

# The Joy of Revenge #Chapter 151 - Read The Joy of Revenge Chapter 151

Chapter 151

CHAPTER 151 Cohen Files

Xavier

In the dining hall, | stood away from the others, listening to Dina. She was my eyes What | couldn't see nor hear, she would describe.

and ears.

"X, | have a visual of Noah and Sarah Hughes arguing in the parking area. Seems like a crowd is beginning to gather around the both of them, Dina informed me. "And | have the combination of the safe, although it looks like we won't be needing it. Liam has just taken all

guys need to the files out from the safe and they're sitting right on top of his desk. All you do is have Liam come out of his office, so Sam can take a look at those files. He's already

inside, waiting."

"Is the argument between Noah and Sarah... bad?" | asked.

"Just a lot of screaming from Sarah mostly," Dina answered. "My main concern is that there's a crowd egging her on. I'm just worried a brawl might happen. That expensive Armani shirt Noah's wearing and blood don't necessarily mix. And here | thought she was concerned for

his welfare.

Well, time to stop an argument escalating to something more physical.

"Guys, Noah and Sarah Hughes are fighting outside," | said, gesturing to the people around us who were making their way outside. | quickly leaned towards Sebastian to whisper in his

ear.

"This is the distraction I need. All Liam has to do is leave his office, so Sam can take a look at his files. I just need someone to knock on his door."

Sebastian nodded, his eyes surveying the people rushing outside. Then, he suddenly called out to one of the townsfolk. He was an elderly man who loved telling stories wherever he was. "Mr. Allen, what seems to be the problem?"

"There are people arguing outside, Dom," he answered with a telling smile. "You know how the people of this town are. Here, we love three things... Gossip, scandals and our honey." He waved his hand at us and chuckled as he walked towards the front of the mansion.

At that very moment, Jack and Lisa came walking into the dining hall. I noticed there was a tinge of sadness in Lisa's eyes. I guess losing her husband wasn't that big of a deal to her.

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handle this," Sebastian suggested. "His house, his rules."

"Do you guys know who are fighting?" Jack asked. Both of us shrugged our shoulders. Jack ran his fingers through his hair, annoyed. "Alright, I'll tell Liam so he can handle this. Thanks

I'll be back." Jack quickly turned to get Liam.

guys. Kit.

"Ooooh, I'm going outside to watch," Lisa exclaimed. "Anyone wanna come with?" Sebastian

and I shook our heads.

"I'm not done yet, Cristos answered, showing his half-empty plate. "And I'll only care if

there's hair pulling involved." Lisa rolled her eyes at Cristos.

"What about you, Virtue?" Lisa asked. Joy shook her head with an apologetic expression of

her face. She showed Lisa her half-eaten cake.

“I’ll go with you, Lisa,” Kiki offered, linking her arm around Lisa’s. “I missed all the drama from awhile ago. I don’t want to miss this too.” Both ladies walked out of the dining room, leaving the four of us behind. I raised my finger, awaiting confirmation from Dina, before all of us could do what we set out to do.

“X, Liam and Link are outside while Sam is inside the office. Outside CCTV camera feed is on loop, Dina said. I turned on my camera jammer, then I gave the signal..

Cristos immediately stood up and went towards the grand hall with Sebastian following closely behind him. Joy, on the other hand, quietly disappeared into the grand living room. while I stayed behind to bug the dining hall.

I placed a tiny CCTV camera within the frame of a painting facing the dining table. Then, I slid my fingers behind the frame, looking for indentations where I can place an audio listening device when I felt something very peculiar.

I pulled it out and found a listening device. Holy s hit!

Right away, I knew this wasn’t one of ours. Although Leo and Benny were guards here, we decided it was best if they only placed trackers on the vehicles and eavesdropped on conversations, rather than placing spy equipment within the house. We didn’t want anything to be traced to them knowing it would jeopardize their stay here. We had to be careful.

The listening device didn’t have much dust on it and it looked fairly new. It was very thin, about two, maybe three inches in length, and cylindrical in shape unlike our circular bugging devices. I scrutinized the tiny object, turning it around in my palm. I could tell this little device was state of the art, usually used by law enforcement.

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Was Theodore listening in on Liam when he conducted business inside the house? It was but weird. From what I knew of Theodore, he had eyes and ears in the whole of New Salem. But this house was his haven and it was set up like a fort... No one wasn't allowed inside the premises without an

invitation. The guards were screened prior to employment, their belongings checked and they were paid well for their loyalty.

son

was

Planting a bug in his own house wasn't needed, unless Theodore suspected his own s betraying him. But Liam was afraid of his father, so | highly doubted he would do anything to betray Theodore.

It wasn't a Cohen who did this. It was someone else. But who?

It was an unfortunate fact the Cohens had many enemies.

My first thought went to Pete. He could have used Nicole or anyone else on his payroll. However, from the burner phone we got off of Cris, it was obvious Pete was getting his information from him. If this was Pete's bug, why would he need to ask Cris for info? He'd know Liam's every move through this bad boy in the palm of my hand.

| replaced the listening device | found with one of my mine, quickly wrapped it inside a napkin, then placed it inside my sock. The textured fabric of my socks will absorb sound, muffling our voices.

"We have a problem," | said through coms targeting mostly everyone. "This place is bugged. Check the paintings, underneath the tables and if you can, those display cabinets outside," | said. Then, | switched to talk to Dina. "There are bugs in the mansion."

"Copy that," Dina said. "Sam brought a bug detector with him. I'm currently searching for signals, so | can cut the feed."

"Hurry," | whispered, noticing there were shadows heading towards my direction. | heaved a sigh of relief when Cristos and Sebastian emerged from the corner.

They quickly resumed their places at the buffet table. | raised my eyebrows at them, questioning if they found anything, but they shook their heads.

Joy came back smiling though, her blue eyes sparkling with mischief. She waved her small black bag indicating she found something.

Good girl.

at to our 3/5

| placed a finger in front of my lips to warn her not to talk about anything relevant to our

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plans. She nodded her head and began to talk about plans for her wedding.

"X, Sam is looking through the files," Dina suddenly said. "Nothing on a Nestor Villegas, but he found files on Cynthia McDowell, Tomas Martin, Daniel Williams, Veronica and Lorenzo Ortiz, the Sheriff including Cris and Lisa Murdock. Oh, and there's something interesting you might want to know. The Cohens have a file on a certain Lucas Jensen."

| moved to another painting in the dining hall, running my fingers behind it, checking for bugs before | spoke. "Jensen? How is he related to Noah?"

"Lucas Jensen is Noah's father," Dina answered. Apparently, this file was made about twenty- four years ago when the Jensen's first moved to New Salem. What's interesting is there are

no other details or information about the Jensens prior to New Salem. There isn't even much in his file, but it does say he died of a car accident almost nine years ago."

That was it?

"So what's your point?" | asked. Noah never spoke about his father nor did anyone in town. It was like Lucas Jensen didn't exist. "X, Lucas Jensen must have been really important to have a file made by one of the Cohens. Back then, Theodore's father was still mayor. Theodore only became mayor a year after," Dina pointed out.

Unfortunately, Theodore was dead. He probably knew why his father made that file, but dead

men tell no tales.

"Good job," | told Dina. "Tell Sam to get out of the office now and | want you to locate where the feed on these bugs go to..

“You never make it easy, X,” Dina said, sighing. “But we're close to finding a location. Lou is working on it as we speak.”

| walked back to Cristos and Sebastian, wanting to tell them what | had just found out, but this-wasn't the time nor place.

Half of the people had come back, resuming their activities before they were interrupted. Lisa and Ki ki were giggling as they walked back to the buffet table. The sorrow | saw in Lisa's eyes was now gone and she seemed to be enjoying herself with Ki ki. “And? Who was arguing with who?” Sebastian asked curiously.

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“Noah and Sarah. From what we witnessed, they've broken up...officially,” Ki ki announced. while Lisa nodded her head as she sipped her wine. “Sarah slapped Noah in the face after Noah called it quits. Jack had to pull her away from him and remind her she was running for mayor. I'm guessing you'll be seeing videos of it circulating on social media by tomorrow.”

My eyes narrowed, remembering what Sarah had said about Liam and Virtue's engagement.

Her break-up with Noah... it was convenient.

It was so out of character for Sarah to be drunk and ruin everyone's night. She even targeted. Joy. Why would she do that? Unless Noah manipulated her.

Whatever Sarah accused Liam and Virtue of was actually the reality of her relationship with Noah. Their relationship was most probably a ploy to destroy her chances of becoming mayor. It was possible Noah and Liam were working together and Noah's mission was to distract Sarah.

Noah Jensen...

I needed to find out more about his father.

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Chapter 152

## CHAPTER 152 Guilt

Joy

I waved goodbye to Liam as we drove off. He waved back at me with a longing in those gray eyes of his. Surprisingly, he was in rather good spirits, despite the scene caused by his rival, Sarah Hughes, and the mob camping right outside the entrance to Highland Oaks.

Cristos, Sebastian, Kiki and I were in Sebastian's car, driving down Prairie Hill, on our way to the p

ub with Xavier following right behind us. Although Sebastian wanted to go to the Ol' Barn, Xavier reminded him he was still recovering from his wound. He said it would be better

if he manned the monitors at Cristos's office and kept an eye out for the Sheriff.

Cristos put on some music while I wrapped a sweater over the listening device I pulled out from behind one of the paintings in the grand living room earlier. After placing it inside the center console, I heaved a sigh of relief. Finally, we could talk about something other than the plans to my wedding. At dinner, it was all Liam could talk about. He wanted a garden wedding right outside the mansion, just like his parents had, and he wanted our motif to be yellow, following the grand custom of the Spring Honey Bee Celebration. It was truly difficult.

to keep the smile on my face when the whole conversation was centered on us tying the

knot.

Honestly, talking about the wedding made me want to shoot Liam in the heart.

By ten o'clock, all the people, except for us, had already left. Noah never made it back after the scuffle he had with Sarah. According to the tracker, he went to Highland Oaks, probably to drop Sarah off, then he went straight to the pub. | guess he was out to get drunk.

Lisa, after her short discussion with Jack, came back anxious although she hid it well. From what we could hear of their conversation, Jack had gone to the Bismarck police department earlier in the day and had spoken to the detective in charge. He said they found Cris's car at Elk's Cliff with Cris's clothes in the back of the trunk. The police were currently looking through all of the CCTV footage in the area, but they suspected he was either abducted, in hiding or at the bottom of the cliff. Jack told Lisa to expect the worst, but he believed Cris was in hiding for reasons unknown.

The slight worry in Lisa's expression changed once Liam and Link came out from the office

after resuming their business meeting. She twirled her hair around her ear and smiled flirtatiously at Link. Lisa obviously liked him and didn't seem to care if people noticed.

