the frozen meat. They came across a large row of assorted chopped up meats. "You think your dog will really go for this?" Damien questioned as he poked one of the hanging meats.

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"Wolf." Jamie corrected. "And yes, I don't think she'll eat anything else." Jamie said reaching across and picking up a large packaged block of... whatever. He then came to a grim memory. He had just recently burned the money his father gave him, not thinking to separate his actual money from his dad's. He burned it all that night. "We're taking this." Jamie said softly so only Damien could hear him.

"Without paying?" Damien asked looking around awkwardly at the staff near them.

"Yes. Go a different way than me. I'll see you at my house." Jamie said and before Damien had time to reply Jamie had already taken off. Damien watched for a moment and with a sigh he looked away. Jamie walked fast paced but had the product in clear sight. He wasn't concerned about being stopped, he doubted anyone had a virtue in the store or that they'd use it to stop them even if some did. Jamie watched one of the staff members running up to him so Jamie grabbed someone's cart and whipped it backwards.

Jamie didn't look back to see what had happened to the person, he was already out of the store by this time anyways. After a while Jamie got home and placed his key in the door and stepped through the door greeted by Damien and Tyrant both sitting on the floor.

"How did you get here before me?" Jamie questioned looking at Damien sitting calmly. "And how did you get through the door?" Jamie further pressured Damien who sat calm on the floor. Tyrant stepped over and began smelling the meat that was in Jamie's hands.

"I should get going." Damien said standing up and walking to Jamie's left side petting Tyrant again. Damien stopped by Jamie and looked down at the floor while the breeze pushed in through the door. "I'm sorry that I couldn't tell you." Damien whispered as he stepped out the door into the darkening streets leaving a stunned Jamie behind him. Turning around Jamie couldn't see Damien anymore, like he had vanished. Jamie couldn't believe it, he was right. Damien had a Virtue too, that had to be it. Nothing else would make sense otherwise. Tyrant walked over and nudged Jamie's hand and sounded a whimper.

He could figure out what it is later, Damien was terrible at keeping secrets especially when Jamie was looking for answers. But for now as it was. Without Melony or Scott around Jamie had to figure out a way to get money. Sure he could steal everything but he didn't want some punk from 'The School' coming up to try and stop him every time he did. Especially since he had no idea how all the Aura stuff worked. And he still had more questions than answers. Getting killed before he got those answers wasn't exactly on his to-do list. He walked over to the table and laid his head down feeling the cold table top surface pressing onto his cheek.

"What to do, what to do." He repeated to himself lightly tapping his forehead on the hard surface. As he did he saw the daily newspaper out of the corner of his eye laying on the surface. He didn't even remember bringing the paper in the morning so he's not sure how it got there. But on the page that had been flipped open he could see a picture of the main bank in their city. The kind that had guards constantly. Jamie sat up with the paper in his hands as his curiosity was peaked.

Jamie closed his eyes thinking back to the night where him and Melony sat watching his money go up in flames. "We'll take it. Whatever we want. We just take." Said out loud as he opened his eyes and turned to the side to see his dim reflection on the glass of the kitchen window.

"Because that's who I am now." He reaffirmed in himself balling up his fist. Crumbling the picture of the bank in his unstoppable fist.

Chapter 16: Device

Jamie stood up from his chair and threw the newspaper aside. His eyes quickly scanned the interior of the kitchen for his backpack. He saw it in the hallway as he turned around. Walking over to it he placed his hand on the shoulder strap of it and just stood there. Feeling the fabric clasped in his hands he froze up. He never thought he would touch this thing again. After coming back to his senses he picked the bag up and unzipped the top of it. Turning it over he watched several types of school books and writing utensils fall to the ground smacking on the hardwood floor. He watched the pages turn open to random mathematics or moments in time.

Once it all hit the ground Jamie placed the backpack over his shoulder and looked back at his pet. "I'll be back shortly." Jamie said walking out the door shutting it behind him. Tyrant let out a small whimper and laid on the floor. While he was walking Jamie thought back to when 'The School' came after him. He wondered if they would do so again, maybe they would send another professor after him he thought as he mentally wrote down Paladin on his 'to kill' list.

It took Jamie a decent amount of time to reach the bank as it was. He stood for a moment looking on at the building. It seemed a little out of place, it have stone pillars, large steps and two police men standing guard just outside the door. Jamie slowly paced himself up the steps still grabbing on the shoulder strap of his backpack. He tried to remain calm as he approached the two guards, but he couldn't help but look over to the guard on his right. The guard looked over to him as they exchanged glances while Jamie was stepping by him.

Turning back to the back he saw a sweet old woman holding the door open for him. He stepped over to the girl and leaned over with a smile. "You get as far away from this bank as you can." He whispered into her ear. She looked at him as he continued to smile. She must have seen the backpack he had on because she turned and started to her car. As Jamie stepping in letting the glass door gently slide shut behind him.

Looking around he saw several people just going about their day, the place felt much bigger on the inside than it looked. One of the officers outside reached up on his walkie talkie and called in a potential robbery. He looked over at his other guard and smiled. The guard looked over curiously as he watched his partners eyes turn from green to red. The guard began walking about from his post and smiled as his hair change to a dark brown. "Let's see what you'll do Lannon." Jack said walking across the street.

Jamie slowly stepped forward looking at the bank teller helping the people in line. He felt bad when he saw how cute she was, one of those sweet blondes that was nice to everyone. Jamie walked up after the last person in her line had been attended to. She flashed him a sweet little grin as he looked around to the other people and the layout of the building. He had gotten to this point but he just realized he wasn't exactly sure of what he was going to do now that he was here.

"Can I help you?" She spoke after waiting for Jamie to open the conversation. "Wait! You're Jamie. Right?"

Jamie looked up slightly surprised. With a closer look he saw the girl he had a crush on when he was in middle school. He followed her every where. They were best friends for the longest time. Her name was Sherry, he never asked or was interested in her last name. "Sherry..." He trialed off thinking twice. If he did this now there's no way he could ever talk to her again. He tapped the desk and took a last look around.

"J... Jamie?" She nervously questioned seeing the straps on Jamie's shoulder, it wasn't uncommon for someone to bring a bag to the bank but as a bank teller it was always nerve wracking. She would never admit it but she knew they feelings Jamie has or had for her. She always felt them too but she was afraid to tell him anything, in case she was wrong.

"Sorry." Jamie spoke stepping backwards. He couldn't do it, not now or here at least. He felt his back press

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against the person behind him in line who fell to his feet after being him. "My ba-"

"Watch it freak!" The man shouted as he started bracing himself up. Freak? Jamie thought to himself. Jamie slid off his backpack and placed it on the counter behind him still keeping his eyes locked on this man. Reaching over Jamie grabbed the man's collar and lifted him up. "Whoa what the hell?" The man nervously claimed seeing how little effort it took to pick him up.

"A freak? No, no. You see sir I prefer the term Abomination." Jamie said with a grin. Bringing that arm holding the man to the side with force Jamie threw the man and watched him fly into the hard stone walls. Jamie turned back around to face Sherry still wearing his smile. "I'm going to need to make a withdrawal." Jamie watched as she stood hesitantly. He let out a sigh and looked back at the people who still stood shocked from what he did. More importantly he could see the reflections of approaching cop lights. "I don't have time for this." He said in frustration deciding to hop over the counter.

Sherry reeled to the side and watched as Jamie grabbed his backpack. Looking over Jamie saw a large metal door. He smiled noticing it was where most of the money was held. It was one of those banks that took large shipments of money at a time instead of smaller ones more frequently. "Jamie please." Sherry pleaded. Jamie looked back to her and stepped over to her causing an overwhelming fear to shoot through her body. Until she saw him lean over and could feel his lips pressing on her's. She stood dazed as a mix of emotions took over her body.

Turning back around Jamie walked to the metal door and placed his hand on the cold surface. He wondered if he could really break through this, he knew doors like this tended to be pretty thick to keep potential threats out. He brought his hand back and punched it into the metal. He saw the dent it made was decent enough and the punch itself didn't really hurt his hand. So he delivered blow after blow slowly pushing the door in more and more. Finally the pressure either on the door or on the hinges holding it was too much and the door fell in. Jamie saw a long slim hallway with countless small square lockers. They were all locked but didn't stand much of a chance when Jamie pulled them.

He stuffed the contents into his bag as he felt the bag get fuller and fuller he smiled. Taking what he wanted felt so good he just wanted to dance. Stepping out of the vault he swung the backpack over his shoulder and hopped back over the desk. He walked out of the bank to be greeted by several cop cars that seemed to be surrounded around the front of the bank. They all began to whisper to each other when they realized it was just one kid. Jamie stepped forward as the cops all pulled their guns up pointing at him.

Jamie stood unaffected unaware that just out of view, Independence had a stern bead on his head while Davis stood next to her. And on either side of them was Memorial and Veteran. Memorial was their heavy weapon specialist. His suit was bigger and capable of hiding weapons that pack a bigger punch. Veteran was their tactical specialist, his suit was the lightest of all three and was more geared towards stealth. Including small handguns, smoke bombs and light melee weapons. Their new member stood behind them nervously looking on, the nine year old Sally Walker was a shy girl.

For years her only friend was her imaginary friend Roadkill, it was just a small bunny that she'd play with. But around seven years old she felt what she considered the spirit of Roadkill possess her body. Unaware that this was a Virtue she lost all control and sanity turning into a monster. That is until Davis came around to her. She now stood in a floral pattern Sunday dress with her long blonde hair tied in two pigtails.

Looking on at the guards Jamie wondered if they'd actually start shooting at him. Even further he wondered if those bullets would hurt him or if they would just bounce off his skin. He started walking to the cops as they warned him to back off but Jamie continued walking forward. To his surprise Jamie heard the click of a gun as he felt a warm bullet go into his shoulder. It hurt? Jamie clutched his shoulder as he decided to keep walking forward, he couldn't back down, not now.

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All at once he could hear a barrage of sounding guns as he watched a hail of bullets speeding towards him. Before they hit his face they stopped and just hung in the air still spinning. Jamie stood shock as he saw the bullets mere inches from his face. Suddenly he felt the ground shake a bit as something slammed into the sidewalk a couple feet next to him.

"I have to fly halfway around the world and I have to come back to this?" Scott shouted letting his anger vapor out as the dust cleared from his landing. Out of sight Independence was about to pull the trigger when Davis hand was placed on her shoulder.

"More interesting people have arrived." Davis said quietly point to Scott.

"Should I take him out?" Independence questioned shifting her sights to Scott's head.

"Let's see where this goes." Davis said looking on through his binoculars.

Looking over Jamie saw his Father standing near him as the bullets in front of Jamie's face fell pinging to the ground. They both looked at each other as the cops stood still in awe. Jamie figured it must have been his dad who stopped the bullets, no other real rational explanation.

"I suggest you put that all back." Scott said pointing to Jamie's backpack. Jamie reached up and grabbed the strap on his shoulder, if only that Aura stuff would show up he thought.

"I don't think I'm going to do that." Jamie spoke rebelliously as he looked over at his father.

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said suggest. It was a command after all." Scott said looking stern in their showdown. Jamie felt his raging welling up in him, it felt like it was starting to flood his body. Looking at his hand he could see Aura gently flowing out of it. Jamie couldn't help but smile as he watched the Aura concentrate around his fist.

"My apologies then." Jamie spoke jumping to his dad swinging forward he watched his dad standing still. Jamie cheered on the inside as he prepared to land a hit on his father. Feeling his fist press onto Scott's face Jamie's glee was replaced with terror as he saw his dad unmoved.

"It's not nice to hit your father." Scott said reaching up and taking hold of Jamie's wrist. Pulling his hand aside he could see a completely stunned Jamie standing before him. "What did you just do?" Scott questions at the green light surrounding Jamie's hand.

"You should know that light better than anyone." Reaper said approaching from behind. Looking over Jamie could only see Reaper, he was a little shocked that Reaper hadn't brought his guards with him.

"I know what it is." Scott bellowed back at Reaper. "It's not what I'm concerned about. Jamie you need to stop, you're on a very slippery slope here. But it's not too late." Scott pleaded with his son while the cops looked on unsure of what to do.

