

# Losing My Insanity

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Las Noches. A city ruled by fear. In a post-apocalyptic future brought upon by a nuclear war in the year 2030, an organization known as the Covert Ops deploys various "agents" to keep the peace within the city, and to suppress any insurgent groups. However, the "peace" kept by this regime has certain secrets of its own. Acidwire is one of these agents, and he is experiencing a change in his way of viewing things that will change his life.

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## Promotion

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^ Can you see what you're doing!? You call this a utopia!? This is nothing more than a dictatorship! A dictatorship! Boom. No hesitation. Another candle put out. The raging fire of rebels here only a few moments ago is now nothing but a pile of cinders, extinguished before anyone could tell what was occurring. The Cleansers arrive and remove the mass of corpses one by one while civilians are directed away from the scene by law enforcement. The smell of death fills the air. This, however, is merely another job for me and my partner, Cipher.

^ Well, that was quick, stated Cipher.

^ Yeah, we haven't been assigned anything interesting lately, I told him.

^ I wonder when the boss will decide to give us something more worthwhile.

The Covert Ops is an organization created by The King that is designed to be a stealth force of cybernetically enhanced soldiers. These soldiers are known as Agents and are scouted as newborn children. When a child is born, it is genetically bioscanned to test whether it is capable of being a valuable asset to the Covert Ops; if judged to be so, the child is promptly taken from the mother whose mind is erased and is raised to be an assassin, implanted with various cybernetic enhancements that augment the senses, strength, agility, and leadership. However, the child is erased from society; all records of identification are destroyed and it is given a codename. I don't know what my original name was either; only my codename: Acidwire. Up until now, I've been doing these jobs without a hint of remorse, or any second thoughts. To me, all I've been doing is protecting our perfect utopia, keeping the civilians from harm, and taking out these insurgent fools; until recently, that is. I saw that Cipher noticed I was lost in thought.

^ Hey Acidwire, you alright?

^ Yes yes, sorry. I was just thinking about some things.

^ It seems that you've been thinking a lot lately. Want to let your old pal here in on what's on your mind?

^ Well, I've been noticing more and more uprisings recently. The rebels have become especially desperate, and it seems as if our methods in quelling them have become increasingly severe. What exactly are they doing that merits such actions?

^ Acidwire, these guys are revolutionaries. All they want is to gain power, and wish to do so through the dethroning of The King. They don't care for the common people; they only want control!

^ I, at any rate, we have to get back to base. Leader is probably waiting for our mission report although I don't think he expects anything less than flawless completion.

Due to a nuclear war that happened back in 2030, most of the world is now blanketed by a thick cloud of sulfur very high in the atmosphere. Because of this, most of the air in the world is poisoned and if breathed for too long, will cause an agonizing death. The cloud also blocks out most of the sun's light, shrouding the Earth in a perpetual darkness. The only places left to live are the few shielded cities left, protecting the

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citizens from the radiation outside and filtering the air, as well as providing energy and light. This particular city is called Las Noches (The Nights), and is aptly named so. Las Noches is ruled by The King, who has absolute control over the affairs of the city. He is also the head of the Covert Ops, as its strongest member.

Back at the base, Cipher and I were welcomed by the door guard. An optical scanner protruding from the wall scanned our eyes to check for the visual enhancements, standard in all of us agents. The flawless white door across from us opened, and we made our way through the pearlescent colored hallways towards the Leader's quarters. The vast entryway was packed with worker drones monitoring the entire city, instantly alerting the leader of suspicious activity, which includes anything from being out past curfew to a simple meeting of people. Anyone seen as suspicious instantly becomes a target, in which case an agent is dispatched to capture and retrieve said person. After a usually grueling and extensive interrogation process, they are mind-wiped and then freed. I have always been against such a pointless system, although I am simply an agent, thus I have no say in any matters.

In the center of the room sat the Leader. He had just gotten back from his own S rank mission and, as always, completed it without breaking a sweat. He is, after all, the only S ranked agent in the base. His imposing aura gave Cipher and I a cold sweat, as always. He wiped off a bit of dust from his black suit as he turned his chair around to face us.

Ah! My favorite duo! I trust you have completed your task, asked the Leader, his face in a perpetual grin.