Link gave her a lopsided grin before taking his phone out from his pocket. | saw her pout

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when he began to scroll through his phone instead of talking to her. She obviously wanted some of his attention.

n, on the other hand, yawned, feigning exhaustion. It was a signal for us to leave.

Liam,

"Aw, you're tired," | said, caressing his cheek with the back of my hand. "I guess it's time for us to go home then. The funeral tomorrow is at eight in the morning, right?"



“Unfortunately, it is,” Liam replied. “Virtue, honey, Henry is outside, ready to drive you and K iki home. I'd do it myself, but it's been a really long day. There was the riot from this morning, then | had our marriage license processed, before coming back here to set up the mansion for the wake.” He yawned again for effect. “I'm completely exhausted.”

“I'll drive them home, Liam,” Jack quickly volunteered glancing at Ki ki. “I don't mind.”

“| still need you here, Jack,” Liam said. “I may be tired, but we still have something to discuss remember? Don't worry. Henry is more than equipped to take care of them. | assure you.”

“No, it's okay, Liam. You might need Henry to drive you if you have an emergency to go to. I'll drive them home,” Cristos offered. “Anyway, K iki said she wants to take a look at the pub to help me fix the place up in time for the Spring Honey Bee celebration. Apparently, she's an interior designer and does some carpentry on the side. Since Nicole is in the hospital and Noah is busy doing other stuff, I'm thinking of hiring K iki while she's here.”

“Oh wow! And here | thought our town had no one left to design people's homes,” Lian pertaining to Pete and Nicole who were the town's known interior designers. “Maybe yo should consider moving here, K iki. You'll be a great addition to the town.” K iki blushed.

“I'm considering it, actually,” Ki ki replied. “My bestfriend does live here and there are prospects.” She gave Jack a warm smile. “You never know.” Jack blushed to the roots of his hair. Liam, noticing Jack's red face, chuckled, patting Jack on the back.

“It's nice to know you're thinking about it. So, it's settled then, Liam said. “Chip, you drive them home after the pub. Virtue, I'll pick you up in the morning for the funeral. After the funeral, we'll go to Bismarck to talk to a wedding planner. We only have one week to plan everything.” | nodded my head in agreement before giving him a hug.

As | ran my hands down his back, an image of me stabbing him repeatedly using my hair comb flashed before my eyes. Lucky for him, | left my favorite bladed hair accessory at home.

Ugh... | was actually going to marry this as shole,

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I looked up at the beautiful mansion in front of me and sighed. It was the only reason pushing me to commit to this farce.

"I've p

got to go," Link suddenly said. "There seems to be a mob gathered in front of Highland Oaks. I need to be there in case the situation escalates."

Liam groaned out loud while Jack ran his fingers through his hair.

"I'll alert the deputies on duty," he mumbled, before taking Kiki's hand. "Kiki, I promise, I'll see you tomorrow, okay. And text me when you get home. Good night." He raised her hand to his lips and kissed it, making Kiki blush. Then, with a frustrated sigh, he turned towards the mansion, whipping his phone out from his pocket.

"Chip, you're right. I do need Henry," Liam remarked, shaking his head. "Link, before you go, remember what we discussed?" "Yes. Don't worry, Mayor. I'll call you once they agree to negotiate terms," Link answered, placing his phone in his pocket. "Good night, everyone." I expected him to walk to his car, but he paused to speak to Lisa. "By the way, Lisa, I still owe you. I haven't forgotten."

I wasn't the only one who noticed her cheeks had turned red. Sebastian, seeing it too, raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Sure, Link," Lisa said, giggling like a little school girl. "Just give me a call or drop by my office." Link nodded his head and quickly waved goodbye, before walking to his car.

She followed him with her eyes, sighing wistfully, a dreamy expression on her beautiful face.

She had a crush on him.

Time to break her out of her trance before Liam notices. Technically, she was a married

woman.

“How about you, Lisa? You want to join us at the pub?” | asked, nudging her with elbow.

my

“Huh? Oh, pub... Actually, I’m turning a new leaf she answered hastily. “I’ll be heading home instead. | just need to use the bathroom first before | drive home. Chip, don’t forget, I’ll see you tomorrow afternoon after the funeral.”

Lisa...

As | looked through the car window, it was Lisa’s face | saw.

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| couldn't shake the guilt | was feeling. Here | was, addressing her so casually, when in fact, her husband died by my hand.

She needs closure...

“Maybe we should give Lisa some closure,” | said out loud as Cristos continued downward towards the main road. | was seated in the back with Ki ki while Sebastian was seated up in

front.

“What do you mean?” Sebastian asked confused.

on. It's

“Plant some evidence to make the police believe Cris is dead, so she can move 0 obvious she likes Link,” | pointed out.

“Have you forgotten Sam made it appear Cris is having you delivered in a cage?” Cristos said, reminding me of our plans. “If Pete finds out Cris is dead, our plans are f ucked.”

Ugh! | completely forgot.

“Are you feeling sorry for Lisa, Virtue?” Kiki asked, surprised. I nodded my head. “Because you killed her husband. But she and Nicole lured you into that gym, Virtue. You can’t feel sorry for

her. She did this to you. Whatever has happened between her and Cris, I believe she

deserves it.”

Kiki was right.

“You’re right,” I said, “and I completely forgot about Pete. I don’t know... I just thought she and Link could become, you know, more than friends.”

“They can be,” Sebastian replied. “Who says she needs to know Cris is dead for her to move on to someone else? I’ll tell Xavier to instruct Link to make the moves on her. Chip, have you gone through the data from her laptop?”

“Not yet,” Cristos admitted. “But I doubt if she didn’t know why Cris was earning so much money. Did you guys notice her brand new designer bag and shoes?”

“I did,” Sebastian said. “Chanel bags aren’t cheap, although she does come from a wealthy family.”

“Well, when she was talking to Jack, she said she’ll be leaving for Chicago next week,” I said. “Maybe we can have Link bump into her there.”

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“Now that’s a plan,” Cristos said. “I’ll look for her itinerary later.”

“Guys, what about the gas station? Virtue was supposed to be delivered there,” Kiki whined.

“That’s easy,” Sebastian said. “We’ll have Sam confirm before the drop. After the wedding, we’ll ambush you on your way to the airport for your honeymoon.”

“How do you know we’re going to leave New Salem for our honeymoon?” I asked bewildered.

“Because Chip, Bo and I are going to book you a honeymoon package as our wedding gift,” Sebastian answered. “I told you, easy.

When we reached the main road, a car turned, heading towards the mansion. As it drove by, we saw the Sheriff in the driver’s seat. He looked angry.

“Max has Deputy Randy in custody. Sadly, Riley is dead. The Sheriff got to him first,” Xavier said through our earpieces.

Oh boy.

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The Joy of Revenge

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Liam

I waved goodbye as Dom’s car drove off with Virtue inside. If I didn’t have more to do, I

would have invited her to sleep here.

I'll be seeing her tomorrow morning anyway. We can spend the whole day tomorrow after |

bury my father. | decided to do away with the post-funeral reception to spend time with her.

| could hear Jack behind me ordering the remaining deputies at the station to pacify the mob

at Highland Oaks until he and the Sheriff were done with more pressing matters.

According to Dan, there were about twenty or so of Pete's loyal drug dealers who rejected our offer. Tonight, those men and women were going to die.

No loose ends. No more people under Pete. ALL WILL BE UNDER ME.

Once I've secured this town, I'll search for Pete and finish him off too... That | swear.

After a relaxing dinner with Virtue and her friend, | didn't expect a scandal to happen at my

father's wake.novelbin

But Sarah was right. | did invite everyone living in New Salem. | just didn't anticipate her coming here.

Link and | were in the middle of discussing a negotiation with the Martins when Jack unexpectedly knocked on my office door. When he told me Noah and Sarah were having a row outside, | thought he was joking. | had assumed Sarah's earlier humiliation was enough.

for her to leave.

Was | wrong.

Yes, | did ask Noah to woo Sarah for me, knowing she had a crush on him, to divert her focus from campaigning. She was starting to gain supporters from all the charity work she was doing and that worked against me. | needed to distract her. And so, | asked Noah for a favor.

"If I do this for you, I want to become an appointed town officer just like Dan, Liam," Noah negotiated. Honestly, it surprised me. I never knew he wanted to work at town hall.

"The best I can do is appoint you as a town assessor," I said.

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"Deal," Noah agreed, quickly accepting my offer. "It so happens Sarah asked Pete to ask me if I could fix up her campaign headquarters and renovate her tiny home on her parents' property. I think I should give her a call then."

Sarah and I were rivals ever since we were kids. During high school, I ran against her for student body president. Fortunately, for her, she won, using the "Liam raped Joy Taylor" card. I vowed I would never lose against her again.

There is no love lost between us Cohens and the Hughes. The same holds true with the Taylors. My great-great grandfather died of a heart attack after he was accused of raping and killing a young woman from the Taylor Clan.

incident, the Cohen mantra became "Death to all Taylors."

er that une

At that very moment, the memory of a terrified young girl with chestnut brown hair and aquamarine eyes strapped to a bench press burned through my head. I rubbed my forehead, hoping to wipe the horrible image from my mind.

"Death to all Taylors!" I shouted at the young girl as I raped her, plunging my dick inside her slippery pussy. "You hear me! Death... to... all... Taylors!" I came inside her, pushing down on her thighs, squeezing her flesh while my fingernails dug into her skin. I remember laughing triumphantly as I pulled my limp dick out of her and watched my come drip out from her swollen pussy.

| closed my eyes tightly, shuddering at the horrid memory. If Virtue ever found out about Joy Taylor and what | did to her, | knew she would call me a monster.

At the hospital, barely alive, Joy underwent a sexual assault examination. Sarah's mom, New Salem's lead forensic pathologist, was assigned to conduct and deliver the sexual assault kit to the Sheriff for evidence, but it magically disappeared. As a result, Dr. Hughes was blamed for the kit's disappearance.

"| know your father had something to do with Joy's missing sexual assault kit," Sarah whispered in my ear while we were standing in line for lunch at the school cafeteria. "You're a rapist, Liam. You make me sick."

| decided to turn the tables on her.

"No, Hughes, | will not f uck you even if you pay me money," | said loudly, so the whole student body would hear. "I don't f uck men."

"You're a pig, Liam," Sarah muttered, her eyes flashing with a cold fury in their depths. "I don't ever want you to ever touch-" 2/6

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"Stop lying, Hughes," | scoffed. "You just said you weren't wearing underwear underneath your hideous skirt." | quickly lifted her plaid skirt to reveal a pair of pink granny panties.

"Geez, Hughes. Did you steal your grandma's underwear?" | exclaimed, laughing hysterically. Dan, Cris and Jack took one look at the gigantic pair of underwear and howled with laughter.