"I find it hard to believe you really care. You're just afraid I'll be even stronger than you." Jamie snarled back.

"Trust me, that's my last fear."

"Then stop me! Right now!" Jamie challenged to his father. "I'm right here, one hit can put me down. Do it!" Davis looked on and saw the shadowy figure of Reaper standing behind Scott. A wide grin came onto his face as he saw his highest priority target had just appeared.

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"Jamie you know I can't." Scott pleaded. He turned around and quickly looked at Reaper. "Why are you here?"

"I didn't want to see my friend simply beating his son senseless." Reaper replied.

"Like I really would."

"I've seen what happens when you loose your temper." The lights faintly reflected off the surface of Reaper's suit. Unbeknownst to them Independence was slowly adjusting her sights.

There was a moment of silence shared between all of them, all there was is the wail of the cop sirens. Then there was a muffled boom. Jamie and Scott watched as Reaper's helmet was pierced while his blood trailed out of the other side. The blood trail fell onto the pavement as the bullet slammed into the stone wall of the bank.

Scott watched as his closet friend fell to the ground, bits of his helmet chipping off. Reaper's body hit the ground letting a pool of red collect around him, everything still seemed silent. Jamie was speechless, wasn't Reaper a feared man? What just happened? Scott turned to where he heard the gun go off, Jamie looked into his father's eyes. A naturally harmless man now had eyes that Jamie couldn't begin to explain. All he could see is they wanted to destroyed everything they saw.

Jamie couldn't explain what he felt. It was like a headache that didn't hurt, like if he wasn't looking at his dad he'd still know he was there. Scott brough his arms outstretched to his side as the cops in front of them lifted off the ground and were tossed to the side.

"I can only use about twenty percent around these people but..." Scott gripped tight onto nothing while gritting his teeth. "That will be enough to tear you apart!" Scott jumped forward with enough force to crack the ground under him. Davis watched Scott approaching them and felt a moment of complete fear until he saw Sally step in lead of the ground.

"I got you dad." Sally said turning around looking at Davis. She braced herself as she watched Scott getting close.

"Memorial and Veteran, help Sally!" Davis shouted watching gliding across the ground towards them. Jamie watched as his father got further and further out of sight. He began running after him insistent on getting glimpse of his father in action again. Memorial lifted up an RPG and aimed it towards the rushing Scott, pulling the trigger the rocket sent off with a trail of smoke behind it. Scott saw it coming and simply slapped it away letting it continue into the sky.

"I don't feel like my weapons will do much sir," Veteran said stepping backwards.

"I said I got it." Sally said as Scott closed it. Just a few seconds now until Scott was at them. Rage still in his eyes, he couldn't see a line between right and wrong. Just the people in his sights. Scott saw the little girl in front of them, normally he would stop but it was clear she was with them. And clear that she was confident enough to be just standing there. Scott reached out with a hard fist as Sally braced herself. The met with a harsh impact that ripped up dirt and grass from the field under them. He's stronger then I thought Sally thought to herself trying her best not to be moved. "Roadkill!" Sally shouted of still holding back Scott's advance but she could feel herself slipping.

Scott could hear that from behind him something heavy had landed sending a cloud of dirt into the air. Scott turned around to face his other foe but could see anything but the dirt. Suddenly he felt something big punish his body making him rag doll to the side. He skipped several times across the dirt and finally halted as he hit

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his back on a sturdy grown tree.

"To test one of my vials. I couldn't have chosen a better person. Thank you for showing up Scott." Davis said looking at the carnage the hit on Scott left up until his resting place. "Behold, 'The friend'." He gleefully said to himself as Scott rose from his seat. Jamie had now made it to the battle field, he wasn't sure if he should fight as well. His dad said he was only at twenty percent right? Jamie didn't even know who these other people were. Before he had much time to think Scott was already on the offense again. Rushing towards Sally.

"So interesting." Scott said in a weird sense of justification that he hadn't just assaulted a regular child. Swinging Scott attempt to hit the kid who dodged by jumping to the side. As she dodged Scott could feel another hit that he couldn't see landing into his stomach pushing him into the air. Jamie watched and turning to the point of impact he could see a vague outline.

"For just this once, I'll help you dad." Jamie said under his breath. He hated his father but he didn't even know these people who killed Reaper in cold blood, Reaper helped save his life with Melony. He owed him that much. For a quick moment his head went over the possibilities of where the attack came from. He looked over to the girl and saw such an accepting look in her eyes. Even if she were to die, she was okay with it because she made new friends. Friend, friends Jamie repeated to himself. Then it clicked. "Dad what's your favorite memory as a child!" Jamie shouted out to his father who was now hovering in the air looking down at Sally.

"What does that have to do with anything?" Scott questioned but for just a moment his head went to the first time he saw fireworks. In that instant looking down at Sally he could see a large faint outline standing next to her. Of course, she's still just a child Scott pieced together in his head. He closed his eyes for a second and relaxed his mind pushing through his unstable rage he brought himself back to his childhood. To memories of his parents and old friends. Opening his eyes slowly he could now clearly see it. Next to Sally stood a monster of three times her height. It seemed like some mutated monster that started out as a bunny with longer limbs and huge ears. It's paws had become more human like yet still looked similar to paws. It's sharp teeth bore a wicked grin, it wore tattered clothing and a collar with a chain falling from it. It's fur was white with streaks of black here and there.

It leaned back for a moment and then shot forward jumping up at Scott who still hovered in the air. Scott put his hands in front of him blocking the large fist of Roadkill, Scott felt such an impact from the beast that he had to fly forward just to stop himself from being sent away. Jamie looked over at the other members of Sally's group just stood still. Scott looked to the side to see the monster's large ear slap into him sending him crashing into the ground. Jamie decided to take action and swung his fist at Sally who turned just in time to see it and blocked it immediately. She retaliated with an attempted kick to Jamie's shin but he jumped back the moment he felt her foot touch him. Looking up Jamie could see Roadkill's fist crashing down above him. Before contact was made Scott intercepted by grabbing the creature's arm and pulling it back.

"Fine, thirty percent it is!" Scott shouted as a breeze emitted from him as he twisted throwing the bunny to the side. As Roadkill got to the floor he turned to land safely on his feet. Launching back at Scott he once again blocked the hit in the same fashion as before. Seeing the ear attempt another hit he reached up with his free arm and stopped it. Jamie turned his attention back to Sally who was leaping towards him. Jamie blocked a series of blows that Sally attempted and returning fire she didn't the same blocking Jamie's attacks. He twisted and ran his outstretched leg along the ground which Sally jumped over and still in the air she delivered a kick that Jamie slid under.

Scott still holding the bunny's ear flew up with the heavy monster higher and higher into the air. "Let's see if monster bunny's can fly." Scott jested as he threw the bunny up high above the ground. Davis, Memorial, Veteran and independence watched as the fight evolved.

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"She's amazing sir." Memorial spoke watching Sally fighting Jamie in the distance. "I wonder if we should help her though?" He questioned only to see Davis shaking his head in reply. "As you wish."

Jamie caught a punch by Sally and holding her hand he spun in a circle quickly and let go letting Sally take off, she skipped once on the ground and managed to catch herself only taking a moment to breath before running towards Jamie again. Scott looked on as Roadkill started falling victim to gravity but stopped in the middle of the air by flapping its ears as if they were wings. "What the hell?" Scott questioned watching the flying bunny right in front of him. Roadkill reached over and grabbed Scott's leg as Scott let out a wondering grunt Roadkill swung it's arm down sending Scott back down to the field. He barely managed to stable himself as he landed feet first on the ground. From where he was he could still see Reaper's motionless body laying in a now larger pool of blood.

"I didn't come to fight, I came to end you." He said looking down at his fist as Roadkill landed next to him. "I'm just going to go all out." The very moment he spoke that someone showed up in front of him. No one saw this girl approach them or did they see him all day. Her hair was bright red with various other shades of red in it. She leaned up to Scott's ear and whispered something that wasn't audible to Jamie. Then as quick as she came she left without any trace of how she escaped. Almost as if she teleported, Jamie remembered Thorn mentioning something about his sister. Could that of been who the girl was?

"Pardon my outrage." Scott said calmly opening his hands. "I shall remain at thirty, it should be enough." Scott lifted his hand up to block a hit from Roadkill who had become noticeably stronger as he forced Scott to use his other arm to counteract the force.

"She's not perfected yet." Davis said looking on at the fight and watching Scott and Roadkill struggling. "Memorial."

"Yeah I know." Memorial replied once again lifting up his RPG. After reloading it he aimed it in Jamie's direction. Turning Jamie was shocked to see the projectile heading right for him. Jumping to the side he turned to watch it go right past him and start heading to the bank. He looked on seeing Sherry walking out the front door to observe all that had happened. She looked on hopeless as the RPG was coming right for her. While Scott was still in a power struggle with Roadkill, Jamie turned to the bank and started putting all his strength into running that he had.

"You're going to save her?" Jamie heard the voice of Melony clearly ring out in his head. He continued to run attempting to get to Sherry before the explosive did. "What does she even matter?!" Melony's voice continued to scream into his head. He brought his hands up to his ears trying to block out the sound.

"Shut up." He screamed as he and the RPG got closer to the bank and Sherry.

"Do you like her?"

"No it's not that!"

"Then what?!"

"I don't know!"

"Let her die! I'm all you need! She can't keep up with you, she can't love you. She can't be what you need!" There was a surreal moment where Jamie felt a weird covering of bliss. He stood inches away from Sherry who had now curled into a ball at the sight of the rocket. Reaching his hand out Jamie slapped the rocket away in the same manner he had seen his dad do it before.

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Sherry looked on as Jamie stood heroically before her, sun leaving his back completely black she could only see his outline and he turned to her. "You okay?" He questioned in a calm voice. They both heard a large boom. They both looked to the source to see a large white cloud of smoke where Scott had been fighting. Without saying anything they looked on for a while until they saw Scott's shadow stepping out from the haze.

Flying over it only took Scott a second to be right next to Jamie and in front of Sherry. "The bigger guard threw a smoke bomb. They wanted to retreat and I couldn't see for the life of me where then went. I did see some other guy appear right before the smoke cloud but I couldn't make anything out about him." Scott said as he looked over at Reaper's body. "Thank you for your help." Scott spoke to Jamie who stood with the backpack still on him. "I don't suppose you'll be putting that back."

Jamie shook his head. "It's not like you'll stop me, we both know that." Jamie said confident that he knew his father well enough. Scott stood for a moment and turned around starting to walk over to Reaper's body. Bending over he picked up Reaper's lifeless gently keeping him in his arms.

"You're right I won't stop you." Scott said standing still. "But I know people who will." was the last words he said before flying over with Reaper in his arms, it was only a second until he was outta sight. Jamie looked down at Sherry and turned to walk away.

"Thank you, we should... catch up some time." Sherry called out to Jamie. He turned to her and gave her a smile. Turning back he began walking away again leaving the whole incident behind him. It took him way too long to get home, all he wanted to do was rest now. Laying his heavy backpack on the floor he greeted Tyrant who was jumping all over him. He didn't know what he wanted to be but he knew it felt good when he did what he wanted. Right now, that's all that mattered to him.

Scott sat in a dark room only lit by the monitor screen in front of him as he scrolled through files of Abominations and Lights. "Fighting you myself needs to be a last resort. I can't kill you myself. And I can't watch you rip this world apart." Scott spoke to himself still scrolling through his documents. "Sadly even just sending the strongest people I know after you has it's own complications." He clicked on a few names he remembered. "I need to find out for sure. So six people. With increasing strength."

Jamie looked up at the ceiling as he laid on his bed thinking of his father and what he meant. "What was up with that old guy with that Sally chick?" He questioned to himself as Tyrant jumped on the bed and laid down by his legs with a soft yawn. Dad...

"With these six plus me, I'll create a physical limbo." Scott spoke to himself slowly accepting what he was doing was basically hiring people to try and kill his son. "So let's see how you do against all this Jamie." Scott shut down his computer and stood up in the now completely dark room.

"First opponent will be Morris Chandler. You'll get to see what a real Abomination looks like now, Jamie."