Indeed we have, sire. It was but a simple one, I responded.

Was it now? Well I have good news. The King has noticed both of your success rates in missions. That last mission you completed was actually an A ranked mission. The very fact that you considered it a simple task is a testament to your skills. Our King has ordered that I contact him for you two as soon as you arrived. I shall establish contact now. Whoa! We never seen The King before. I wonder what he'll look like?

You better get your act up partner, this is the ruler of all of Las Noches, said Cipher.

Yeah, wouldn't want to get on his bad side. The room went dark, and a large hologram appeared over a table in the center of the room. Instantly, I saw the face of our King appear over the hologram. He had a very calm and relaxing complexion.

Hello, my loyal agents. My good friend here has told me much about you two. 26 C-ranked, 42 B-ranked, and 98 A-ranked missions, all completed flawlessly and without fail. Your records surpass all previous teams save one in the history of the Covert Ops. You will immediately be transferred to the Covert Ops Central Headquarters, and are hereby promoted to S rank agents. I will dispatch a transport drone to bring you two here ASAP. Be ready.

-Communication Disconnected-

Cipher and I looked at each other, completely taken by surprise, not having expected any of this at all. We managed to maintain our composure, although on the inside we were both jumping for joy. I definitely had not expected The King to be such a great guy, nor did I expect the abrupt transfer to Central.

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“Congratulations, you two! A transfer to Central, hm? That is quite a promotion you’ve received there. I remember the first time I was assigned to Central. It was a few years back, and I had just become an S ranked agent just like you two. Of course, my record was not nearly as amazing as yours; it had one black mark. An A ranked mission I was sent to complete, that involved the assassination of a certain woman. She was said to be a high ranked member of the Troupe, the greatest rebel organization, and threat to The King. I was told to ambush her without my partner near an abandoned warehouse; however, things did not go as planned. When I saw her approaching, and prepared myself for the ambush, she stopped. Confused, I remained hidden—she then turned her eyes and looked directly into mine. In an instant, I felt a fear like I’d never felt before. She continued to approach me and I, in cowering fear, did not come out of hiding. She walked right past me and when I turned the corner to see her, she was gone. That mission was the only one I had ever failed. The Leader had a gloomy look on his face.”

“Don’t worry about it Leader, we’ve just been fortunate with easy missions,” said Cipher.

“Yeah, we’d probably have failed that mission if we had to face that woman ourselves.” I added.

“Yes, well—that’s scary as that experience was, the fear I felt from that woman pales in comparison to that of our King. He—there’s something about that man—I would never think of defying him. As soon as he said that, our wristbands flashed, indicating to us that our transport was outside the base. The Leader went with us outside to bid us adieu. However, something was strange—the transport vehicle’s door opened up, and out stepped The King.”

“Hello there, Agents,” he said, with a grin. As soon as he stepped out, I felt an intense pressure all over my body. I began to sweat and shake, knowing that if this man so chose, I would be dead on the ground in an instant. Any ideas of being able to fight this man immediately left my thoughts as I stood frozen in fear. His clothing was not nearly as extravagant as I had imagined it; he wore a simple, but very long black robe decorated with a large set of eyes on the back. A sword was hanging from his left hip, with a beautifully decorated hilt and a black sheath. His hair was slicked back and curled up near the ends. His eyes—his irises—were absolutely black and he gave off an unbelievably intimidating aura.

“S-s-sir??” What are you doing here? asked The Leader.

“I have come to witness some entertainment. Before the transfer of our two prodigies here, I want you, Leader, to do something for me.”

“A-and what would that b-be, s-sir?” he asked nervously. He looked attentively at The King, awaiting what would likely be a simply errand.

“I order you to fight Acidwire immediately.” A look of surprise appeared on the Leader’s face.

“Wh-what!?” questioned the Leader, flabbergasted.

“You heard me, agent. Acidwire, get up here and engage Leader here in combat,” ordered The King.

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“Y-yes sir,” I replied. I approached The King as the Leader regained his composure. He wiped some sweat off of his forehead and stood straight in front of me, showing no signs of hesitation or worry.