Upon seeing the huge pair of underpants, everyone at the cafeteria poked fun at her... to her utter humiliation. As a consequence, | was called to the Principal's office and given detention, but it was worth it.

ng our senior year, to Sarah's disdain, she was referred to as President Granny Panties.

During



Noah was f ucking President Granny Panties... It was both extremely hilarious and disgusting

at the same time.

all

I gotta give Noah some credit though. He went way beyond the call of duty and f ucked President Granny Panties. I didn't know he had it in him. Well, as men say, "In the dark, women feel the same." Yet, Sarah was built more like a bony man. She was flat- chested with no hips, not even a nice ass to hold on to. How he was able to stomach f ucking her was a wonder. Maybe Noah had to drink himself to a stupor before even touching her. Maybe he had a vivid imagination and pictured himself f ucking some hot girl.

But of all the nights Noah and Sarah could pick to make a ruckus, it had to be tonight. Sarah was obviously drunk and Noah didn't have it in him to keep her in line.

Right in front of everyone, he broke up with her. That was enough for her to explode.

"You and I are over, Sarah," Noah said, his face red with fury. "You are a jealous, stalking

little bi tch. I know you hide behind that big tree on the Old Taylor property. I, for had enough of your antics. It's over. You hear me? Over!"

one,

have

"I'm a jealous bi tch? Well, I wouldn't need to follow you around if you were faithful. You think I didn't know you were seeing Nicole on the side? You two-timing ba stard!" Sarah spat

at him.

The people around us didn't seem to want to stop the two. Some of them were laughing while others were biting their lips in anticipation, hoping they would disclose more about their relationship.

On the bright side, I will no longer be plagued with questions regarding my relationship with Nicole. It was irritating to constantly tell people Nicole and I were just friends. Nicole and my father... Well, they were a different story, but no one needed to know that.

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As the dutiful mayor, I had to put a stop to this, although watching Sarah's downfall was extremely satisfying.

"Noah, I think it would be better if you two discussed this privately. You guys are causing a scene," I pointed out, trying to diffuse the situation, but they ignored me.

Well, I tried.

"I wouldn't have to see Nicole if you knew how to suck dick, Sarah. I mean, you aren't a virgin. I know you had sex with Pete McDowell in high school. I saw the both of you in the locker room," Noah threw back at her. Gasps escaped from the lips of the townsfolk, me

of them together made me included. I didn't know she had sex with Pete. Imagining the t

feel sick.

Sarah quickly raised her hand and struck him in the face. Before she could scratch him with her long polished fingernails, Jack intervened, grabbing a hold of Sarah by her waist.

That's enough or I'll arrest the both of you for alarm and scandal," Jack yelled, as he struggled with Sarah. For a thin woman, she gave him quite the fight.

By the time Jack was able to subdue her, he had a couple of scratches on his arms. She was like a feral cat, untamed and improper.

"I should lock you up for assaulting an officer, Sarah. You're lucky I'm friends with your mother," Jack told her after she had calmed down, placing her back on her feet. "What is wrong with you, Sarah? You're a candidate for mayor. You shouldn't be doing shit like this. It's so... unbecoming of a future public servant."

You tell her, Jack.

I smirked noticing that some of the townsfolk were recording everything on their smartphones. Not even her social media managers could undo this. It was all on video.

mayor. I was It was at that very moment I realized Sarah was out as the forerunner for assured another term... all I had to do was keep the status quo. I'll have Lisa spread the video, so she'd remain the crazy as s bi ch all throughout the campaign period. "Liam, I'm going to head on home too," Lisa said, interrupting my thoughts. She had just come from the bathroom.

"Any

ny word on Cris?" I asked. She shook her head

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"It's like he vanished into thin air," Lisa answered. "I'm going through CCTV footages from places he might have gone to. I can't seem to find anything. Jack told me Bismarck Police found his car on Elk Cliff. He doesn't even go there, Liam."

"He's somewhere. He's definitely somewhere with Pete," I said. "The campaign period starts in a couple of weeks. If the election is really important to him, he'll pop up."

"Y-you think so, Liam?" She asked. I was taken aback at the hesitation in her voice.

"You don't sound too happy," I remarked.

“Liam, Cris and I, it's been years since we shared a bed, she admitted sorrowfully. “Our happy marriage... it's a sham. Sure, I have problems conceiving, but Cris... he has deep rooted issues that I can't even fix. I love him, I do, but I don't know if I can continue being married to him for four more years.” She wiped a tear from her cheek. “I can't believe I'm actually talking to you about this.”

Cris was an asshole. I thought Lisa could talk some sense into him. Truth be told, she was good for him. Unfortunately, there was a man named Pete who kept Cris on a tight leash.

“Lisa, if you want to divorce him, then maybe you should. You deserve to be happy,” I heard myself saying. I couldn't believe I just said that. Maybe because I was happy. I was going to marry a wonderful woman soon. I guess I wanted people around me to be happy too.... especially my friends.

“You think so?” Lisa asked, shocked.

“Yes. You have Link's number right? Maybe he can point you to a good divorce lawyer. The one in town really stinks,” I pointed out. And I meant that literally.

She paused, staring at me like she was looking at a different person. Then, all of a sudden her expression changed. She smiled. “I'll give Link a call then,” she said. “Thanks, Liam. I really appreciate you being a friend.” She kissed me on the cheek.

“I need bridesmaids,” I suddenly said. “You think you can wear a yellow dress for me?”

“Of course!” Lisa answered excitedly, clapping her hands. “To be part of your wedding is an honor, Liam. Gosh, I can't wait!” She practically skipped to her car, giggling the whole way.

drive out when another car entered through the gates.

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S hit! The Sheriff was here.

“Isn't the Sheriff suppose to meet us at the Ol' Barn?” Jack asked from behind me.

“Yep,” I answered. “This means we have problems.”

What now?!

Chapter Comments

Shelly Torz

I'm liking your story a lot, good work

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#2

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Chapter 154

CHAPTER 154 Pleasantries

Jacknovelbin

While the Sheriff parked his car, I took one look at his dark menacing face and it was enough

to send a chill down my spine..

I've seen him mad before, but this was the first time his eyes were dark with rage. Yet, in their depths, there was something else...

Anguish... Misery... Torment.

Liam took a step forward, obviously wanting answers, but I blocked him with my arm. He looked at me, his brow furrowed, as if questioning why, so I answered him by slowly shaking my head and giving him a warning look.

That look on the Sheriff's face... I've seen that look before... in the eyes of desperate, hopeless men. In my experience, disheartened men usually ended up doing harrowing things. I didn't want anything to trigger the Sheriff into doing the unthinkable. I knew my conscience wouldn't be able to handle something like that.

Liam impatiently pursed his lips and placed his hands on his hips, annoyed he had to hold back and give the Sheriff time to calm down. Eventually, he nodded his head, finally agreeing it was best if we allowed the Sheriff his space.

Just like Liam, I wanted answers too, but seeing Sheriff Combs in that state, frightened me.

Earlier in the day, as instructed by the Sheriff, I drove to the Bismarck Police Precinct to speak to Detective Matthews. I saw him patiently waiting for me at the information desk as I walked into the police station.

He wasn't what I expected. I thought I'd be meeting a young inexperienced rookie in a suit. However, the man who greeted me looked as if he was nearing retirement. He looked as old as the Sheriff, bald except for the fluffy white hairs sticking out from the sides of his head. He had a sharp pointed nose, a brown haired moustache with several errant strands of gray hair, beady blue eyes and bushy brown eyebrows. He was wearing a simple brown suit paired with a dark shirt and red necktie while on his feet were a pair of scuffed up black leather

shoes.

"Undersheriff Emery," he greeted me while extending his hand. "I'm Detective Matthews. I really appreciate you coming to see me."

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## CHAPTER 154 Pleasantries

| grabbed his hand and shook it enthusiastically “Hello, Detective Matthews. Nice to meet you. The

off extends his apologies for not being able to meet with you. Aside from all the investigations our department is conducting, he was injured at a riot this morning and had to go to the hospital for stitches. He’s been ordered bed rest by the doctor.”

“Sorry to hear that. Do tell the Sheriff | wish him a speedy recovery. Anyway, pleasantries aside, I’m hoping you can help me with my investigation. Let’s talk in my office,” he said, releasing my hand and gesturing for me to follow him. “You drink coffee?” He asked, stopping at the small coffee station situated at a corner.

“Of course. Cream and two sugars,” | replied. He nodded his head.

“Donut?”

“Sure, why not,” | answered nonchalantly. Using a napkin, he took a powdered donut from a

he white box and handed it to me. After filling two disposable cups with brewed coffee, nudged his head towards a door with his name on the office doorlight.

While | situated myself comfortably in a wooden chair in front of his desk with my donut

of and cup of coffee in my hands, he quickly sat in the chair behind his desk, placing his cup coffee on a coaster, and began shuffling through the papers in a file folder.

“You must be terribly busy. | heard about the death of the former mayor of New Salem. Is it true the nurse administrator of St. Elizabeth Hospital killed him while under the hospital’s care?” Detective Matthews asked. He was apparently up to date with his current events.

“According to her suicide letter, but it’s still under investigation,” | answered, sipping my coffee. | felt myself relax as the bitter taste of the coffee swirled in my mouth.

“And the nurse who inadvertently killed Theodore Cohen? | heard he’s no longer in your custody.”

“Well, he was able to hire himself a good lawyer | replied.

“| see. Seems you have your hands full, so I’ll just get right to it. There were two incidents that have happened recently and both seem to be connected to New Salem. One was at the Silver Spoon Diner and the other at Huff Hills Mansion. I’m afraid it has been one blood bath after the other,” he said, showing me pictures of both crime scenes. | noticed each photo contained images of people lying in a pool of their own blood. “Both places are owned by CMD Enterprises whose CEO and founder is a certain Cynthia McDowell, a resident of New Salem. According to our intel, both crime scenes are believed to be related to some drug war. When | spoke to Sheriff Combs, he said Cynthia McDowell passed away. Can you tell me

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## CHAPTER 154 Pleasantries

how she died?”

“She was shot inside her own home with a sniper rifle,” | answered. His eyes widened in

alarm. “Based on our investigation, we suspect she and her son, Peter McDowell, may have double-crossed someone. After her death, Peter disappeared. According to a close friend of his, McDowell is most probably out of the country. We've been trying to locate him, but have

been unsuccessful. We believe he might have changed his name and appearance. Truth be told, none of us had any idea the McDowells were tangled in this sort of stuff. You see, Peter McDowell kept to himself mostly and worked as an interior designer for a small contractor. His mother, on the other hand, did charity work and was even the head of a local church organization.” The detective nodded his head while he took down notes.