Chapter 17: Encounter

It only took Scott a few hours until he found himself standing in the rain outside a large military complex. The structure was mainly made of stone and had guards sprawled all about the premises. They were regular guards though, lacking the super suits that the higher ups had. They were just regulation camouflaged suits that really didn't work against the building's back drop. Scott approached the front gate of the building as two guards lowered their guns. Scott stood there waiting for them to realize who they were pointing at.

"Oh! Mr. Lannon. We deeply apologize." One guard spoke lowering his weapon back to his side. Scott gave him an understanding nod as the gate behind them began opening up. Walking inside Scott walked through a variety of detection devices mostly geared towards weeding out any potential Virtues that could impersonate a person of high regard. Scott looked around at the large hallways and various sealed off doors. He had been here a hundred times but still was amazed at the structure. It was a subsidiary building to 'The School' complex. It was a jail for Abominations who they saw no reason to kill or they needed to interrogate before putting them down. Walking by jail cells Scott could hear the lament of all the inmates. Which was to be expected considering that Scott himself put almost half of them there.

Walking by two guards Scott heard something about an assault on 'The School' that took place sometime yesterday. It would've been more interesting to Scott had he been here for no reason. But he was here looking for someone, the problem was he couldn't remember where he was for the life of him. Down the hall he saw a familiar face walking his way. Paladin slowly checked each cell to make sure the doors were damaged or tampered with in any way. Looking up from one of the doors Paladin saw Scott off in the distance.

"Hi there Paladin. How you feeling?" Scott joked as Paladin came up closer to him.

"That's very funny, you're lucky you're in an official building. Which reminds me, why aren't you in one of these prisons. Or better yet why hasn't the janitor cleaned you up." Paladin fired back at Scott.

"You don't know the terms of my release? How odd a higher up like you not knowing. Maybe they feel your use is running out?" Scott further dug into Paladin's skin.

"That's ridiculous. I'm a top honored professor!" Paladin said confidently raising his arm up to his side gesturing like he was holding a wine glass.

"I'm sure it was such an honor getting your arm torn off." Scott laughed out noting the cut sleeve on where his left arm would be. There was a moment of silence where Scott was putting two and two together. "No way! You lost your arm fighting my son didn't you!?" Scott leaned over letting himself chuckle. "That's so fantastic!"

Paladin reached to his back and pulled out his sword and pressed it against Scott's throat. "Careful there buddy. I doubt 'The School' wants a professor beating up a simple visitor." Scott mocked as he stood unmoved. Paladin took a second to think over the situation and secured the blade back into its scabbard. "Might want to get your arm looked at. Hey maybe you can stick that blade of yours in it." Scott said as a final jest before walking away. Paladin turned to see Scott's back as he disappeared into the dim lighting of the hallways.

Scott continued to walk for several minutes, the halls never seemed to change much other than the screaming from the cells. Eventually Scott came across a wandering guard. "Excuse me, can you direct me to Rift's cell?" Scott asked the slightly spaced out guard.

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He looked around for a moment giving an unsure 'uh...' as he read the numbers on the metal doors. "You're in the completely wrong wing man." The guard replied in a constant spaced out tone. Scott stood for a minute waiting for the guard to speak again.

"Well could ya tell me what wing then?" Scott said with slight irritation, this kid was just wasting his time.

"I'm pretty sure it's wing C, you're in wing A." The guard said then soon left after completely ignorant that Scott might have any other questions. Scott turned around and walked back to the front of the building quickly passing the guard who most probably just buying time until his shift ended. It took him longer then he wanted but he finally made his way to wing C. It looked just about the same, well exactly the same.

Scott walked down the hall looking for the right door, he at least knew the number before he came so that was something. He pressed his hand on the door and wondered if they guards here would mind if Scott busted the door in. "They probably would be upset." Scott said to himself.

He saw another guard walking towards him. "You guys are super convenient." Scott qualified the guard who stopped right by him.

"Do you need something?" The guard questioned reading the number on the door.

"I just need you to open this good sir." Scott said placing his finger on the door feeling the dust that had collected on it. The guard hesitated for a moment and then reached into his coat pulling out a small key on a chain. Scott wondered how practical and safe one key for every door was. The guard shoved the key into the lock, Scott could see the man's hand clearly shaking.

The door creaked open as the dim light from the hall slivered into the claustrophobic room. Inside Scott could see a dull gray eye looking directly at him, almost like he'd been seeing Scott through the door the entire time. "I'll be fine from here thanks." Scott said to the guard who walked away knowing the face of Ace, and that the doors locked once closed he felt confident. Scott stepped in while still being eyed down by the man he put there. Rift.

"Hello Scott." Rift said out loud watching Scott slip into the room blocking the light from the hallway.

"Hi Morris. How have you been?" Scott asked not meaning for it to sound as sarcastic as it did coming out.

"God ya know Scott. I've just been so great."

"I'm really glad to hear that Morris."

"So what did you come here for buddy? Kick some more of my teeth out. Oh wait ya know what?" Morris said opening his mouth and showed Scott him running his tongue along his mouth. "The teeth you knocked out last time seem to have grown back, you could just hit those. Ah memories!" Morris continued to jester to Scott who looked on unamused.

"I have a proposal for you."

"You haven't even taken me out to dinner yet!"

"You're right maybe I will kill you here." Scott said tired of Morris' inability to take anything seriously.

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"No no no!" Morris giggled, Scott had just now noticed that the entire time he had been in the room Morris hadn't moved an inch. Scott looked on at Morris' long gray hair. It wasn't caused by age, Scott remembered it was always like that even when Scott put him in here. "I hear that son of yours in running a muck lately."

"That's actually what I came to talk to you about."

"Oh? How unlike you Scotty." Scott stood for a moment remembering how much he hated that nickname. It made him think back to when Scott and Morris first met. It was an incredibly sunny day, one of those days where you don't expect anything could go wrong. Scott was called in by 'The School' to check out a missing person report. It took a few days and a few favors from friend to track Morris down. He finally found the bodies but not in the shape he was hoping. It was such a beautiful day, stained red. Find all those bodies stacked up like they were meat in the apartment. Morris sitting there on his rocking chair like nothing was around him, like those bodies weren't there.

"I need you to kill my son."

Jamie continued to lay on the couch flipping through various channels trying to find something to amuse him. It was all mostly stupid news, overrated cartoons or some mindless reality show. It was all really boring and couldn't keep his interest for more than a few minutes. He rolled over and looked at the fabric of the couch. He was so used to a fight taking place later at night that he could fall asleep when he got home. But the sun was still in the sky and pressing on Jamie warming the back of his neck.

Standing up he walked over to his back door and looked at the calm grass that sat bright green in the sun. He opened the metal back door and stepped forward walking down his back steps. Standing in the middle of his backyard he heard Tyrant run out excited to be back outside. "Sorry I guess I forgot to let you out more." Scott said as Tyrant ran to a corner of the yard and allowed herself to use the bathroom. "Of course." Jamie remarked turning his head to the sky letting the warm wind press over his face. He snapped out of his daze hearing Tyrant let out a loud bark the almost ruptured Jamie's eardrum.

"Watch it." Jamie said to Tyrant reaching up and rubbing the outside of his ear which was still ringing. "But I get what your saying, I cant be standing here moping. I should be inspired. That last match was so fun! I need to train." Jamie shouted feeling fired up. He began running through the training exercise he had set for himself in his head. Whenever he would throw a punch or a kick Tyrant would leap over his leg or fist like it was a game.

About half an hour went by where Jamie trained continually without taking a second to rest. Jamie noticed that Tyrant has stopping playing around with Jamie while he was training. "What's your problem?" Jamie asked to Tyrant who was sitting pretty watching him. Tyrant let out another softer bark and turned to the ally, it wasn't like anything was there for Jamie to see.

Jamie walked over cautiously peering around the corner of his garage to see if anything was there but it was just an empty ally. Jamie watched Tyrant start walking forward into the ally. Every now and then Tyrant looked back at Jamie who was standing still. "Am I supposed to follow?" Jamie questioned and in reply Tyrant barked and took off running. Jamie stood for a minute watching his pet take off. "Wait! People will freak if they see you running around." Jamie said starting to run after the wolf.

Even with his increased strength enhancing his speed he didn't see himself catching up to the dog any. There was a red car sitting right under a street light in front of Jamie and Tyrant. Tyrant veered towards the car hopping on it and with one mighty jump she pounced up onto the roof of the nearby house. "How!?" Jamie shouted watching Tyrant while still running after her. He knew wolves all had some amazing physical attributes but that was astounding. Jamie took a deep breath jumping onto the same car and grabbed the light

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pole using it and his momentum to swing up to the same roof.

Tyrant let out another bark and started hopping from roof to roof running across the block of house. Jamie stuttered for a moment and gave chase after the wolf both of them jumping the gaps between the house. It felt weird at first but only took a second for Jamie to get used to it. Tyrant then jumped to the right landing in the middle of the street. Jamie did the same expecting to feel the impact when he hit the ground but he felt nothing landing on his feet. Tyrant once again started running as Jamie once again gave chase. They reached the end of the residential area and were forced to turn onto the main road which was already incredibly busy.

Jamie had to dodge cars and other vehicles as he ran after Tyrant who effortlessly weaved in and out of traffic. Jamie's movements between the cars and such was clunky and unsure. After a while of running on the main road Jamie found himself chasing Tyrant onto the highway. "Are you insane!?" Jamie screamed looking at the busy highway Tyrant was running onto. Tyrant for a moment looked back and gave Jamie a bark. "Wait a minute."

He thought back to the commands Jamie had given the wolf and that she followed them all to a tee. "I train you..." He said trailing off as he quickly thought to himself. "And you train me!" Jamie figured excited as he looked at the increasing numbers of oncoming traffic. Jamie did his best while chasing after the wolf to dodge all the cars he could without taking short cuts. Seeing a large eighteen-wheeler Jamie ran towards it as it barreled forward. Putting his hands on the cab he pushed up and vaulted himself over the truck watching it pass under him. He was starting to get it, dodging it all required last second planning and quick reflections and most importantly, adaption.

They had to be running for the decent portion of around two hours as the day was starting to get a little dimmer. Tyrant jumped off the side of the highway landing in an industrial transportation hub. Trains ran through constantly to take goods away or bring them in. Jamie followed landing on the dirt and quickly running after Tyrant who continued running in front of him. For a moment Jamie lost sight of Tyrant until he heard the wolf's booming bark again.

He found her sitting calmly on the train tracks, the girl didn't even seem exhausted. Jamie was fighting just to catch his breath. "You're one fit animal you know that?" Jamie panted out as he heard a whistle sound off in the distance.

"Kill your son eh?" Morris chattered out looking at Scott. "That's a little harsh, what's in it for me?"

"The one thing you desire most. Your freedom." Scott replied observing the chains that were around Morris' wrist and ankles. Scott wondered what good these did against someone with a Virtue like Morris'.

"And you won't bother me once I'm free?"

"I didn't say that."

"Then why should I bother Scotty."

"Because you haven't had a good fight in years. You're looking for some blood to spill. My son, he'll put up such an attractive fight."

"Like I can take your word for it."

"We are talking about the same son who was able to rip off one of Paladin's arms. And..." Scott softened his voice wondering if this was even a fact he needed to pull out. He likely already had Morris in the bag.

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"And?"

"My son has manipulated Aura." Scott watched as Morris' eyes filled with excitement.

"Oh! You know just how to work me Ace-e-boo." Morris bellowed out rolling his head around.

"So you're in?"

"Without a doubt!"

"Very happy to hear that." Scott said turning around and walking out of the door letting the light from the hall flush in.

"Aren't you going to take these chains off?" Morris questioned lifting his arms up and moving them around to make the chains jingle.

"I will when I need you. Besides, I need to recruit the rest of you.." Scott looked over his shoulder at Morris. "You, Morris Chandler. Are now in limbo." Was the last thing Morris was able to hear before the door shut leaving him shrouded in complete darkness again.

"This will be so much fun, I hope he can hurt me." Morris chuckled out through his maniacal laughter.