“On my mark, you will begin.” He backed up a bit, eager to witness the fight but not get involved. The wind sounded and the tree leaves rustled as we faced off. My thoughts were racing as I recalled the Leader’s rumored strength. I knew this wasn’t going to be easy.

“Fight!” As soon as the words were spoken, the figure of the Leader disappeared from sight. I had heard rumors of his speed as well, but I had no idea it was this great; to be able to escape the view of an agent is no easy feat. I instinctively turned to my right, having heard some movement, and barely blocked a bone-shattering kick with my right arm. I quickly pulled away and resumed my fighting stance, albeit with a possibly broken arm. He once again disappeared, and I jumped backwards; as soon as I did so, the ground where I was standing was shattered, with the Leader’s foot on it. This guy has some serious leg strength. The Leader continued his relentless attacks, while all I could do was barely dodge them.

“Why do you run, agent?” I want to see you fight, not run in circles,” said The King, with a somewhat bored look on his face. “Of course, to him, this fight is nothing but child’s play. I don’t ever want to see him in full strength, that’s for sure.”

“Don’t worry King, you’ll be getting a show soon, just as soon as I catch this mouse,” responded the Leader. He may have said so, but I could sense tiredness in his speech. His movement was also beginning to lag, and his breathing was becoming heavier. Finally, he came at me again, and this time I was able to see his movement. I sidestepped to avoid his lunge, grabbed his neck and, using his own momentum, I lifted him into the air and slammed his body into the ground at full force.

“Gaahh!!” yelled the leader. The pressure I applied to his throat had knocked him out before he had even landed on the ground. The King looked on in quiet satisfaction. He stood up and walked towards me.

“Very nice, agent. You have proven yourself quite capable. I’ll be hoping to see more from you, Acidwire, and you too, Cipher,” he said with a look of approval, but also smugness, on his face.

“I will not disappoint you, sire,” said Cipher, quickly and eagerly responding to The King’s words.

“Yes, sir,” I said halfheartedly. “I wasn’t very pleased at all. I had known the Leader for quite a long time, and although he did call me a mouse, I still respected him. I hoped he would receive applause for fighting so well.”

“Go ahead and finish him off, Acidwire. I’ll be waiting in the transport vehicle,” said The King, nonchalantly. “What? Finish the Leader off? As in ‘kill him’?”

“Finish him off..?” “What do you mean by that?” I asked, hoping my presumption was incorrect.

“Well that is obvious, is it not? Kill the man.”

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Can we not just let him lie? That very instant I fell on the floor, losing all ability to move and unable to lift even a finger. My body felt as if it was being pressured with massive amounts of weights on every area of my body; it was bone crushing. I thought I was going to die right then and there. I was able to slightly raise my head to look at The King, who was simply looking at me, with no visible signs of effort whatsoever. Was he seriously exerting this much pressure without even trying?

You will kill him, if you do not want your life to end this instant, ordered The King, with a cold look upon his face. He let off on the pressure, and I was finally able to move. I struggled to stand up.

Just do it, whispered Cipher, with a worried expression. I didn't know what to do. I've known the leader for a very long time and he's been a good friend of mine. Why do I suddenly have to take his life, over a simple duel!?

It isn't worth it, I said, looking down. Why is this necessary?

It seems you choose to die, agent. The King pulled his blade from his sheath. He slowly approached, all whilst exerting another massive wave of pressure. Cipher fell unconscious, and I was barely able to remain awake. I knew it was over at that point. Going against this man is simply impossible. The King raised his arm.

Hmph. I like your style of doing things, little man, said a mysterious voice, belonging to a female. The King looked around, attempting to locate the source of the voice.

This voice, I recognize it. Show yourself! shouted The King. I caught a glimpse of a slender figure jumping down towards us from the top of the Covert Ops base. As she descended, The King jumped up towards her, presumably to attempt to kill her as she fell. Well, she's done for.

It's over, former king! yelled The King, as he extended his arm to impale her with his blade. She, however, avoided the attack by spinning in the air while, and kicked The King down into the ground with an unbelievable force. His crash produced a massive displacement of rock and dust, obscuring my view of him. As the smoke cleared, I saw The King standing there, with the ground surrounding him slowly breaking apart. I was overwhelmed by fear. Suddenly, everything went black.

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