“And his mother, what was her occupation in New Salem?” the detective asked.

“She was into real estate and had several businesses,” | answered.

“When | spoke with your sheriff, he mentioned a Marla Lawrence. There happens to be one lone survivor of the Silver Spoon massacre, a young man identified as Riley Harris, who is currently at Bismarck General Hospital. The EMTs who provided onsite emergency care told me he uttered the name Marla. Who is she and what is her relationship with Riley Harris?

“Marla Lawrence is a suspected drug trafficker and Peter McDowell's lover while Riley Harris is one of Lawrence's closest associates. They were classmates in high school. Anyway, after receiving an anonymous tip, we had assets in place for a buy- bust operation at Marla Lawrence's residence, however she together with a small army were able to neutralize all assets. In their haste to flee from the authorities, they left weapons, drugs and money in Lawrence's home. If memory serves me correctly, all this happened at approximately the same time the Silver Spoon Massacre happened.

“And what about motive? Why kill Riley Harris?” The detective asked.

“Love triangle. Marla Lawrence and Riley Harris were very close. Peter McDowell must have set up a meeting with Riley here in Bismarck with the intention of killing him,” | said. The detective nodded his head while scribbling on the sheet of paper. | waited for him to ask me a question, but he just continued writing.

Impatient, | coughed to grab his attention..

“Detective, we've come to believe we have a mole in our department. And from what you told the Sheriff, we believe it might be Deputy Randall Evans. He purposely did not inform the Sheriff that Riley Harris is currently in the hospital. It begs us to believe Riley's life may be

in danger.”

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"I understand your concern. Riley Harris no doubt has valuable information and could serve

as an asset when and if he wakes up," Detective Matthews said with a smile. "I have uniform

personnel keeping a close watch. I assure you, we will protect him, despite the circumstances." He suddenly pulled out another picture from his file folder and placed it in

front of me. This time it was a photo of a small dark room with a filthy bed against a wall with chains hanging above the bed. "This is a small room at the basement of Huff Hills

Mansion. It appears to be a torture room. Does Peter McDowell have any prior records for rape or assault... maybe kidnapping?" Fuck. He knew.

My hands began to sweat.

"No," I answered curtly. "What have you found, Detective?"

"Nothing conclusive, but after finding this room. I believe this isn't purely about drugs. We

suspect human tra

The door to Detective Matthews's office suddenly opened. I turned my head to find a younger man in a blue suit standing at the doorway.

"Matthews, I need a word with you... in private, the man said.

"Excuse me, Undersheriff," Detective Matthews said, walking out the door. Once the door

closed, I leaned over, my ear to the door, to eavesdrop.

"We got an anonymous call, Matthews. The woman on the phone said there's a plot to kill Riley Harris sometime in the evening. How the fuck? A woman? Could it be Norma? Or Randy's wife?

I leaned closer hoping to hear more.

"I'll have Harris moved to another room in the secluded area of the hospital," | heard Detective Matthews say. "Is that all?"

"No. We have a report Huff Hills Mansion is currently burning to the ground."

Oh wow! Pete was covering his tracks?

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"Christ! The Crime Lab isn't even done processing everything. How bad is it? And how is this even possible?" | instructed a team of uniforms to stand guard."

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## CHAPTER 154 Pleasantries

are having "Gas leak and from what | heard, it's bad. Because of the wind, the firefighters trouble extinguishing the fire. Most of the residents living in the area have been evacuated and reports say, the trees surrounding the mansion are in flames."

| heard Detective Matthews utter a curse. | quickly scooted back to my original position, so

| wouldn't get caught eavesdropping. That's when | noticed the open file folder on his desk... so, | decided to take a peek. There

re wasn't much in the first few pages of the file, but it was clear they were looking into the McDowells and all their close associates. Aside from the photographs and his notes, there wasn't anything else.

| quickly fixed the file folder back to its original position and glanced at the ceiling, noticing the CCTV camera. | smiled. Before walking into the station, | turned on my jamming device. | was here to snoop, not just answer questions.

Honestly, | was clueless as to why there was a gunfight at Huff Hills last night, but | suspected De Vega was involved. Then again, Lisa said De Vega swore he wasn't involved in any of this...

Maybe it was someone else... Maybe it was Joy Taylor.

| smirked. Pete was using Joy Taylor's ghost to distract us. If Pete got himself into a jam with De Vega, there must be someone else out there gunning for him.

gone

for

The fire wasn't an accident. He must have set the mansion on fire to destroy evidence. Well, that plays to our advantage. Any evidence on the Joan Summers case would be good.

The detective walked back into his office as | was finishing my donut. He didn't look too

happy.

e way. Cris Murdock's wife can collect "I'm sorry, Undersheriff, but we have to cut our meeting short," he announced, closing the file folder. "I'll call if | need more information. By her husband's car when she's free. But | have to warn you. It doesn't look too good. We happen to believe Cris Murdock's body may be at the bottom of the ravine. Rest assured, | have K-9 units searching for him."

After one final handshake, | quickly left the station and climbed into my truck. Before turning the corner at the exit, | threw the jamming device into the bushes, knowing they wouldn't find any fingerprints on it. | had silicon on my fingertips.

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| was a good distance away when | called the Sheriff to tell him what | had overheard.

"Good. They'll expect someone to come at Riley's old room. They won't see me coming."

As I stared at the Sheriff, who was banging his palms against the steering wheel like a madman, my guess is they did see him coming.

Chapter Comments

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Chapter 155

CHAPTER 155 Bob

Sheriff

I parked my car right in front of Jack and Liam. They stood rooted to the spot, obviously debating whether to approach me or not. From Bismarck, I was supposed to meet them at the Ol' Barn. But instead here I was, angry as hell.

Go d da mmit! Why the fuck didn't I check the bathroom to make sure the coast was clear?! Why didn't I do my homework? Of all the screw ups I have done in my life, this was the

worst.

I banged on the steering wheel with the palms of my hands, releasing some of my pent up anger, but it wasn't enough. I wanted to break something, anything...

God, I was so stupid! STU PID!

I thought my plan was fool proof. After getting stitches, I called an old friend of mine who I had bailed out from a jam a long while back. I helped him change his name and appearance, then I got him a job at Bismarck General as an

unsuspecting security guard. It's been twelve years since I saw him last, but he owed me a favor.

"Combs, I was wonderin' when you'd call. I was shocked to find Ol' Mary's grandson admitted in the hospital under police custody. What's goin' on in New Salem anyway?" Bob asked.

Bob was Theodore Cohen's favorite runner. Bob was a man of his word, never complained, and most importantly, he brought in lots of money. He was trusted by Theodore, so much so that he was allowed to sell in large quantities. I used to envy Bob's relationship with the Cohens. He was one of the selected few who could visit the mansion without having

invitation.

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Unfortunately, Bob made the mistake of supplying a huge amount of drugs to a new player in the field. Apparently, the new player was an undercover DEA agent. During what was supposed to be a routine deal, he found himself walking into a bust.

But Bob was a shrewd man. He knew something was wrong. So he brought a group of men to back him up. And just like what we've seen in the movies, they all ended up shooting at each

other. Bob alone survived to tell the tale of that fateful day, although to the townsfolk of

New Salem, he was deceased.

"Same old, same old," I answered. "Same old sh it."

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CHAPTER

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"Nah, this ain't no drug bust," he said, "this is somethin' else. They got bodies piled up in the morgue, 'but they ain't got no drugs on them. I've been doin'

some snoopin' around and they think Ol' Mary's grandson is part of some human trafficking syndicate. There've been reports of girls goin' missin' around Bismarck. You know, Combs, this kinda s hit wouldn't be happenin' if Cynthia was still boss." Bob never liked Pete. To him, Pete was a little boy playing godfather.

"I don't know if you've heard, but Cynthia's dead and we're making the necessary arrangements to get rid of Pete. Once Liam becomes boss, there won't be anymore girls going missing," I promised.

has

"Well, they moved Riley to a corner room at the secluded area of the hospital, near the ICU. The police say they got some anonymous tip about an assassination," Bob stated. "That area eyes at all times, but the computer system that powers the security around the hospital

minutes to is so sophisticated that it takes time for it to boot up. After reboot, it takes seven i be fully operational. That'll give you enough time to break Riley out of his hospital prison."

"This isn't a rescue mission, Bob," I mumbled through the phone. "I need to make sure he doesn't make a peep."

"Oh, I see. Poor Ol' Mary ain't gonna see her grandson ever again. Well, that's karma," Bob replied. "I'm guessin' seven minutes will be enough to shoot him in the head or inject him with some sort of poison. All we need to do now is think of way to distract the guards and nurses in that area. So what time should I expect you?"

"Around five in the afternoon. That'll give us enough time to finalize our plans. Get me so clothes to make me look like some doctor and a wig of some kind if you can find one," I

instructed him.

"No problem. I already have somethin' in mind. I'll message you where you can meet me. See you, Combs."

I arrived at the address he sent me at exactly five in the afternoon. It was the address of a laundry shop in a remote part of the city. I walked in and asked to see a man named Charlie. The woman at the counter took one look at me and

asked who I was. She looked to be in her forties, with long curly brown hair, a full face of make-up, wearing a red top with a deep v that showed ample cleavage and a tight denim miniskirt. She leaned forward, giving me a

clear view of her breasts, as she waited for an answer.

"Tell him I'm an old friend," I answered. She smiled seductively and ushered me inside.

"He's waiting for you at his office. It's the blue door at the very end," the woman said,

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pointing me to the right direction. "You can't miss it."

I followed her instructions and walked through the shop, looking for the blue door. After dodging clothing hanging on metal racks, I finally found what I was looking for, hidden behind a dry cleaning machine. I knocked on the door tentatively and patiently waited for an answer to come from inside. But instead of an answer, the door swung open, revealing Bob.

He was much older now and fatter. He had a pot belly, a dark moustache and a beard, and thin salt and pepper hair. He was wearing a plain white T-shirt and black slacks. He looked as if he was getting ready to go to work at the hospital.

He smiled at me, his teeth stained from coffee and cigarettes. Because of his old age and his fully grown moustache and beard, he didn't have to dye his hair, wear colored contacts or wear loose clothing to mask his true self.

"Wow, Combs, you look as old as me," Bob remarked, ushering me inside. "But it's really nice to see a familiar face. After bein' stuck in this hell hole, I sure miss the good old days."

"I didn't know you had a business," I said noticing the currency counters on a long table on the left side of his rather large office. On the right of his office was a long leather sofa with a coffee table in front of it, while at the end, near



a red wall, was a vintage wooden desk made of sturdy dark mahogany. It was a beautiful desk, varnished and gleaming under the light. It made me want to change the old desk in my office.