Jamie looked in the distance at the source of the whistle to see smoke pouring out from the tracks. A heavy train carrying section after section of cargo was charging down the tracks towards Tyrant. Tyrant continued to sit pretty on the tracks wagging her tail watching the train coming at her. She looked over to Jamie and let a small bark out followed by a whimper.

"I can't stop that, get off the tracks!" Jamie pleaded as the train came closer and closer. Tyrant just let out another bark still watching and waiting. "I'm going to die." Jamie said to himself running onto the tracks. He jumped up and down quickly readying himself as the train shot towards them. Jamie started running, picking up more and more speed as the train got closer and closer.

Once the train and Jamie were right up to each other Jamie put his hands forward on the speeding train. He could feel his fingers bending back and his elbows buckle as he met with the train. The train continued to push him back closer and closer to Tyrant. With a shrill yell Jamie planted his foot in the dirt breaking the rums of the train tracks under him. He did his best pushing forward attempting to stop the train completely. Jamie continued hugging the train not realizing that he had already stopped the behemoth.

Tyrant let out a whimper making Jamie open his eyes and look at the ground to see he wasn't moving anymore. Turning around Jamie ran picking up Tyrant in his arms he hurried away from the train not want to converse with cops or even whoever was driving the train. Jamie retreated to behind another stationary train and laid on his back with Tyrant on his stomach. Laying there Jamie attempted to stop his frantic breathing as his broken fingers repairing themselves.

It was dark now, the sun had gone down but the moon hadn't come up yet so the sky seemed empty as Jamie looked up at it. He could see the stars but they were faint under the smog from the polluting hub. Tyrant began to growl about the same time Jamie heard the two sets of footsteps appear sound out before them. Jamie lifted his head and body to see both of Reaper's guards standing in front of him. It took a moment to recognize them since their suits were all black and they were standing against the blackening sky.

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"It's you two. Do you need something?" Jamie questioned, he really wanted to avoid fighting. As he was certain at this state he wouldn't even be able to fight and knew he had no chance of winning.

"Yesterday, Reaper died because of you. As you can expect our whole system has been thrown into flux." The guard on the left said raising his hands up he cracked his knuckles. "We're just looking for payback."

Jamie was too tired, his body already felt worn down and he could barely lift his arms much less fight. If these two were intent on killing him they'd have no problem doing it. Jamie watched as the two guards took a step back while Jamie heard something land on the train above his head. Turning around and moving away from the train he looked at the figure standing on it.

The long black hair being pushed in the breeze, her clothing all black casting a proud silhouette against the sky. "Leave these two to me my love." Melony said as she reached up and used her right pointer finger to pull her lower eyelid down a bit making her purple eyes shine. "I believe there was something I promised I would show you."

Chapter 18: Core

The wind continued pushing Melony's hair around while she watched both of Reaper's guards standing around looking all cocky. She really couldn't stand that, she knew she had the same stance but it irritated her nonetheless. She reached up and unzipped the long black trench coat she had on. Taking it off she let it be taken away by the wind revealing her black tank top and now visible leather gloves. "Jamie please promise me one thing." Melony spoke in such a way that it almost completely offset the situation at hand.

"What's that?" Jamie questioned looking up at her, against the sky he could only see those bright purple eyes of her's.

"That no matter what." She hesitated for a moment to finalize her resolve to fight in her own head. She already knew just a melee approach wasn't enough to fight them. Especially after seeing one of them kill a Student with just a simple touch. "No matter what you'll always think I'm cute."

Scott walked into the main building of 'The school' to look for his next recruit. He already knew the six of them by name so finding them should be too much of a challenge. It'd be nice if life worked like that. As Scott walked through the building he constantly heard chatter of a recent break-in. Scott when to the front desk admittedly curious of the details.

"Hello Ace, how can I help you?" The receptionist said while she constantly logged data into her computer.

"What's with the break in stuff?"

"Just yesterday around the same time Paladin was deployed to target Jamie. Someone was able to sneak into our building completely undetected."

"Did they kill anyone or anything?"

"No, they only took a few files on a former Student."

Scott stood still as he looked forward processing the information. "Whose files went missing?"

"Just one person, Melony Zain."

"You do what you have to." Jamie said looking up at Melony. She gave a shy little nod in return as she opened her eyes wide. Jamie watched as Melony's eyes began to alter. The purple in her eyes seemed to vibrate for a moment before going back to being still. Then the purple color cracked out into the sclera of her eye the same sort of cracks you see on a windshield. The cracks continued to spider web out of her iris taking over the rest of her eye. After a short moment all you could see was the pupil, the rest of it was the vibrant purple her iris had always been.

Melony stood still for a moment and looked at the two guards with hungry eyes. "Please tell me your names. I'd like to distinguish between the two." Melony spoke, her voice had a short of shallow echo to it.

"I'm pitch and he's-"

"Real names. You have no need to hide yourself." Melony interrupted one of the guards. The guards both looked at each other and had a good chuckle at what seemed like a threat.

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"I'm Paul and he's Thomas." One of the guards said point to himself and then his partner.

"I doubt those are your real names but it will do."

"It doesn't matter, I'll end this now." Paul said leaping up at Melony while sticking his arm out. Melony reached into her pocket and pulled out a small packet. As she moved out of the way she brought her hand with the packet up and splashed it all over Paul. Falling to the other side of the train Paul looked at the mess Melony had put on his suit.

"What the hell is this!" He shouted trying to wipe it off but the glowing white substance refused to budge.

"It's white out mixed with chemicals to make it shine at night. It's not dangerous, just there so I can tell you two apart. Your suits are exactly the same. I needed to know which one had the killing touch."

"And if I tricked you?"

"I doubt that greatly." Melony said stepping down towards Thomas. She started walking to him when he started assaulting her which Melony simply felt herself blocking like second nature. "See, I'm not dead." Suddenly Paul showed up behind her and added to Thomas' attacking. She dodged all of Paul's attacks while blocking all of Thomas'. "So Thomas what's your Virtue?" Melony asked still dodging and blocking the onslaught. "You're the stronger one right?"

Both Thomas and Paul halted their attacks as they looked at Melony between them both. "And how do you come to that?" Paul asked offended that he had been placed under Thomas in power.

"Because you're already dead." Melony said turning over to Paul with a wide grin. Paul felt an indescribable fear creep throughout his entire body as he jumped away from Melony. When he landed he could see a little white light hovering in the air next to him. All four of them watched as the white light grew in size and intensity. Paul started lifting his hand up and tried to touch the vibrant light, as his finger got close the object combusted and let out an impressive explosion. It sent Paul flying back until he hit another stationary train in such a way that it spun him into the air. The impact broke his armor off of his head revealing brown hair down to his shoulders and green eyes. As he spun into the air he saw another light hovering above him while Melony watched. As he got close the light once again erupted forcing him down crashing into the train ripping up the roof of it.

Through the rubble Paul crawled out of the wreckage of the train with mangled legs and a twisted arm. As he crawled out he came face to face with another light only an inch away from his right eye.

"That's enough!" Thomas shouted as Melony turned to face him causing the white light to burst right in front of Paul's eyes. Melony grinned wickedly as Paul's blood stained the train wreck behind him. Thomas stood silent as he looked at the now unidentifiable Paul. Reaching up Thomas took the locks of his helmet off and continued to slide it off his head.

"Pardon the deceit but my name. Is Pluto." His gray hair with a tint of blue hung just above his eyes of the same color.

"Pluto? Might you be part of Steller?"

"That's correct."

"Why are you acting as Reaper's guard?"

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"I'm not exactly a planet anymore." Pluto spoke as the black on his outfit seemed like it was trying to escape. "Did you know that the planet Pluto is in perpetual darkness?" The black on his outfit continued branching out covering the surrounding surface in darkness. Eventually Pluto himself was lost in the shroud of midnight. Jamie and Melony watched as the dark of Pluto headed towards both of them. When it took them both over it didn't hurt or feel any different. They just couldn't see anything right in front of them.

Melony felt Pluto's fist land into her face making her stumble back and trip over some train tracks. "If you live in the darkness long enough, you can see right through it." Pluto echoed as his foot pressed down on Melony's chest keeping her pressed on the ground. She could hear him pull some sort of weapon out, it was definably metal. She couldn't focus on the darkness in front of her, she couldn't move at all. Pluto looked up at where the sky would be and looked at the stars in the sky. "That's odd, I shouldn't be able to see even the star."

"Not stars." Melony choked out under Pluto's foot. All the lights exploded at once but right as they did they vanished. The explosions couldn't be seen and the light from them instantly faded. "Shit." Melony mumbled out feeling her back being pressed onto the ground.

"That was a clever attempt." Pluto admired looking at the sky where the lights had been. "But I will not be beaten by some woman." He brought his foot up again and began slamming it down but when Melony felt the pressure let up she rolled to the side so Pluto basically kicked the ground. Melony hopped away a few times and silently walked to the side as she figured he knew where she was through sound.

"It's more like sonar Melony." Pluto said in confidence. He brought his hand harshly forward pressing the spear in the back forcing it out the stomach. He could feel the warm liquid as it pooled onto his hand. "Sorry Melony, I simply cannot let you live."

"Who do you think you're talking too?" Jamie said through the darkness. Pluto confused went to feel Melony's face but was instead greeted with the destroyed mess of Paul's head. He started backing away but it was too late as he felt Melony's foot hound into the side of his head. As he started stumbling away she grabbed his arm pulling him closer and punching him in the rib.

"I hate revealing this ability, but it seems I must." Pluto said and directly after Melony felt several sharp points press through her body. "As long as your in my shade, I control everything and all." Melony felt helpless, she didn't think a guard was this strong.

"The world can't be magnificent if you can't see." Rung out an unfamiliar voice to Melony and Pluto. But Jamie peaked his eyes in curiosity as the voice played in his ear. All the dark around them all evaporated without any trace of it's existence.

"What are you doing Jack?" Jamie questioned without even looking to see who it was.

"Was taking a stroll home and saw this weird dome of darkness." Jack replied with a giggle added in.

"What did you do?" Pluto asked seeing his dome had vanished completely.

"You assume it was me?" Jack jested out point his finger to the side and noticed no one was there. "Oh! He must have left!"

Jamie thought to himself guessing it was Barley who must have made the darkness vanish. But it doesn't make sense that he would help them any. Jamie looked over to Melony. "This is your fight right Melony?"

She turned over to face him. "Yes?" Questioning unsure of where he was going with it.

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"So why are you holding back?" Melony stood still listening to him she put her hands together in front of her. "Holding back, isn't cute."

Melony smiled as she turned to Pluto. Pluto knew there would be a few minutes before he was able to cast his shade again. He ran at Melony grabbing his spear out of Paul's lifeless body as he ran. He spun the weapon quickly getting the blood off of it. He swung it at Melony who back flipped to dodge but he continued to advance with a thrust as Melony moved her body to the side. Swinging it at an angle Melony brought her hand up at the wooden part of the spear breaking it.

She grabbed the broken spear as it was still in the air and threw it at Pluto who as expected dodged it. Melony swung her fist and Pluto leaned back avoiding it, while still spinning Melony jumped up and delivered a kick to his shoulder.

"Can you please do that shadow thing?" Melony pleaded as she braced herself from her kick.

"Why do you actually want that?"

"I don't want to see how you look after this." Melony sternly stated taking her gloves off.

"As you wish." The color once again branched off Pluto and cover Jamie, Melony, him and Jack. Right away Pluto screwed Melony with several points of darkness.

"Please don't tell Jamie about what you're going to see." Melony said with the darkness weaving in and out of her. There was a moment of silence and then all Jamie could hear was Pluto screaming "Please no! What is that?!" Then the darkness faded away. Looking at where Pluto was all Jamie could see was what he assumed was Pluto. His body was ripped about all over. The only thing Jamie could truly distinguish was his eyes that were filled with terror.

Jamie looked over to Melony as she slipped her gloves back on, turning to Jamie she smiled with her eyes back to normal. Looking over Jack had already vanished from sight. Tyrant ran over and nudged Melony who knelt down to pet her while Tyrant licked her face. Tyrant and Melony walked over to Jamie, Melony just stood for a moment. Jamie rose to his feet and smile at her.