“Money launderin’ is actually quite profitable,” he said, chuckling, gesturing for me to sit in one of the leather chairs in front of the desk. “I started several years back, so I could keep tabs on New Salem. And in case you didn’t know, Daniel Williams is my number one client. Coffee or whiskey?”

I

“Whiskey. I need something to numb the pain,” replied, pointing to my stitches. He poured me drink from a small bar beside his desk and placed the glass on the mahogany table in

front of me.

“What happened to your head?” He asked.

“A riot,” I answered. “Some people just don’t have any respect for law enforcement.” He laughed, nodding his head.

“I know what you mean.” He laid a long sheet of paper on his desk, flattening the folds with his hands. I took a look and realized it was the blueprint of the hospital area Riley was transferred to.

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CHAPTER 155 Bob

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“Have you spoken to Bismarck police?” Bob asked. I nodded my head. “What have they told

you so far?”

“Riley’s unconscious. The detective on the case told me they called a few days ago to inform me, but Randy, the prick that he is, didn’t tell me. This would have been dealt with earlier if I had known about it sooner,” I said before sipping my drink.

“Matthews right?” He asked. | nodded my head. He shook his head. “He lied to you. Riley’s conscious. He just can’t talk or use both his hands. But knowin’ Matthews, he found a way to communicate with Riley. On the bright side though, Matthews is a lone wolf. He likes to investigate on his own and won't tell anyone anythin’ until he has enough evidence. I’m sure whatever he already knows, no one else knows.”

“But he has files, Bob,” | pointed out. Bob nodded his head.

“Of course, he has files, Combs,” Bob said. “But not at the station. Too many police on someone else’s payroll. He has an office in his basement slash bunker.” | raised my

eyebrows, surprised to hear bunker. “Ah, yeah, he’s one of them folks who believes doomsday is right around the corner. | got the blueprint of his home right here.” He opened a drawer and pulled out a folded piece of paper. “But before we think of breakin’ into the detective’s home, let’s go over how you’re gonna enter and exit the hospital and what we’re gonna do to the

guards stationed in the hospital security monitorin’ room.”

“Alright,” | said, standing up and looking at the blueprint. “What do you propose?”

“There’s a utility entrance at the west wing of the hospital. You’ll wear a security guard

uniform to enter. | swiped this ID off from one the guards whose s hit always goes missin’.” From the same drawer, he took out the ID card and tossed it towards me. “There aren’t any screen checks through that entrance, so you’ll be fine. From there, proceed to this utility room, change into your doctor’s disguise and wait for the signal.”

“What signal?” | asked.

“Once the computer system is down, the light of the utility elevator will turn green,” he answered. “Take that elevator all the way up to the twelfth floor. He’s in room 1203.”

“Will | need an ID to access any other doors?” | asked.

“No. All doors needin’ a card will automatically turn green when the computer is shut off or rebooted. The hospital director had that specifically engineered. He reasoned a doctor locked in a room or out of the hospital for seven minutes can risk a life.”

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## CHAPTER 155 Bob

“What about the guards at the monitoring room? What’s going to happen to them?” | asked.

“I’m goin’ to make them all fall asleep, Bob answered. “Redford, the guard in charge of the night shift, comes by the cafeteria at eight-thirty every evenin’ for coffee. Just a bit of rohypnol and in ten minutes, they’ll all be fast asleep. Now, all we have to do is think of a

distraction.”

“| think | have something in mind. What was Riley’s room number before he was transferred

to 1203?” | asked.

“Room 728 in the east wing at the Orthopedic ward. Why do you ask?” Bob asked confused.

“| got Randy coming in to fix his mistakes,” | answered, smirking.

“| remember him. He’s Ernie’s kid,” Bob nodded his head, knowing who Randy was. “I always hated that kid. He was a snitch.” “Well, now he’s a greedy sonofabitch who wants more money,” | scoffed. “Knowing him, he’ll shoot Riley in the head instead of using his imagination. When you see him, you can alert everyone on radio.”

“That’ll make me look like some sort of hero,” Bob said, agreeing to the plan.

“I’ll give Randy a call and give him the intel he needs. He’ll probably think I’m helping hi Bob chuckled merrily.

“What do you know? | get to pay back a favor and get some revenge. Life is full of novel bin

Bob said.

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Chapter 156

CHAPTER 156 Baby

Sheriff

With a threatening scowl on my face, | climbed out of my car, taking a deep breath, seemingly unaware of the white medical lab coat falling to the ground. | was wearing a white long sleeved button down shirt, a maroon tie and gray slacks, disguised as a well-paid.

doctor.

| was about to shut the door closed when | finally took notice of the white coat lying on the ground. | picked it up, squeezing the pristine white coat, as if holding it tightly within the palm of my hand would somehow alleviate the guilt that weighed heavily on my conscience.

| angrily threw the coat onto the front seat of my car beside the surgical mask, surgical cap, wig, beard and glasses before slamming the door shut.

| was so angry at myself that | couldn't even look at my reflection in the window. | was utterly disgusted at myself.

I needed a moment to calm the f u ck down.

| placed both hands on the roof of my car and took deep breaths, grateful that somehow the cold air was numbing my insides. Jack hesitantly took a step forward, most probably to offer me some solace, but | raised a finger, urging him to stop. He quickly raised his hands in the air and backed away, giving me the space | needed.

| just wanted more time to... decompress. Was that too much to ask?

Somehow, Jack understood... maybe because he knew me so well. He allowed me a moment

to myself.

Liam, on the other hand, didn't want to waste time. He took his phone from his pocket and quietly read his messages while waiting for things to simmer down. He quickly replied, his face devoid of emotion, but his eyes... his eyes expressed a certain satisfaction...

He was simply enjoying the fact that tonight a Cohen would no longer need the organization.

Randy was grateful for all the information | gave him. He said it made his work easier. After/6

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to Pete, Riley and Marla and voila! Case closed. Christine, Randy's wife, would probably be depressed for some time, but she was a young and beautiful woman. She'd find someone else to be her life-long companion and a father to her baby.

"Did he buy it?" Bob asked in anticipation.

"He sure did," | said, smiling. He scoffed in disbelief.

"Well, that was easy. Okay, so when you're done putting two in Riley, leave the same way. Hospital protocol in the midst of an active shooter is to hide or

evacuate. The nurses will most probably leave their station and hide, so there won't be anyone in your way when you leave," Bob pointed out. "You won't need to change back into the guard uniform either. Most of the people, if not all, will be leaving through the front entrances anyway." He unfolded the blueprint of the detective's house and placed it on top of the blueprint of the hospital. |

quickly took a picture of it using my phone.

"Here's information on Matthews," Bob said, handing me a sheet of paper he took from his desk drawer. | was impressed. He was very thorough. "I know what you're thinkin'. Nope, | don't do this in my spare time. | fund a couple of private detectives to get me all the intel | need. | got a good thing goin' here: | don't want to have to leave any of it any time soon."

"It says here he's never married," | mumbled as | scanned through Matthews' information. sheet. Good. It meant his house would be empty

"Because he's married to his job," Bob replied, rolling his eyes. "Anyway, his house is a bo ten minutes away from the hospital. Within that time frame, the Bismarck SWAT will be conductin' a search from floor to floor for suspects. Matthews, just like SWAT, will be focu on finding whoever killed his witness, so he won't bother to check on his house. Even then, you need to be in and out quickly." He pointed to the rear entrance of the house. "I suggest enterin' through the back. The hatch to the basement is underneath the floor of the pantry

in the kitchen."

\*| have a question. How do we know Matthews will be at the hospital?" | asked.

"After that anonymous tip, he'll definitely be there. Matthews is the kind of guy who gets a high from an arrest," Bob answered, shuddering in disgust. "Oh, and another thing, he has not home security alarm. That's how co cky he is."

"Seems like you don't like him," | said, noticing the dislike in his voice. "What did he ever do to you?"

"| have a garage on the next block. You know... the usual," Bob said, implying the garage w

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a venue for his usual criminal activities. “He came snoopin’ one day. Somethin’ about a certain car part comin from our garage that matched the serial number of a stolen vehicle. My main man, Manny, well, he explained that my garage only fixes cars and that we get our

from reputable dealers only. To send him on his way, Manny gave him a list of auto parts parts dealers we order from and told him he forgot which store we got the

car

“| see. So tell me what really happened with that car part?” | asked, amused. part from.”

“Manny forgot to remove the serial number. Anyway, the garage ain’t listed under my name. It’s owned by Charlene, the lady you met earlier at the front of the store.”

“No wonder you asked me to look for Charlie,” | said, chuckling at my mistake. “I thought you were Charlie.”

“Hell no,” Bob replied. “Around here, I’m known as John. John Doe.”

Bob left for work before eight to make sure the creamer Redford used was laced with Rohypnol while | entered through the rear exit at approximately fifteen minutes to nine. checked my messages once | was in the utility room. It was a huge storage space with its own elevator.

Matthews is at the hospital director’s office located on the fifteenth floor. He’s having Riley transferred to Sanford Medical Center asap.

It was now or never.

Everything was going according to our plans until | was inside Room 1203. Riley was peacefully asleep on his bed, both arms and one leg in a cast while his mouth was wired from a broken jaw.

| decided it was best to inject him with a lethal dose of pentobarbital and let him die peacefully in his sleep. | was done injecting him with the drug and pulling his life support monitor off its socket when the bathroom door suddenly opened behind me to reveal Detective Matthews hiding inside.

“Turn around slowly with your hands above your head where | can see them,” he instructed.

| muttered a curse. Why didn’t | check the bathroom earlier? How could | have been so careless?

| looked down at the gun in my holster. | had screwed a silencer on, intending to use it on Riley. Unfortunately, I’d have to use it on the detective instead.

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“| said, turn around with your hands above your head. Slowly now,” Detective Matthews instructed once again. “I’ve you don’t look as young as it says on een waiting for you. |

Randall Evans’ file. Who are you?”

| raised my hands and turned around slowly.

“Wait a minute. There’s a cut on your forehead. You must be Sheriff-”

| didn’t hesitate. | grabbed my gun from its holster and shot him in the head.

Smoke billowed out from both my gun and the gun shot wound on Detective Matthews’ forehead. While he collapsed on the floor, | quickly turned around and shot Riley in the head. It would be strange if Riley was found poisoned while Matthews died of a gunshot wound. | needed the story of an active shooter roaming around the hospital to stick.

I ran out of room 1203, headed back into the utility room and took the elevator back down to the ground floor.



Just as Bob said, no one was using the rear entrance to evacuate from the building. I casually walked out of the hospital, the guard uniform I had on earlier in a garbage bag, and quickly headed out to the main road to the car Bob had lent me.

ded

I was a good distance away from the hospital when I parked the car on the side of the road to change my disguise. I took my surgical mask, cap and coat off and donned a gray-haired wig, a beard and dark rimmed glasses. When I was satisfied with my appearance, towards Detective Matthews' house. I parked about a block away and walked toward house with a small gasoline tank in a duffle bag.

I needed to destroy any evidence that pointed to Liam, Jack, Dan or myself. Without Cohen, everything would sink. Without Jack, Dan or me, Liam will be a sitting duck.

Only way to destroy the evidence was to start a fire in the basement and keep the hatch

open, so the fire would burn everything to the ground.

Luckily, entering the house was simple. All I needed was some tools to pick the lock of the back door.

In the kitchen, I found the pantry, the false floor tile and the hatch which was padlocked. I took out a very small screwdriver, inserted it into the keyhole and began to wiggle and slide. until the padlock opened.

Before setting the place on fire, I looked through the papers on top of Detective Matthews 4/6

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desk, took his laptop, and rummaged through his files in his file cabinet.

681

| doused everything in gasoline. Once | was done, | lit a cigarette, threw it in the basement. and left the back door open so the fire could draw in more air.

| made my way back to the car and drove towards the laundry shop, but instead of parking the car near Bob's shop, | brought it to Charlene's garage to be stripped down.

| was driving back to New Salem when Bob called.

"We have a problem," he said.

"| know, but | had to. There was no other way."

"What are you talking about?" He asked bewildered.

"Matthews," | answered, feeling guilty.

"Oh, yeah. Well, that's on your conscience not mine," he said. "I called to tell you Randy is missin'. | did see him near room 728, promptin' me to alert the police, but when | went to follow him, he suddenly disappeared. I've checked everywhere... and he isn't in police custody either."

"He's on the move, probably back to New Salem. I'll deal with him," | told him. "Don't worry

about it."

"| have to ask you... did you actually hire someone to shoot people here at the hospit

asked.

"No. Of course not," | quickly replied. "Why do you ask?"

"Listen to the news, Bob answered. "F ucked up thing is... SWAT couldn't find a shooter. Well, Combs, we're even now. So long." | turned on the radio to listen to the news. Luckily, | found a station that was reporting on the shooting incident at Bismarck Gen. So far, six casualties were reported, but according to the news reporter, the police were still looking for victims and suspects. Six?! How did that happen?

Liam.

111

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12:10 Thu, Apr 4d

CHAPTER 156 Baby

68novelbin

"We have an incoming report about a fire which broke out at one of the homes at Prairiewood. Neighbors say the house belongs to a Detective Matthews of the Bismarck Police Department who he shares with his niece and her baby daughter. There are no reports confirming if the niece and grandniece were indeed home when the fire broke. Firefighters at the scene are currently containing the fire. This is a developing story." Music suddenly filled

the car...

Did | just kill a baby?!

F uck! F uck! F uck!

| continued listening to the radio station, praying for a miracle. There was no car in the driveway at Matthews' house nor did I even hear a baby cry. Maybe the niece and her daughter weren't home when | broke into the house and set it on fire.

As | exited the highway to New Salem, the news reporter finally came back with more

information.

Breaking news... One of the casualties at Bismarck General Hospital mass shooting is Detective Amos Matthews, the owner of the house at Prairiewood which is currently in flames. The police have found no suspects of the mass shooting which leads authorities to believe that this might have been an inside job," the reporter said. "As for Detective Matthews' family, according to Mr. Lee, one of Detective Matthews' neighbors, he saw the neice with her baby enter the house at seven in the evening. With me, right now, is the Chief of

the Bismarck Fire Department,” the reporter said. “Chief, have you found the neice and her daughter?”

“Yes, we have,” was the Chief’s curt reply. “With deep regret, Miss Lynette Matthews Richardson and her baby did not survive the fire.”

| quickly stopped the car, parked it on the side and vomited my guts out..

| killed a baby.

Chapter Comments

Shzaqte

POST COMMENT

Of course with these 5 di ps hits nothing goes as planned, but wow that certainly took a sad unexpected turn.

VIEW 1 COMMENT >

2

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Chapter 157

CHAPTER 157 Appearances

Sheriff

It was a good long while before | spoke. My face was starting to feel numb from the cold breeze that circled around us.

“You heard right, Jack. The Bismarck Police did get a tip from an anonymous caller. They moved Riley to a secluded part of the hospital,” said in a low hushed voice. “Good thing | had someone who owed me a favor working at that hospital. He showed me how to get to Riley’s room through the utility

elevator, then he roofied the security guards who man the security monitors. We were able to shut down the system, knowing it takes a while for it

it to

reboot.”

“How did you get the police away from their post?” Jack asked. | had to lie. Jack couldn’t know the extent of Bob’s participation. All Jack knew was | went to Bismarck to assist Randy and get it done. He was actually surprised | had sent Randy instead of someone who was fit to do the job.

“| told Randy to call the nurse’s station and tell them he saw a man with a gun gun near the room Riley originally occupied. After the guards left, | unhooked the heart monitor and injected Riley with a lethal dose of pentobarbital. Everything was going according to plan when Detective Matthews comes out of the bathroom. | didn’t expect him to be there,” | tearfully murmured, remembering | had just killed an innocent baby.

| didn’t care about Matthews. He poked his nose where it didn’t belong. | was crying be | had done something utterly tragic that made me as bad as Pete.

Sure, we were all bad men, but there was a thin line between being bad and evil. Pete was evil. Cris, well, wherever he was, he was on that same path. | believed | still had some self- respect in me like all good men, but now, | didn’t know who | was anymore.

It was one of those rare occasions where | felt so utterly hopeless. The last time | felt this way was when Julia died.

Liam ran his fingers through his hair. He didn’t anticipate me killing the detective.

“Sheriff, tell me you didn’t-” Jack couldn’t finish his statement. He already knew what | was going to say next.

“| had to, Jack,” | growled. “He saw my stitches and knew it was me. | just couldn’t allow 1/7

CHAPTER 157 Appearances

myself to get arrested. With me in custody, all this shit we've been doing, all of this will blow

up on all our faces."

"Regardless. You know how the police are when one of their own dies," Liam said. "They won't stop until they get whoever did this. They already know Riley's from New Salem. They'll want to pin this on someone from here, but you have nothing to worry about. It's already been fixed. Anyway, if they do come knocking on my office door-

"We'll just have to pin this on Pete and probably Randy, if they come," I mumbled. "So it was you Liam. When I heard the news that there were more casualties than the two I killed, I had

a feeling that was you."

"I had to do something," Liam said, shrugging his shoulders. "You might be good at what you do, but with a whole police force after you, that's a problem. Let's just say I called in a favor. For now, they've pinned the mass shooting to an ill-treated janitor who worked on the twelfth floor. He won't say anything. Dead men tell no tales."

Jack rubbed his forehead. He didn't like what he was hearing.

"Just in case, I'll plant some evidence at Riley's house making it look like Riley was stealing from Pete and that Marla and him were seeing each other, giving Pete motive to kill Riley. All I need you boys to do is corroborate my story if or when I'm questioned by the police."

"There's a small problem," Jack said. "I told Lisa and the others you were at Bismarck attending to something."

"You what?!" I exclaimed. "Jack, why can't you keep your mouth shut?!"

Liam raised his hand, gesturing for me to calm down.

"Sheriff, it's fine. I doubt if Bismarck Police suspects you of killing one of their own, Liam said. "Anyway, in case Bismarck Police does ask, we can tell them you were suffering from a headache due to your injury so you didn't go to Bismarck and instead came here to pay your respects to my father. Lisa saw you. Who else did you pass on your way up here?"

"I don't know. I passed a few other cars on my way here," I answered.

"I'll tell Dan to tell police he came over to bring you some food, so he'll become your alibi. Everyone else was here, so I assume no one saw you actually go to Bismarck. I'll have Lisa erase all the CCTV footage. Don't worry, I'll handle this. Did you leave any fingerprints?"

"No, I have silicon on," I replied.

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hu, Apr 4

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## CHAPTER 157 Appearances

"And what about Randy?" Jack asked. "Where the hell is he anyway?"

"I can't get in touch with him. His phone's off," I answered. "He's probably on his way back here. He has Christine to think about." "He probably is," Liam mumbled, his eyes narrowing momentarily, like he had just thought of something. "I'll handle all this. I'll even take care of Riley. Sheriff, why don't you change-and grab something to eat and drink... hmm? Relax. We still have Pete's men at the Ol' Barn to

take care of."

I nodded my head. I did need a drink.

"Jack, I just need to talk to Henry. You go on and help the Sheriff," Liam called out as he walked to his right-hand man.

Liam

I turned around, trying not to smile. Although it seemed it was just one problem after the other, everything seemed to be working to my advantage.

I couldn't believe a mob of people actually showed up at Highland Oaks. Their presence will make my ploy look even more realistic.

As for the Sheriff, he made a grave mistake, but he will continue to be loyal to me after warding off suspicion from him.

Still, the unexpected death of one of Bismarck's finest posed a small problem. I had to make sure there were no loose ends. Earlier in the day, unbeknownst to Sheriff and Jack, I had taken matters into my own hands. I covered our bases just in case Randy came back with his tail between his legs or worse, got caught.

I had a number of Bismarck police officers on my payroll and I explicitly told them if they saw him to grab him, drive him off somewhere and keep him there until I needed a fall guy.

While the Sheriff was having a tantrum earlier, I checked my phone for messages. There were a couple unread messages. Matthews and Harris are dead. Evans MIA. Five others shot. Suspect janitor, killed by police." 3/7

12:11 Thu, Apr 4.

## CHAPTER 157 Appearances

68%

Why couldn't I find competent people like this as shole? Sure, he was expensive, but he was able to make it look like a mass shooting happened at the hospital. Good.

I pulled out my phone and messaged the police officer telling him to destroy all evidence that may lead a cocky young detective into my territory.

up

He quickly messaged me back with a thumbs u

andy was most prol

cooling off before making his way here. I was sure he would come

back; he couldn't leave his pregnant wife.

I don't know if Randy knew, but aside from being a substitute teacher at the local elementary school, Christine was one of Pete's drug smugglers. She did it part time, maybe once or twice a month, but the pay was enough.



Because she portrayed herself as a devout Christian woman, she could cross state lines with a huge amount of crystal meth in the trunk of her car without harboring suspicion. She wore a gold cross around her neck and was always dressed prim and proper at all times.

It didn't hurt she was married and pregnant. It added more to her credibility as a clean, God-fearing, woman.

I rolled my eyes at the thought. Sometimes, it was all about appearances.

Unfortunately, she and her father rejected our offer. They wanted more than what I was offering... much more.

We will take care of Christine's father later. He was easy. As for Christine, I had Dan call her up after Randy left, telling her we agreed to give her the money she requested. All she had to do was see him at the clubhouse. I'll just use her to get to Randy.