"Thank you for saving me. That's twice those eyes saved me right? It was you back at the restaurant that made those explosions."

"Yeah, I can only make them when I'm looking at something. How big the explosion is depends on how long or how much I focus. I call it ocular detonation."

"That's really neat, why wouldn't you want me to know about that?"

Melony closed her eyes for a moment as a picture of flames flashed in her mind. "Shy I guess." She said while out of sight her files got picked up again by the wind and blown even further way. "You must be so tired. Let's go home before someone finds this mess." She looked back at the two damaged bodies, these two couldn't have been Reaper's true guards. They were far too weak.

She took Jamie's hand and lifted him up, when he was firmly standing Melony jumped onto the train she appeared on and grabbed a suit case. "I hope you don't mind if I stay they night again." Melony asked giving the sweetest face she possibly could.

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"Sure, but Tyrant is kinda a bed hog." Jamie joked as he started walking with Tyrant at his side. "I'm starting to wish I could fly like dad." Jamie said realizing he was in for another long walk.

"Me and you both." Melony said walking after them. They all just walked along the highways, it was the only way Jamie knew how to get back home so it was their only bet. It was about an hour until things started looking familiar, Jamie only now realizing just how fast him and Tyrant must have been running to cover that distance in the amount of time they did.

"So how exactly does that work? Your eyes I mean." Jamie questioned knowing they still had a ways to walk home. He was far too tired to run anymore.

"I'm not exactly sure, I can only speculate. I stumbled upon it on accident when I was around seven. So if I had to guess. I'd say where ever I focus on some how correlates with my interaction of Aura. It heats up the atoms and at their threshold they explode and the size depends on how much Aura is in them. Maybe, but Aura is an untestable substance sadly. So I don't know how it really reacts to other building blocks."

"So you can manipulate Aura too?"

"Anyone with a Virtue technically can, after all Aura is what gave birth to our powers."

"How's that?"

"I'm not really sure, that's something you'd have to ask your dad, sorry."

"Not a problem, your Virtue is so cool though." Jamie said making Melony blush again. The rest of the walk was mostly in silence, there just wasn't much to talk about. Jamie wanted to know where Melony went but it really wasn't his business to ask. Jamie just remembered that the day Melony left he dropped his clothing off to be cleaned. So they took a detour and picked it up managing to get to the place just before it closed. As they walked Jamie constantly ran his fingers over the plastic that the clothing was in.

Getting home Jamie walked upstairs and put his cloth into the dressers in his room. Melony walked up and held her bag up to show Jamie and tried to pull a pathetic face. With a sigh Jamie opened up the bottom drawer that had nothing in it and motioned for Melony to put her stuff in there. She stuffed the clothing she brought over shoving it into the dresser making sure it all fit. She looked at the remaining clothing left in her bag.

"Please turn around." Melony asked and Jamie complied with another grunt turning around while Melony shoved her underwear into the door putting it under the rest of the clothing. "Done!" She said excitedly standing up. She turned around and with a smile she jumped onto Jamie's bed landing on her face. Jamie watched as she rolled around messing up the covers and pillows. Jamie looked down to Tyrant at his side. Tyrant continued to wag her tail as while panting waiting to be able to sleep.

"Tyrant says you should sleep with me." Melony said now completely balled up in the blankets.

"You don't know what she said." Jamie snarlingly replied. Tyrant jumped onto the bed next to Melony and laid down barking at Jamie. Finally giving in Jamie climbed into the bed with her turning over. Melony scooted over and put her arms around him. "Melony." She replied with a groan as she closed her eyes. "Where did you go?"

Melony laid there in hesitation feeling her face on Jamie's back. "Everything is for you Jamie." She said allowing herself to drift away. Every night her head would be host to countless nightmares, but for tonight at

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least. She could dream, actually dream of something positive. The thing she wanted more than anything. To just let the past go. Jamie attempted to stay away as long as he could feeling Melony's breath on his back. Eventually he surrendered to sleep as his eyes became heavy and his body became relaxed.

He woke up in the morning to the feeling of Tyrant standing up and gently walking off the bed, unfortunately not gently enough. Jamie moved himself out of bed carefully picking up Melony's arm. When he got free she curled up even more and fell quickly back to sleep. After cleaning himself up he dressed himself in his freshly cleaned clothing. He always loved slipping on clothing that had been cleaned the day before. It was one of the freshest smelling experience.

Walking downstairs he watched the sun pushing through the windows lighting the house, he could see all the specs of dust floating around him. He went into the kitchen and opened up the backdoor letting Tyrant run outside. He looked around and decided to make breakfast for Melony. Jamie had started when Tyrant came back inside and looked at him curiously. "I'm making food for Melony." He said to which Tyrant replied with a whimper. "Because she makes me food all the time, just return the favor." Tyrant yelped once Jamie stopped talking. "Hush, you'll wake her up." He said walking to the fridge and taking out a piece of meat he found in the back and dropped it on the floor.

After the food was done he looked on slightly proud of the food he was able to make. He walked up the stairs and gently set it down on the bedside table, she wouldn't wake up for a while but it needed to cool down anyways. He heard the phone ringing downstairs, oddly enough the phone in his room refused to ring. Maybe he had accidentally unplugged it. Running downstairs again he picked up the phone to hear a dead tone. Then the phone clicked and Jamie heard Damien on the other end.

"This phone is dead man." Jamie said checking the phone line to see if it was loose. The thin cord still connected firmly in the wall up to the phone.

"It's Saturday!" Damien shouted into the phone forcing Jamie to take his ear away from the phone. "We have to hang out, like we always did."

"Uh..." Jamie turned glancing at the stairs. "Sure what do you want to do?" Jamie questioned figuring Melony needed her sleep.

"Just hang out. It feels like all I've been doing lately is sleeping." Damien said exhausted on the other end of the phone.

"So same thing we always do, I was wondering something anyways. I'll meet you in front of the school." Jamie hung up the phone not waiting to hear a reply. He rushed over and grabbing a paper towel he wiped the floor where Tyrant had eaten the meat. "Tell Melony I'm out with Damien." He quickly moved out the door and started running to the school. Damien lived much closer to the school than him so he'd need to hurry, considering if Damien was ready when he called or not.

Jamie sat on the steps of his previous education waiting for Damien. It was only a few minutes before Damien showed up and sat next to him. Jamie looked over as Damien sat next to him.

"So what were you wondering about?" Damien asked shuffling his feet on the stone steps under them.

"Have you been feeling... off lately?" Jamie awkwardly questioned getting an equally awkward look from Damien. "I mean like, have you been able to do things lately that you couldn't before?"

"You could say that I guess." Damien said under his breath looking out towards the street.

"Like what?"

"Nothing worth noting, honestly."

"Look if there's something you need to tell me, just tel-"

"Your girlfriend is coming." Damien cut Jamie off watching Melony rushing down the streets. She must have left short after he did to get to them this quickly. Jamie and Damien stood up to greet Melony. She looked into Jamie's eyes, Jamie couldn't help but notice how worried she looked.

"Are you okay?"

"I heard you leave, I was afraid it was something major. But I see you're just hanging out at school." Melony said perturbed.

"Don't be rude, at least say hi." Jamie said half kidding.

"Hi?"

Jamie looked over to Damien unamused. "You're right Damien, chicks are always so weird."

"Jamie..." Melony said causing Jamie to turn back to her. He saw tears collecting in her eyes and streaming down her face with her hands clasped up to her face.

"What the hell is your problem?" Jamie asked turning his body to face her as well. Jamie could feel the hot wind pushing against him as Melony returned his gaze with desperation and loss in her eyes.

"Who are you talking to?"

Chapter 19: Broken

Jamie's little hands placed on the brightly colored paint as he weaved himself around the huge play-set. Well huge to him at least. Scott said on the brand new park bench with Cynthia as their child played. Jamie discovered corner after corner. Naturally startled coming face to face with another child. Hair just started grow, he had the same eyes of wonder that Jamie had. Both of them couldn't really speak that well yet, but that one glance sealed their friendship for years.

Utter confusion laced in his heart he turned his head to where Damien was standing right behind him. Only this time, he saw nothing. Just the cold uninteresting school building. Jamie frantically looked around desperately searching for what wasn't there. His whole body trembled, the wind seemed so much colder. "Damien!" Jamie screamed hoping for a reply, any kind of reply would do. He felt his head as a sharp pain like someone pushing a needle from inside his head trying to get it out. He couldn't stop shaking as memories passed through his eyes. All their voices fighting to surface.

"Jesus man! I didn't even hear you come up."

"You know how it is, sometimes it's like you're not even there."

"Wow your arm healed fast!"

"They're looking at you."

"Sorry to bother you but are you okay?"

"How did you get here before me?"

Jamie gripped his head tight not even aware of how wet his face was or the crowd his screaming was causing. Melony stood helpless looking on as Jamie's touch on reality slowly slipped away. Jamie stumbled back still gripping on to his head so tight his fingers began digging through his skin. How? How?!

"I don't know, some stupid kids played a prank on me. Yeah Alan and them."

Jamie's mind wandered to him walking downstairs and sitting on the couch turning the TV on and coming across a news report of some teen found dead. After a few minutes they revealed the identity of Damien Presscott. Jamie remembered turning the TV off immediately after hearing the news, shutting his eyes. And blocking it all out. His head cycled through the memories of Damien in the past few days and he only saw himself sitting alone. He never even got to say goodbye, Jamie felt something snap inside of him.

Before he could tell he was already running leaving Melony and his tears behind him. The pavement punished under his feet as he pushed through the oncoming wind. He couldn't feel anything, his body numb to the outside world he wasn't even sure where he was going until he was there. Running up the steps on the porch Jamie pounded desperately on the front door. It took a second for it to open as Damien's mother appeared at the front door.

"Jamie?" The mother spoke while she too fought to hold back tears with a tissue placed up to her eyes.

"Where's Damien?" Jamie said hurried completely ignoring the state she appeared to be in. He could hear the faint sounds of a TV in the back round playing some special on accepting loss. Can you really just accept loss? Is it even the right thing to do if you could.

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"They haven't buried him yet, the service is next week. I'm sorry I didn't call or anything, i've been... busy."

"Don't be sorry."

"I miss him so much already. I just want him back."

"Me too. I'm going to do the best thing I can right now."

"What's that?"

"Revenge." Jamie said turning around and running off the porch. He remembered Alan always bragging about some stupid bowling thing he did every Sunday. It seemed like a weird sport for a jock type to take place in but it was pretty convenient now. The saddest thing was that Alan used to be their friend too, those days where hard to remember but when they were little they would always hang out. I guess when you're young your ability to judge others hasn't really kicked in yet.

Jamie ran faster than he ever did before, things started to become a blur in front of him. Melony walked herself home after Jamie had vanished from sight, she wasn't really into the idea of stopping Jamie, in fact the idea of him getting his revenge made her want to skip home. It only took her a few minutes to get to the house. After being greeted by Tyrant she noticed a message was waiting on the answering machine. This was practically her house now too right? She thought walking over and placing her finger on the play button.

The robotic female voice chimed out the date and time the caller had left the message and then it beeped. "Hi Jamie, I hope this really is your number. I got it from a friend. Anyways this is Sherry, call me back whenever. Was nice seeing you." Melony narrowed her eyes at the message while she pressed down on the delete button.

"Sherry huh?" Melony said while the robotic female voice one again spoke, this time to confirm the deleted message.

Jamie knew exactly where he was going as his feet continued to pound on sideways. Running across the street a car came to his side and Jamie brought his right up smacking the car hard enough the it lifted up and off the road. It didn't take too long before Jamie reached the ally. Looking on her saw the bright neon sign that marked the building, you could see it for so far away it was almost impossible to miss. He stood at the see through metal framed door for a moment and his fist tightened up. Feeling the chilled steel he Pushed the door open and started walking forward onto the old dusty carpet under him. The sounds of the bowling ally where all one big collaborative mess. The voices, the dying pins and the clinking of cups full of beer or whatever. How do people enjoy this? It's the literal birthplace of headaches.