I walked over to my car where Henry and several of my guards were waiting.

"The Evans house... were you able to finish planting the evidence against Randall Evans?" I asked.

"Yes, Mayor Cohen. I placed the files on his computer and planted the drugs and money in his safe," Henry answered.

"I'm afraid we have to do the same to Riley Harris," I said, sighing. "I like Grandma Mary. She always looks genuinely happy to see me whenever I see her. Make sure she isn't implicated in any of this." Henry nodded his head.

4/7

68%

## CHAPTER 157 Appearances

"We could do it now. There's still some time," Henry said. I glanced at my watch. It was already eleven.

"No. We need to go to the Ol' Barn soon. After we're done, just place a bag of dough in that shed Riley has in the back and stick a picture of Marla Lawrence somewhere. Make it look like they were lovers," I instructed.

"I'll have Danny and Brett go. They know the place," Henry suggested.

"Alright. But make it quick and remember no fingerprints. I need the rest of you with me at the Ol' Barn. Are the men I hired in position in Highland Oaks?" I asked. Henry shrugged his shoulders.

Shit! I forgot. They only spoke to me. I dialed the number hoping he'd answer.novelbin

"MC, we're about to leave," he said merrily.

"Good. Just make sure you and your crew are there by midnight. If all goes well, you'll get the

rest of your payment

"Sure thing, MC. I hung up, praying they wouldn't fuck up.

"Henry, the mercenaries?" I asked.

"They're on foot, surveying the area. The Colonel said they've spotted two trucks south from here. Whoever's on those trucks are making their way here as we speak," he said.

"Tell the Colonel to kill them once they set foot on Cohen land. I don't want any intrusions at my little meeting tonight," I instructed. "We need to get things done quickly."

"As you wish, Mayor, Henry said before dialing.

Everything was in place. All I had to do now was wait for midnight.

I was heading back to the mansion to prepare myself when a silver SUV came speeding through the gates.

"Stop that car!" I heard the guards yell.

Gunfire erupted. My guards were shooting at the SUV...

Which was headed straight for me.

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## CHAPTER 157 Appearances

68%

Suddenly, my old BMW rammed into the side of the car, the impact so great, that the SUV rolled and tumbled towards the edge of the hill.

Fortunately, the car stopped, upside down, several feet before hitting the brick fence that

lined the edge of the estate.

“Get out of the car!” Jack yelled, walking down the front steps of the mansion, his gun

pointed at the driver’s side of the windshield. No movement. Jack quickly moved his hand an

inch and shot at the headlight of the car. “Get out of that f ucking car! The next shot will be your head.”

| couldn't see through the windshield. It was tinted.

Finally, the door opened and out came an older gentleman.

It was Randy’s father-in-law aka Christine’s dad.

“Where is my daughter, Cohen?!” He growled as he stumbled out of the car. | scoffed at him.

He had some balls.

| pulled my gun out from its holster, aiming at his head. The fearlessness he was experiencing was quickly replaced with terror. “Search him,” | said, gesturing to my guards. “Lift his shirt. Pat down each leg, especial near the shoe. Give me his phone and empty his pockets.”

"I beg you. I'll sign. I'll give you whatever you want. Just don't kill my daughter and n grandchild. Please, I'll do anything," Christine's father begged as my men checked him

"Liam, son, you have Christine? But she's pregnant," the Sheriff reasoned. "Son, let's not k an innocent life."

"I'm not a monster. I won't touch the baby," I said. "But you, Tom, you almost killed me. I gave you a chance to sign, but you and your greedy little family want more money."

"We take all the risks. We deliver the product to areas where we don't have any protection. Of course, we want more money," he argued.

"And why ask me for it? Why didn't you ask Pete?" I asked him.

"Because..." I waited for him to continue his sentence, but nothing followed.

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## CHAPTER 157 Appearances

said. "As for me, I was willing to double your fee. All you had to do was sign the non- disclosure agreement. Just keep your mouth shut and the money will come." I lowered my gun when I noticed he was shaking. I wanted him to relax. "There are risks I take, the Sheriff takes, Dan takes to keep this operation under wraps. But your son-in-law thinks it's better if he sabotages our operation, so he can get more money. Have any of you ever thought if I go down, what happens to all of you? You think I'm going to go down alone? While I rot in jail, I'm going to have all my men hunt you down one by one until none of you are left. There won't be any need for money, because you'll be dead."

I raised my gun and shot him in between the eyes. One down.

"Drop him in the hole intended for my father and cover him with some dirt. We'll place my father's casket on top of his body. And get this piece of junk out of here," I ordered.

“Liam, where is Christine?” The Sheriff asked, his voice laced with concern.

“I’m guessing Dan has her,” | said.

“And what about the baby?” Jack asked.

“I’ll adopt the baby,” the Sheriff said, a sadness in his voice.

Huh?

My phone suddenly rang. | answered.

“The bogeys have entered your territory,” | heard the familiar voice of the Colonel.

“Kill them.”

Chapter Comments.

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Chapter 158

CHAPTER 158 Slippery Slope

Xavier

| was atop one of the smaller hills adjacent to Prairie Hill, overlooking the Ol’ Barn. After parting ways with Cristos, Sebastian, Ki ki and Joy, | drove to the border between New Salem and Arnold County to where | hid my gear and dirt bike before | lost contact with Joy and Cristos earlier today.

| changed into a dark tactical suit and black boots, strapped my backpack on tightly, took my sniper rifle out of the hidden compartment of my trunk, slung it over my shoulder, and drove off on my bike. Sam was already on the hill, prepping his gun, while Dina and Lou were in a white van hidden within the forest beside the road that led to the Ol'Barn.

"Dina, what's the situation at the Ol' Barn?" | asked while driving up the hill to a group of dirt trees along the hillside where it plateaued into a path. It wasn't much of a climb on bike, but on foot, | bet the slippery slope was a killer.

"| have eyes on three teams of mercs," Dina replied. "One team has hidden themselves within the trees and bushes surrounding the perimeter of the land owned by the Cohens continuously monitoring another team coming from the south. The team positioned on Cohen, land is wearing midnight blue tactical gear and is being led by the notorious Colonel while the other team, judging by the characteristic bird tattoo on their necks, is the Black Hawks led by a man named Brock."

"The Colonel? | mean, the Colonel... No way," | gasped. Sam was a soldier under the Colonel's command during his days in the military. However, the Colonel went rogue, so did many of his men, after they were left to fend for themselves for almost twelve hours against an army of rebel militants in a small village in Iraq. According to Sam, it was the very first time he actually prayed to Go d for a miracle..

Go d heard Sam's prayer. A miracle came to them in the form of a truck loaded with weapons, grenades and ammunition. They were able to fight their way out of the village to the nearest extraction point.

To us, it's a story with a happy ending, but for the Colonel and his men, it's a story of the worst kind of betrayal.

Well, | had to give Liam some credit. The Colonel was expensive.

"| knew one day we'd see each other again," Sam said through our coms, the spite evident in

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CHAPTER 158 Slippery Slope

his voice. The Colonel tried to recruit him, but Sam rejected his offer. He didn't believe terrorism was the way to fight the government who betrayed them.

off my bike.

"Dina, where's the third team?" I asked, cracking the muscles in my neck as I got off my

"Third team?" She asked, puzzled. I sighed.

"Hello... You mentioned there was a third team. Two on the ground while the third team is

where?"

"Actually, the third team is part of one of the two larger teams." I rolled my eyes at her statement. She always had to make things so complicated. "It's a small group of snipers, currently making their way through the other side of the hill you and Sam are currently on, Dina said. I shook my head in disbelief. She should have started with that. "They've split up. One took the right side while the other went left."

"That's it? Just two?" I asked, parking my bike behind a tree and covering it with branches and foliage as fast as I could. I squatted down, hiding behind some bushes..

"Yep," Dina answered.

"I have eyes on one," Sam mumbled. "In midnight blue

Team Colonel.

tactical gear." I hit. He was part of

guno

"X, the other one is rounding the hill, walking on the path that you're on. your left in 3-2-1, Dina counted down.

I heard his footsteps before I saw him. Just like his friend, he was wearing a midnight blue. tactical suit. He had a CB radio strapped onto his belt and a sniper rifle slung over his

shoulder.

He looked young like he just came out of boot camp. He was clean-shaven, his dark hair was high and tight and he was muscular.

Well, I could pretend to be part of Team Colonel for a bit.

I positioned myself near the path and waited for the right time to jump.

When he passed, I swiftly came from behind and swung my arm across his neck, placing him in a rear naked chokehold. Then, with one forceful jerk, I broke his neck.

After moving his corpse away from the edge of the path. I took his CB radio and then 3/7

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## CHAPTER 158 Slippery Slope

I quickly positioned myself against a huge rock overlooking the Ol' Barn.

"Sam, update," I said through coms.

"Neck slash" he replied smugly.

"Broken neck," I said, as I set up my gun. "Dina, I need to-"

I stopped at the unmistakable sound of gunfire that echoed around me. Judging by the echoes, I suspected it came from Cohen Mansion. I took a look through my scope to check, but since I had the view of the back of Cohen Mansion, I couldn't see anything.

"Dina, where is the gunfire coming from?" I asked.

"Cohen Mansion, X" Dina answered. "CCTV shows footage of a car speeding into the compound. Sadly, the driver was executed."

"Do you know the identity of the driver?" I asked.

"No," she said. "But maybe you do. I'm gonna bring up an enlarged image for you." I took my phone out and synced it with Dina's feed.



The image was unclear, although I recognized the well-trimmed moustache, the gold cross around the man's neck and the mole over his left eyebrow. It was Randy's father-in-law, Tom

Baker.

Why did he just try to kill Liam with his car?

Then it dawned on me... Liam must have Randy's wife. I quickly messaged Cristos to look for her from CCTV footage throughout town.

All of a sudden, gunfire erupted from down below. I quickly pocketed my phone and peered downward through my scope. It was nice to have a higher vantage point. I could see everything through the night vision capability of my sniper scope.

The two

teams on the ground were waging war with one another. Although few, the Colonel and his team were well-trained while the other team in black tactical gear, although many, lacked the necessary skills.

I glanced at my watch and yawned. It was nearly midnight.

"Do we intervene?" Sam asked.

3/7

## CHAPTER 158 Slippery Slope

"Not unless we are asked to," I answered as I watched. "Besides, I want to see how good this

Colonel is."

Honestly, his reputation preceded him. He was a sharp shooter and skilled with the knife. He could practically shoot and throw at the same time.

I was so busy admiring him that I didn't notice he was calling for his snipers on the CB

radio.

“Roger,” I answered eagerly. Well, I did say I’d pretend. “Sam, the Colonel is asking for our help,” I said.