Jamie was stunned for a moment when he saw Alan throwing his stupid ball down that stupid lane with his stupid friends. He couldn't believe that he'd actually be here having a good time after what he did. "Humans are disgusting." Jamie said as he started walking again. Walking by the rack that held all the rental balls you could use Jamie picked one up. He didn't know it's color or it's weight or any of that, he just took one. He could feel the tough plastic under his fingers as he got closer to Alan.

"Alan!" Jamie shouted as Alan turned his head, when Alan first saw Jamie his face seemed confused. Jamie drew his arm with the bowling ball back and whipped it forward letting the ball fly loose. With Jamie's increased strength the ball seemed to move forward like it was just rubber. It made impact right at Alan's knee crippling him immediately. It didn't take any time before Alan started to scream as loud as he could. Hitting the ground Alan reached down to his knee and looked at the mangled and splintered mess that was now his leg. He could see his bones protruding out of his skin. The only think you could compare the sight to was how

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a plank of wood looked after it was bent and the wood fibers separated and spiked off.

Jamie watched one of Alan's friends running over to him, maybe to stop Jamie or to fight him. Jamie didn't care one bit he took his arm and landed a swift punch to his chest. His ribcage must have shattered and punctured his lungs because he fell to the ground with his mouth open deliriously grabbing for air but only finding half hearted wheezing. Alan was now sitting in a small pool of collected blood trying to fix his leg in hysteria. It was so loud in the building but still Alan's screams drew a crowd but no one acted on it after seeing what Jamie did. "Cowards." Jamie said walking forward while people watched like it was just another movie.

Jamie reached down to Alan's shirt and picked him up by the collar as gravity took hold on Alan's leg further ripping it. The bones almost sounded like cutting paper except it was really noisy. If you could hear it over Alan's screaming that is. It was all inaudible so he wasn't talking, just reacting to the pain. Jamie placed him firmly against the nearby wall as he heard someone talking to the police, because that worked out so well last time. Jamie looked into Alan's eyes as they shut more and more. "Are you going into shock?" Jamie questioned in anger bringing his open palm across Alan's face. "Don't you dare go to sleep, I want you to feel all of this. Every agonizing second!" Jamie shouted directly into his ear perking Alan's eyes open.

Alan reached his arms out and placed it on Jamie's face moving it around, Jamie couldn't help but think Alan was drunk but then Jamie remembered how his rationality altered when his arm was broken. He couldn't help but think how much worse it was for regular humans. Every time Alan attempted to squirm free his leg would shift position worsening the pain. Jamie watched for a while as Alan kept trying to get out.

"Let me go." Alan choked out through stuttering and trailing off into a stupor.

"You can still talk. Good." Jamie replied looking down at Alan's leg, he could clearly see the bone. Blood kept dripping from the wound collecting under them. "You'll die of blood loss soon so let's hurry. I need one thing." Jamie said looking into Alan's fading eyes. Jamie leaned over again next to his ear. "I need you to beg." He whispered.

"Fuck you!" Alan managed to summon enough strength to taunt out spitting in Jamie's face. Jamie shook his head and reached up to wipe the saliva from his face.

"Don't you think it's weird that our teeth have nerves." Jamie said opening his mouth and running his finger along his white teeth. Jamie then reached over and made his fingers glide over Alan's cheek. "So I bet something like this really hurts." Jamie sadistically recited putting his hand into Alan's mouth and placing his middle finger and thumb on the front most teeth. Squeezing his fingers together it didn't take much effort before the tooth gave way and was obliterated between his fingers. Alan let out such a ferocious howl as the pain shot from his mouth right to his head. The small chunks of broken tooth fell down, some into Alan's mouth and some fell out. Jamie rubbed his fingers together feeling the dust between them.

Blood from Alan's gums started dripping down moving over the wounded tooth. When Jamie heard no begging he went and broke another tooth causing the same helpless yell as before. "I'm honestly surprised you have any blood left in you." Jamie said noting the stained floor under them. "Did you know the human mouth has thirty-two teeth. This could take some time." Jamie said with a malicious smile.

Alan's eyes seemed so gone now, he had stopped screaming and stopped trying to get free. It looked like he was somewhere else. "Please." Alan mustered out in an utterly defeated tone. "Please no more. I'm sorry for everything."

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"You'll have to do better." Jamie smile as Alan's tears running down his face mixed in with the blood from his mouth.

"Please stop, god. Please I just, want to go home. I'll do anything. Please god." Alan pleaded with his slowly vanishing breath.

"I'm certainly not god. But I can't help but think you sound exactly like Damien did." Jamie closed his eyes and letting his grip loosen Alan fell to the ground landing feet first, his broken leg crumbling beneath him. Alan must have been tired because all he did was whimper. Jamie looked down at the pathetic mess he left of the ground. Reaching down Jamie picked up the bowling ball and outstretched his arm hovering the ball over Alan's leg. "You'll mostly likely die today. But even if you live it's not like you can consider the rest of your existence truly living."

Jamie turned his head away from Alan and looked towards the crowd, the other kid Jamie hit had stopped movie now.

"Goodbye Alan." Jamie said letting the ball fall crashing one last time onto Alan's leg. Alan mustered his strength for one last scream lurching his head forward a mixture of tears, blood and vomit spewed out right before he passed out in a pool of his own blood.

The gathered crowd in Jamie's way all parted as he walked towards them giving him room to walk. No one was saying anything and the ally had now become completely silent. There were now lights that covered the outside of the building. Jamie easily recognized them as the lights from several cop cars. The might have dispatched so many when Jamie's description fit the same one for the bank hold up.

Jamie walked out and faced the raised gun the officers held aiming at him. He looked around for a moment and walked forward. The cops repeated a warning of not moving and the instructions to get on the ground. Jamie continued walking seeing bright lights appearing from under the cop cars. The white glow erupted and forced the cars into combustion sending the vehicles off in all different directions while taking out the entire police for stationed there. Melony watched the explosions as she sat on the couch looking at the TV. "Thank god for news coverage and helicopters." She said her eyes glazed over completely in purple.

"As long as you can see it huh?" Jamie said knowing it was Melony using her Virtue. Jamie kept walking making his way through the field of flames, it was warm but it didn't burn him like it did the cops who were rolling around as they charred to death. Walking by one of the wrecked cars Jamie tore off the door, it's windows had already been completely shattered by the explosion. Looking at the helicopter that continued to film him by shining an incredibly bright spotlight into his eyes he squinted. He spun his body once and let go of the door then he stood still watching the door spinning towards the helicopter. The helicopter started to move but was too late at the door flew into the helicopter blades breaking two off and bending another one.

Jamie watched as it spun out of control only to fly directly into the side of another already burning car. Jamie looked as the pilot struggled with his seat belt while the flames were taking him over. He could save that man who was only doing his job. Sure no one is pure but it's likely that man was just trying to provide for his family. That however was none of Jamie's concern, not anymore at least. No one is innocent, everyone is evil, vile and disgusting. This world needs a good purge he thought to himself as he watched the hope vanish from the pilot.

Turning away he started walking home eager to feed his dog and to get some down time before getting some sleep. Maybe show Melony a sign of his appreciation for all her help. He still didn't know exactly what to think of her, Barley and Paladin seemed to both hold anger towards her and suggest that she was using him for something. But the truth always surfaces eventually, so he'll just have to wait.

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Walking home he was certain he heard another explosion going off behind him. It must have been the helicopter finally giving it's gas to the fire. Jamie watched a fire truck drive pass him with it's sirens whining. "What a mess."

Elsewhere Morris looked down in utter fascinating glee as he watched the chains that bind him. Being broken.

Chapter 20: Curtain

Jamie opened his eyes to find himself surrounded by complete darkness, but when he looked at his hands he saw himself clear as day. It felt like he was just floating in space. It felt warm and comfortable, like getting home and sitting next to the heater after a long cold day. Looking around he attempted to find any signs of life, just so he wouldn't be alone where ever he was. In the distance he saw a faint light. He wasn't sure how relative distance was in this place but if it was anything other than darkness it would spike his curiosity. When he started moving he found that instead of walking he seemed to just glide towards it. Getting closer he could certainly recognize the object as another human. He was thrilled. But once he was close enough he found this human was none other than himself. He got close as his doppelganger just looked into his eyes. Jamie raised his hand and found that his copy did the same thing. Waving his hand around it continued to mimic him. Everything Jamie did was photocopied onto this thing except the expression. It always remain stale and uninterested. Jamie decided to put his arm out with an open palm. As expected the doppelganger did the same, the both continued reaching forward until their hands met. To Jamie's surprise his copy's hand was warm, like it was living. Suddenly the copy closed his fingers on Jamie's still open palm. It's face came alive as it pulled Jamie to him while Jamie floated in fear. The copy came right up to Jamie's face and with a shrill cry it exclaimed "Wake up!"

Jamie's eyes shot open to him seeing the ceiling above him and the fan that circulated slowly. The dark sky was spread all over the room with dim moonlight seeping through the windows. He could hear crickets going about their conversation outside his house. But something felt off, the air felt more malevolent than usual. Melony had her arm lightly wrapped over Jamie's chest while Tyrant had fallen asleep on his legs. He wanted to get up for some fresh air but any movement would surely wake them both up. So he just watched the fan as it turned. That was it, why was the fan turning? All windows are shut, the heat or cooling isn't on. Jamie licked his finger and put his arm into the air to see if he could feel any breeze. But nothing.

Hearing a small tap on the roof Jamie leaned up a little shaking Melony enough that she started to open her eyes. Jamie then heard a loud crash that completely woke up Melony and Tyrant. He watched as his ceiling caved in but amongst the debris Jamie could see someones hand pushing down. In a short window of time Jamie pushed Melony off the bed, Tyrant naturally followed her. Then he kicked his legs up flipping backwards kicking the sheets up along with him. He could barely make out the shape of the intruder but once he saw whoever it was touching the bed Jamie lifted the back of it and once it was vertical he kicked it sending the bed and intruder into the wall. Melony, Jamie and Tyrant all looked at the bed pressed up against the wall.

"You're terrible at welcoming guest." Spoke the newly released Morris as he pushed the bed over letting it fall to the floor. "And this room is a mess." Morris jested looking around the room that now had the sheets sprawling on the floor and bits of the roof and fan laying about. "Oh such mean looks. I just gave you a nice sun roof and-" Jamie interrupted by pulling a drawer from his dresser and swinging it at Morris breaking it on his face. Morris stood with his eyes wide open watching the wooden drawer explode on his face causing Jamie's clothing to go everywhere. The splinters of wood danced in the air. Jamie looked at the unfazed Morris, his eyes were the same exact color of his hair. He wore some long black hooded cloak with stitching that was once again the same color as his hair. Morris put his hand up in front of Jamie's face, Jamie felt a strong gust of wind that pushed him back into his room's wall.

Morris turned slightly towards Melony to see a bright light right by him and Melony's deeply purple eyes. Jamie could see another figure appearing behind Melony out of thin air. The figure reached over and placed a hand over Melony's eyes instantly making the glow fade. The figure had a cloak almost identical to Morris' except this persons stitching was red. The figure had it's hood up so Jamie couldn't make out the face but he knew by the hand that this must be a woman. "I can't allow you to participate in this fight." The girl spoke

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delicately in the Queen's English mostly just to Melony but the whole room could hear it. Melony seemed to become complacent as she stood calm as the woman dropped her hands from Melony's face. "I'll certainly allow you to watch though." The woman said politely.

"What's this about?" Jamie questioned during the momentary cease fire between them. Morris turned his attention back to Jamie who was still sitting on the ground.

"Your father's orders. But further detail isn't needed. Just give a good fight Scott."

"I'm Jamie."

"You look just like Scott did. You're Scott."

"You're getting on my nerves"

"Good! Get angry Scott, let me see that rage."

"Jamie don't let him bait you!" Melony called out to him seeing the frustration building up in his eyes. Jamie crawled up to his feet and clenched his fist. Morris looked on as Jamie stood with the moonlight from the hole in his roof pressed on him. Jamie remembered Melony telling him that a Virtue should be treated like a trump card. So for now he'd hold back his strength and not get too emotional. He still wasn't sure how that Aura worked but he didn't want to take the chance of pulling it out too early.

Jamie advanced to Morris and attempted a right hook that was blocked by Morris raising his arm. Morris quickly leaned forward landing a headbutt, it didn't hurt but it was enough to push Jamie back. Morris followed up by kicking out his lanky legs into Jamie's face. Jamie swiftly reached up and took hold of his leg pulling him with him as he fell back. Jamie and Morris both landed with a thud and Jamie reacted pulling his dresser down and rolling to the side as the heavy wood landed on Morris. The dresser seemed to just blast off of Morris as the room filled with a gust of wind.

"Your methods sure are odd." The cloaked woman chimed out watching the dresser landing next to Morris.

"Hush you hag." Morris retorted. There was another gust of wind as Morris rose to his feet the same way Dracula would rise from his coffin.

"I'm younger than you." She spoke again. Jamie grew impatient and lifting his foot up he slammed on the ground forcing the floor under Morris and himself to shatter. The both fell through into the kitchen. Jamie opened up the drawer the held all the silverware. Reaching in he pulled the largest knife he saw and turned around to begin his assault on Morris who was just now standing back up. Jamie charged swinging at Morris who constantly backed away from the sharpened blade. Grabbing Jamie's wrist Morris swung his arm with enough force to make Jamie let go of his weapon. The knife let a ping out as it bounced off the window over the sink. Jamie and Morris continued attacking each other exchanging blows, Jamie couldn't tell if Morris was holding back or not.

Pushing Morris back Jamie grabbed a plate on the rack next to him and threw it at him. Morris swayed to the side as the plate smashed against the wall behind him glass falling broken to the floor. Jamie continued throwing the plates as Morris looked at him with confusion. Jamie reached over to discover all the plates were now gone. "Okay? That was exciting." Morris taunted. Jamie rushed forward and Morris went to block but failed to see Jamie's leg. With a kick swipe of his leg Jamie brought Morris down falling onto the pile of broken glass. Falling to his knee Jamie put his hands on Morris' chest and pushed down. Morris laughed as he felt the sharp glass piercing his back.

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Jamie could feel a small gust of wind then he was hit by what felt like a tropical storm as it chucked him into the fridge. "Most people hide their Virtue until the absolutely need it. Not me." Morris spoke gaining his footing, reaching back he pull the small shards out one by one. "I cherish my Virtue. Using every opportunity I can." Jamie drunkenly got to his feet as his spine healed it's from the possible fracture he just endured. "You see people call me Rift. Because I have the ability to create and manipulate air currents. And before you go looking for some weak points I'll tell you. I can't create an a current if there's completely still air." Morris said remembering the chamber he was kept in, they isolated any source of possible moving air to keep him detained.

"Why tell me this?" Jamie questioned as the healing on his back finalized itself.

"Because, I like to be at the disadvantage. Makes my victory so tasty." Jamie felt a hard wind hit him across the face, then again pushing his head in the other direction. A gust made him bow forward to be greeted by Morris' knee. Arching back some blood from his nose dripped out into the air. The blood droplets just hung there as Jamie got stable once more.

"How are you doing that?" Jamie said in almost a complete wonderment over the levitating blood.

"Many things come with perfecting your art Scott. It takes just the right amount of wind to keep them up. Too little and they'll obviously fall. But too much and it will rupture the surface tension and break them apart." Morris flicked his hand and the blood splattered onto Jamie's face. Jamie went to react in anger but felt a heavy wind push him back. The wind continued to persist keeping him pinned to the wall. Morris merely held his arm around as the pressure kept Jamie immobilized. It was to the point where he couldn't exhale any or it would just be thrown back into his throat. He felt suffocated watching Morris snickering just inches away.

Using what force he could Jamie put his arm straight in front of him and brought it back as hard as he could into whatever was behind him. Hearing something giving way he did it again, this time the entire wall gave out as Jamie and the contents behind him were pushed into the next room. Jamie scuttled around on the floor with the broken wall all around him and fridge laying halfway in both rooms. Jamie stood up only to be thrown to the side by another current into his living room toppling over the couch. Standing up Jamie threw the couch into the hallway blocking the stairs.

Jamie felt something out of place as he looked over to Morris now standing where he had thrown Jamie from. Morris put his hand up though the part in the cloak once more. Jamie jumped to the side landing on the couch as a frightening gust of wind broke through the front of his house. Jamie put his hands up to the side of his head looking at the gaping hole near him.

"I just fixed that!" He shouted in belligerent anger. He ran to Morris who create more wind but Jamie continued rushing through it. He lightly tapped his fist on Morris' chin, with the winds pushing him a small tap was all he could manage. Morris smiled as he stopped the wind, in the very moment he let the wind drop he felt Jamie's right hand uppercutting him. It pushed him up creating another hole in the structure. Morris was able to float enough to land on the second floor without falling back down. Jamie jumped up to the second floor as Melony and the cloaked woman appeared in the door way.

"I'm not a fan of the look in your eyes." The cloaked woman spoke once more peering on at Morris. Morris just smiled as the four of them could feel the house starting to shake, five once Tyrant got to the hall. Morris quickly pointed at Jamie who felt a gust of wind and then a strong push from the flow sending him flying out of the house and onto the roof of the house next to them. The woman in the cloak put her hand on Melony's back and the both appeared next to Jamie on the roof. The could see Morris hovering out of the hole in the roof, legs together with his arms outstretched to both sides. He long hair was all wildly being pushed up as he used the wind to fly.

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"This is my first fight getting out of the stupid cell!" Morris shouted as he started lifting his hands up. Looking down Jamie could see what seemed to be a light purple tint swirling around his house. "I'm going to put on a show!" Morris continued.

"We're leaving." The cloaked woman toned as she placed her hand on Melony's back again.

"Wai-" Melony started saying before completely vanishing. Jamie turned to them to see nothing then back again at Morris who was now laughing uncontrollably slowly raising his hands up. Jamie could see the shingles of his roof lifting off and being carried into the sky. Then the roof itself gave way under the wind bending and ripping from the beams and it's foundations. Then with a final push of Morris' hands Jamie watched his entire house being ripped apart and lifted into the sky. Jamie could see sparks generated from broken electrical circuits and the furniture lifting out of place. The heavier chunks all levitated around Morris as the house continued to disintegrate.

"Tyrant!" Jamie screamed scanning the wreckage for any sign of the wolf but failing to see ever a hint of her. Putting his hands by his side he chuckled looking at Jamie with his head cocked. Morris moved his hand sending a large chunk of the house flying towards Jamie. Seeing the mangled mess coming at him Jamie jumped backwards onto the roof behind him. He watched the wreckage crash into the house he was just on. He could hear whoever was in it screaming as the former house crashed through theirs. Jamie looked up at Morris who continued floating without a care in the world. "What if you've just killed someone?"

"That would be terrible." Morris put his finger up to his mouth trying to recall something. "I do hate odd numbers."

"What are you talking about?" Jamie shouted in anger as the screaming stopped inside the house the was now between him and Morris.

"If I really did just kill someone my kill total will be one hundred and twenty-seven. That's an odd number." Morris smiled. "Oh wait, your dog counts to I suppose." He chuckled out still floating watching Jamie standing on the roof. Jamie didn't say anything in reply. "What's wrong?" Morris questioned without any real concern for the question.

"I'm waiting for you to think about how stupid what you just said was." Jamie replied continuing to stand still. Morris slightly amused looked on his face getting softer, the broken house that was floating around him now fell to the ground pounding what ever was left of the ground level.

In the headquarters of 'The School' the doors opened on the principals office as the secretary of the building walked in. "Sir, there are reports of a high concentration of Aura in sector twenty-seven!"

The chair didn't move an inch, the only hint that the principal was actually there was the vague reflection on the window he looked out of. "We are already aware of the fight between Morris and the Lannon boy."

"I know that sir. But an Elder level Aura has been detected as well!" The woman pleaded out as the principal raised his eye brow.

"Perhaps just more than Scott is interested in this fight. Unless it's her." He said trailing off. "As always get Stupor and Choke on it."

Melony looked at cloaked woman in anger as they stood in the sunlight on an endless field of green. "What the hell I wasn't going to fight!" She argued to the woman who wasn't even looking at her.

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"Relax, I've made arrangements so you can watch the action through Jamie's eyes." The woman's calm British accent defended. Melony was confused at first but. She went to blink but when she opened her eyes she could clearly see Morris floating above the completely destroyed house. She could still feel the warmth of the sun pressing on her. Was this someone's Virtue?

Jamie made a bold leap of faith towards Morris, he got closer and could see more of that man's wicked face grinning at him. Morris rose his hand up and Jamie felt himself shooting backwards skipping on roof after roof, rag doll across the structures. The impacts ripped up the shingles and protective coatings of the house, still caught in the torrent the roofing followed along with Jamie. After a few houses Jamie began slowing down only to see Morris flying up next to him. "Hi!" He shouted swinging his hand causing the wind to violently shove Jamie off the roof and into the hard pavement of the street. Morris jumped down to the small hole he put in the street where Jamie was laying.

Jamie rolled over and pushed himself up facing away from Morris, he could almost feel it before it happened, then wind on his back pushed him at a hard angle into the air. It didn't really hurt but he felt helpless all the same as he climbed in altitude towards the stars. He quickly saw Morris once again as he swiped the wind again sending Jamie flying to the right. Morris continued throwing Jamie around like he was a toy. In the distance Jamie could shortly see the graveyard while he was spinning around. Morris saw the graveyard as well and without saying anything they both knew where they were going next. Morris showed up directly in front of Jamie with his hands together like they were holding a ball. Jamie could see the air around him and Morris being pulled in between Morris' hands like he was holding a vortex. The wind collecting in Morris' hands actually became visible mixed in with a faint purple tint. Once some sort of sphere had collected and formed in his hands he shot it swift at Jamie who was just a foot or two away.

Feeling the orb touch his chest Jamie was covered in such an odd sensation, all the sound evaporated for a moment and then before he knew it Morris was almost out of sight. He felt himself landing into the metal fence that surrounded the graveyard. He rolled across the ground while the long metal bars with the spikes on the top bounced around them. Jamie was happy he landed in unplotted land so he didn't disrespect any of the dead. Morris floated down but continued to hover in the sky, if anything just so he can feel above Jamie. Jamie quickly grabbed one of the bars next to him and threw it at Morris. Morris moved his hands attempting to use the wind to shove it away, but the strength Jamie threw it and the lack of surface area the spike continued on its path. He then resorted to moving out of the way watching the spike zip past him. While Morris' head was turned Jamie reached down and picked up another spike and jumped towards him.

Jamie held the bar in such a way the the steel was hidden behind his back while the spike in his hand was barely visible. Morris turned around to see Jamie coming at him, he was surprised he could even jump that high. He let out a small stream of wind in front of him, just enough to keep Jamie from getting him. Feeling the wind Jamie let the bar slide down showing the whole thing now he rose his arm up and swung it into Morris' neck. The hit was enough to push Morris down to the street that surrounded the graveyard. Jamie no longer being held up by the wind fell down and landed on his feet. He charged running the spike along the ground leaving a trail of sparks behind him.

Morris stood up and Jamie rose his arms up bringing the bar with him while Morris flipped backward. Jamie turned away from Morris and started running away swiftly. Morris was curious so he gave chase flying after Jamie as he started turning through streets and ally ways.

"Come on Jamie, let me see that Aura of yours!" Morris shouted chasing Jamie around. Morris quickly realized that Jamie was just doing what he could to get away from the graveyard even though they were already a decent distance away. Jamie continued to run holding the bar firm in his hand while it scraped the ground sparking up. Jamie and Morris found them self an a large open road that was surrounded by industrial buildings so no one took the road through the cloud of obnoxious fumes. Jamie abruptly stopped to stand still

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while Morris continued flying at him. Jamie turned around swinging the bar making Morris fall back on a cushion of air sliding under the threat. The air under him expanded after he was clear of the hit causing him to stand up.

At once Morris swung around hit Jamie with a gust of air but Jamie didn't move any, he stood looking on as he resisted the wind. "I've realized that the Aura, is just another person helping me. I'll beat you all on my own." Jamie asserted still feeling the wind pressing pass him.

"You're not planning to use your Aura? That's so boring. I'll just kill you now. You seem to be become resilient to me now anyways. I suppose stage two will do fine." Morris chatted as a purple tint began staining the air around him.

"Stage two?" Melony questioned as she continued to watch the fight unfolding before her through Jamie's sight.

"It's rather new, the phrase I mean. It's the idea that there is a threshold of Aura capacity in all Virtue holders. But should you push your body to let more, you gain access to greatly enhanced variation of your Virtue." The woman explained standing next to Melony. I could kill her right now she thought to herself, only deciding not to as it was against Scott's orders.

Jamie watched the weird color appearing around Morris as he continued to chuckle. He saw the purple tint flying towards him, figuring it would just be another gust of wind he stood to face it. Feeling it hit him he was lifted off his feet and tossed back. Morris lifted his hand up picking Jamie off the ground only a few inches. He continued to do this knowing it didn't hurt Jamie but he could see how annoying it was making him. Jamie back flipped to escape the wind under him and started running to Morris. He felt the purple tinted wind hit him again but with a stern push he got through the hit Morris. The began exchanging blows while the wind continued to swirl around them. Morris took a jump back putting a little distance between the two. He put both of his hands forth and created a steady stream of wind, it wasn't enough to push Jamie away but Morris continued to condense the wind to the point that it felt like blades were hidden in the wind.

Unable to move Jamie suffered through countless microscopic cuts that covered his body but were healed instantly. His clothing also suffered damage to the fabric tearing up. Morris pleased he brought his hand back and collected two orbs of wind in his hands. Jamie was still stuck standing when Morris brought his hands together on Jamie's head. Instead of sending him flying Jamie just stood with the combined air covering his head. Jamie felt his eardrums completely bust causing an immense amount of pain in his head. He opened his mind to scream but outside the orb he couldn't be heard. "Did you know that the ear drum is one of the fastest generating tissue in gifted body. That's because our balance is incredibly important for our survival." Morris explained unsure if Jamie could even hear him inside the collected wind. Morris looked on as inside the ball of air he could see a green tint forming. "Yes!" He exclaimed seeing Jamie's Aura activating even against his will.

Morris intensified the air around Jamie's head to further pull the urge to use Aura out of him. Then he saw Jamie close his eyes for a moment and upon opening them the Aura had vanished. Morris enraged went to make a final blow by closing the ball by was hit in his stomach pushing him back. The ball around Jamie's head vanished as he panted to catch his breath hunching over. Morris closed his fist tight and started grating his teeth together as the wind around him began picking up in strength. Jamie only saw the ground for a few moments as he fought to get air back into his lungs. But looking up to Morris he couldn't believe that he was looking at a literal tornado forming behind Morris. His hair dancing wildly Morris watched nearby objects being picked up and sucked into the storm behind him. "I'll draw that Aura out!"

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The wind of the tornado seemed to stream off and fly at Jamie making him jump back to dodge it as it broke the ground. Several other streams came off and spread out into all different directions surrounding Jamie. Landing on the ground Jamie spun his body as quickly as he could right when the streams hit him. Spinning fast enough the wind he created negated the wind that was about to impact him. Morris notably aggravated lifted his hands as the wind of the tornado streamed off but stopped short forming several orbs around him. The tornado formation completely vanished giving away to several circular pockets of wind around Morris. Morris rose his body into the air the orbs following up with him. Jamie already knew the drill now so he started running forward while Morris swung his hand to send an orb flying at him. Jumping to the left Jamie narrowly dodged a hit as the ground behind him completely erupted from the impact. Jamie was shaken at just how much of a hit the orb punched.

Jumping again he missed another hit but stumbled feeling the dissipating wind against his back. And with that stumble there was enough time for Morris to chuck another one that landed right on Jamie's right shoulder. He crumbled feeling the orb hit him and shatter his bones under his skin. He was dragged down to the floor leaving a crater under him. He managed to drag himself to his feet spitting blood onto the ground he felt his shoulder healing itself. Morris reached out with an open palm and slowly closed his fingers as the rest of the floating orbs started to fuse together. It remained the same size as they did when they were separate but you could tell the wind inside was endlessly amplified.

"I certainly have stronger people I want to play with. So I'm going to end this here. But since I'm a nice guy, I'll show you what it's like to fly." Morris swung his other hand up picking Jamie up. Flying at him Morris wrapped his arms around Jamie tightly and started flying upwards. Jamie felt helpless, even with his strength he wasn't able to get free as they climbed higher and higher. Jamie could see the orb Morris created following along with them as they went up. The Morris leg his grip go. Jamie flew free of Morris and started falling down in gravity's wicked hold. Morris grabbed the orb and flew down after Jamie following him down the both of them picking up speed. Jamie hadn't realized how high the both of them climbed until now seeing the ground was so far away.

He could feel Morris' orb pressing on him tearing up his shirt and ripping up his skin. He saw the ground approaching him and he closed his eyes to accept what he couldn't change. Harshly Jamie slammed into the ground ripping up the pavement and sending a small shock wave out. He had no time to move before Morris caught up and slammed the powered up orb into him. The impact further cratered the ground and ripped up large chunks of the ground around them. Morris flipped off and landed outside the impact crater that Jamie laid broken in unable to move.

"Well that's enough of that. I wonder, why did Scott even bother to hire the other five?" Morris questioned himself hearing no movement in the hole behind him. Looking back he could see nothing but the completely mangled mess of Jamie, his bones were broken and twisted and his eyes were shut while he laid in his collecting pool of blood.

Melony welled up in tears as the vision she gained through Jamie's eyes had faded away. She stood silent with the cloaked figure next to her.

"Why are you crying?" The cloaked woman questioned looking over at Melony whose tears ran down her face.

"I couldn't... help him." Melony choked out past her shivering.

"Scott hired Morris you know."

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Melony looked over at the stranger who hadn't moved an inch since they got there. Melony thought it was odd she couldn't see the woman's face, the sun was pressing right on the front of the cloak but how was her face hidden? "What does that even matter?" She questioned in anger.

"Scott also hired me and four other people."

"What are you saying?"

"Why would he hire people after Morris if he thought Jamie would be taken out that easily?" Hearing the stranger's words Melony's eyes grew wide suddenly seeing the dark sky.

Morris began walking away when he heard a stone scrapping across the ground from the crater. "You know..." He heard Jamie's voice ring out. "This hole time I've been trying to think of a clever way to beat you." Jamie said standing up, the only indication of his fight was his torn clothing and scuffed hair but the rest of him seemed untouched. "But I'm not sure for someone like you there really is a way like that."

"You seemed to be talking bold boy." Morris said turning around to face the newly healed Jamie.

"In order to have some crafty way to beat you, I'd have to focus on a single weakness of yours."

"I don't have a weakness." Morris boldly claimed.

"Exactly, you don't have a weakness. You have countless. In fact, everything about you is a weakness." Morris' eyes grew wide with fire hearing Jamie taunting him even after he had delivered such a beating to him. "Shut your mouth brat."

"You're hot headed, you don't think. You know your Virtue well but you throw it around like it doesn't mean anything to you. And most of all, even with such a powerful gift. You're so insecure." Jamie said as he started walking towards Morris one foot after the other with his arms at his side.

"Uh oh." The cloaked stranger rung out. Melony turned to her with a raised eyebrow. "I've... certainly seen that walk before."

"The wind is such a gentle thing. But it's also a monster at times. Which is great but you've forgotten how fancy the wind can be. There's no art to it, you just use the biggest move you can to make yourself feel better." Jamie continued taunted as he got closer and closer to Morris.

"Shut up!" Morris shouted belligerently as he collected air in his hand once more. It was a ball but a poor excuse for one as even the air itself didn't want to be part of it any more. He swung it at Jamie but he simply rose his arm blocking Morris' hand before it even reached him.

"And most importantly. You killed my dog!" Jamie said reeling his fist back and putting everything he had into bringing it forward. It landed right on Morris' face sending him backwards with blood dripping from his nose. It wasn't as devastating as the hit he landed on Paladin, but Morris wasn't as strong as Paladin was anyways. Morris fell on his back with blood trailing from his nose he felt unbelievably worn out from how often he pushed himself using his Virtue. He laid there panting as he desperately tried to collect more wind around him but it all would swirl quickly then vanish.

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Jamie got to him and raised his foot ready to bring it down to end the fight and the life of Morris Chandler. "Wait wait!" Morris pleaded putting his hand up to Jamie. "Please, you've won. I give I give. I'll go back to that prison just please don't kill me."

Jamie closed his eyes and sighed as he lowered his foot softly onto the ground and turned around. "You're pathetic." Jamie spat as he walked away with his back turned to Morris. Laying in a mess Morris watched as Jamie walked away from him. Morris began collecting wind around him tinted a deep purple that started collecting in between his hands. Pushing his hands forward a huge wave of wind forced out heading right towards Jamie. Looking over his shoulder Jamie was shocked to see the enormous amount of bladed wind heading right for him, he was unable to dodge an attack like that. Not in this state at least. Closing his eyes he prepared himself for impact.

After a few seconds had passed he pried his eyes open to see two cloaked figures standing in front of him. One was the girl with red stitching but the other one had an ornate broadsword on his back with golden stitching on his cloak. The violet wind was slamming right into the figure with the sword but there was some golden glow given off as the wind was hitting. It was unusually beautiful with the purple turning into the golden glow. The new figure started walking forward keeping the wind at bay, it didn't even reach Jamie and the woman. Well wherever that woman went anyways as Jamie saw her vanish out of the corner of his eye.

The golden stitched figure reached to his back and placed his hand on the handle of his sword still walking forward. He was now standing right in front of Morris who seeing the face of the man in front of him stopped his wind. "Why... why are you here?!" Morris shouted with fear in his eyes. Without a word the figured pulled out his blade and brought it across Morris' chest all the way down to past his stomach. Morris' blood pulsed out of his wound staining his grey hair that hung over his helplessly gone eyes. The figure then turned around and started walking towards Jamie as Morris fell limp behind him. Jamie stood up concerned and thought about running from the cloaked stranger. Until he saw whoever it was sliding his sword back into it scabbard.

"Who?" Jamie started to question but stopped when he saw the cloaked woman and Melony appear next to him. Melony instantly ran over and wrapped her arms around Jamie and gripped tight. He could feel her wet face pressing on to his chest as he put his arms around him.

"I really hope you plan to fight better." The figure with the sword spoke standing by them. "Since I'll be your next opponent." Jamie looked on with worry in his eyes. "Don't worry, each fight is to take place a week apart." Jamie let out a sigh of relief. All four of them heard a small trampling of feet behind Jamie. Turning around they saw Tyrant running towards them, Jamie and Melony opened their arms to welcome the wolf into their embrace.

"Why did you kill him?" Jamie questioned seeing the dead Morris motionless.

"He said he gave up and attacked your back. So, I ended him for his dishonor. He already said he lost to you so he was fair game." The man in the golden stitch spoke out. "In that case, since this game has officially started you'll be needed an alias name."

"Many of us spend our whole lives running from feeling with the mistaken belief that you cannot bear the pain. But you have already borne the pain. What you have not done is feel all you are beyond the pain." Jamie said with his eyes closed. "Saint Bartholomew said that. My name." Jamie stood up to face the figure who he'd fight next. "Is Saint!"

"So it shall be. We'll be gone." The figure said as the woman and him held hands and vanished before their eyes. Melony and Jamie looked at each other while the sun began to rise.

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"There are a lot of scary before us on this path." Melony said leaning into Jamie.

"Where would the fun be if there wasn't, together we are unstoppable. Let's see who dad thinks can beat us." Jamie said kissing the top of Melony's head making her face turn red.

"Yeah." Melony said closing her eyes feeling the warm sun press on the three of them sitting in the middle of the road.

My name, is Jamie Lannon. I'm not sure what or who is in front of me. But I know who I am, and I know my destiny is undeniable. I'm going to change this world. For better or worse. Is the real question. "Let us all be brave enough to die the death of a martyr, but let no one lust for martyrdom."

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