“Copy,” Sam answered gruffly. Apparently, the wounds between Sam and the Colonel ran deep.

Shooting at the Black Hawks felt like target practice. One by one, Sam and I took out Black Hawks until the Colonel yelled to cease fire.

the

“Good work, boys,” the Colonel praised us. “Keep an  
eye for more.”

“Copy that,” I whispered, disguising the sound of my voice.

“We have incoming,” Sam said through coms. I peered through my scope and saw cars fast approaching. It was the townsfolk. “Ten minutes to midnight,” I said, moving my scope to see what Colonel and his men were doing. This time, they positioned themselves around the barn, and hid behind the hay bales.

“X, Liam and his entourage are on their way,” Dina informed us. “By the way, feed coming from Highland Oaks shows a group of masked men. It’s strange though. The feed shows them coming from the back and, X, all of them are armed.”

I groaned. There was a mob of people outside the gates of Highland Oaks.

This spelled massacre.

Damn it, my men were twenty minutes away.

“Dina, alert Cristos and Sebastian and tell them they need to help the people at Highland Oaks,” I told Dina.

“Copy that.”

4/7

CHAPTER 158 Slippery Slope

“Sam, I need you to head to Highland Oaks. I can deal with this. Cristos and Sebastian may need an assist.”

“Liam is one slick so nofabi tch,” Sam said, sighing. “Two in one night, at the same time God, help us.”

“I know what you mean,” I said. “Once I’m done here, I’ll make my way there. Keep me updated.”

“Copy that, X.”

too.

It wasn’t long before several vehicles came into view, entering the wooden gates of the compound where the Ol’ Barn stood. I continued to watch using my scope as more and more vehicles came in, surprised that the people who arrived weren’t people I had expected.

After the arrival of the townsfolk, Theodore Cohen’s silver BMW SUV finally drove into the compound followed by the Sheriff, Jack and several more vehicles behind them.

I noticed movement alongside the vehicles. I peered through my scope and saw men in tactical uniform making their way to the barn by foot. Liam had thought of everything.

All of a sudden, a light flashed from the distance. I peered through my scope and saw a

group of men making their way towards the barn. One of them was large, bald, and muscular. He must be the one named Brock.

“Time to rock and roll.”

I positioned my finger and steadied my breathing. I had already estimated wind speed and established wind direction.

I was good to go.

Liam

I told Henry to park my father’s car near the barn. The car was bullet proof with a certified standard of protection.

| glanced at my watch. It was almost midnight.

Before aviting the car | made a phone call

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## CHAPTER 158 Slippery Slope

“Are you there yet?” | asked.

“Yes, we are, MC, the clown answered. He sounded high. C rap!

“Just create enough chaos as a distraction and get me that deed of sale,” | instructed.

“Will do, MC.”

| stepped out of my father’s car with a duffle bag in my hand, making it appear | had brought money with me.novelbin

| adjusted my coat. | hated wearing bullet proof vests. It slowed me down, however in this situation, | needed one.

| purposedly told Dan to tell Cris about tonight, knowing he would betray me and tell Pete. | wasn’t wrong. He did tell him.

Well, if he had a group of mercenaries, | did too, | won't allow him to win.

“Let's all get inside for the meeting,” | told the townsfolk who were standing outside,

smoking.

“Tom ain’t here yet, Mayor,” said Ol’ Man Simon, “I'd prefer if we waited for him.”

“| spoke to Tom and Christine and they signed,” | lied. “Maybe you and | can come to an agreement just like Tom and Christine.” “Well, whatever you gave them must be good enough. Come on people. It’s freezing. The sooner we get this done, the faster it is for me to get home,” the grumpy

old man said, waddling into the barn. Without hesitation, the rest of the townsfolk followed him inside.

My guards, then, followed, positioning themselves along the walls of the barn. I turned around to give Jack instructions.

“Jack, you

and the Sheriff stay out here. We'll handle this. Just have the coroner's van ready for transfer. Jack looked at me confused. “Transfer? What do you mean-

Enough of your twenty questions!CHAPTER 158 Slippery Slope

I entered, walking all the way to the back where a table was set up. I placed the bag on the table and gestured for everyone to take a seat. I wanted them to be comfortable before I told them the bad news.

“You guys should have just signed. Instead, you signed your death certificate.”

My guards quickly took out their weapons, aiming their guns at the people seated.

“You can't do this. Our families will come looking for us,” Ol' Man Simon said.

“I know,” I remarked, smiling. “I already have that all figured out, too. Colonel, if you would kindly...”

The Colonel and his men walked in and began shooting. One by one, the people fell to the floor like flies. Some tried to scurry away through the back door, however, escape was futile.

We were almost done when gunfire suddenly erupted from outside. I scowled, glancing at my

watch.

I was already late for another party.

Chapter Comments.

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TIT

11:16 Fri, Apr 5

The Joy of Revenge

CHAPTER 159 Intervention

Liam

“Liam, we have company,” Jack yelled, looking for cover. “Get down!”

The Colonel and his team quickly positioned themselves and returned fire.

While Jack and the Sheriff assisted the Colonel, | went to check if every last one of Pete’s loyal dealers were dead. However, | noticed a red light aimed at my chest, so | quickly took cover, diving behind one of the hay bales in the barn. | may be wearing a bullet proof vest, but it was painful to get shot at..

| was surprised to find Mr. Lewis, one of the townsfolk, hiding behind the huge hay bale, with his back towards me, covering his head. Like Ol’ Man Simon, he smuggled drugs to the neighboring states, using his old age as his cover.

When Dan told him the conditions of our deal, he ripped the NDA and threw it at Dan’s face. “If | need to stay quiet, you need to pay me more money. My Clara is in the hospital being treated for cancer and our medical insurance won’t cover all the costs. | want more money. I

need more money.”

Scowling, | pulled out my gun from its holster and aimed it at his back before squeezing the trigger. Mrs. Lewis was better off without you.

As | reloaded my gun, | noticed the gunfire had died down. | looked around and saw one of the townsfolk trying to leave through the back.

| chased after her. No one was leaving here alive.

| quickly pushed the back door of the barn open and to my surprise, | found a tall, large, muscular man shooting the woman in the back.

He was bald, his oily head reflected the light from the barn, and clean-shaven with a nasty scar that ran down his left cheek. Unlike Colonel and his men who were wearing blue, he was

wearing an all black tactical suit, boots, and gloves, with two silver guns holstered to each of

his thighs.

He smiled at me, as he raised his weapon, aiming for my head.

“The ten million dollar prize.” His voice was low and menacing, sending a chill down my spine.

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## CHAPTER 159 Intervention

| raised my Wilson Combat Tactical gun at him.

If | have to die, I’m taking him with me.

“| can double that amount,” | negotiated. He laughed.

“Peter said you'd negotiate and I’ve already taken a look at your finances. You do have that kind of money, but it will leave you almost penniless,” he reasoned.

He obviously did his homework. But the bank account under my name wasn’t the only account

I had.

“Really now? What about my bank accounts under my various aliases? Have you checked them too?” | asked, raising an eyebrow, daring him to challenge me. “The largest meth laboratory in the country is here in my town. My town. Not Peter McDowell's. He is a traitorous snake and will kill you once he gets what he wants. If you agree to work for me, | can make it worth your while. Just ask the Colonel.” His eyes widened once | uttered Colonel. -Every private army in the world knew who the Colonel was.

However, instead of agreeing, he laughed at my offer. The bastard.

“Funny thing... Peter says the same about you. I'll take my chances and go home ten million dollars richer,” he replied, grinning sinisterly at me, the shadows on his face making him look utterly terrifying.

“Then we both will just have to shoot each other.”

But before either one of us could shoot, a bullet whizzed by my head entering the large man's skull, his blood spraying over my face. He collapsed with a thud in front of me, dust flying up from the ground.

I hurriedly wiped my mouth, disgusted at the taste of blood and raw human flesh.

I knelt down to check on the man whose dead eyes looked up at the sky. The hole was remarkably big. Obviously long range. I quickly hid myself against the hay bales along the barn.

The Colonel's sniper had a sick sense of humor.

Eventually, the gunfire stopped. I picked myself off the ground, entered the barn through the back door and headed to the main entrance. Then I found lock wine in

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Chapter 159

CHAPTER 159 Intervention

Sheriff was assisting the coroner's van.

“Mayor Cohen, the area has been contained,” the Colonel said, appearing from the side of the

barn.



"Thank k you," I said. "Sheriff grab all the car keys from the dead bodies and have Colonel and his men drive them to the impound area. Make sure to load up all the bodies in the barn into the van and have the driver head to Highland Oaks. While you do that, have the deputies.

and dump all the other bodies in the mass grave. When you're done, suit up in tactical gear

await my

instructions." He silently nodded his head. "By the way, Colonel, I'd like you to life." thank your s niper for me. He saved my

He grabbed his radio and called out to his sn iper. "Eagle, I need you to trek back to ground level." We waited for a response, but we only got static. "Eagle, do you confirm?" More static. He grabbed his binoculars and looked up at the small hill in front of us. "We have a problem. I don't see my men up there."

Joy

I was at the bar having a bit of fun with Noah when all of our phones pinged at the same time. It was an alert informing us of active shooters in the vicinity. All at once, the patron inside threw money on the tables and quickly left in such a hurry.

"Uhm, Virtue, Beth and I, we need to go home. Can you tell Chip for me, please?" Patrick,

bartender, said, panicking.

"Sure. I'll tell Chip," I said.

"I'm sorry, Virtue. I'll just clean up tomorrow." He took his apron off and grabbed-Beth, exiting the pub just as fast as the rest. "Me too," Noah said, finishing his beer and throwing money on the bar. "Lock the doors and don't let anyone else inside after me. Take care, Virtue. And stay safe."

I quickly locked the door after Noah exited and gestured to Ki ki to follow me to the office.

"It's a little after midnight," Ki ki said. "This could be the mess happening at the Ol' Barn."

"This feels wrong though," | reasoned. "No one is allowed to go to the Ol' Barn. And why would emergency services alert the people of something the Sheriff and Liam were in the 3/7

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## CHAPTER 159 Intervention

middle of? Come on. Sebastian and Cristos might know what's going on."

We fushed to Cristos' office to find them both in tactical gear.

"What the f uck?!"

You guys are going without me?" Ki ki exclaimed, closing the door behind her. "What's going on anyway?"

"There is a group of seven men, disguised in animal Halloween masks, shooting at the mob camped outside Highland Oaks," Sebastian said. "They've killed all the deputies and guards and have entered the residential area. We need to stop this. This isn't right."

"But you heard Bo," | argued, remembering what happened to us yesterday, "we aren't supposed to intervene."

"My ass. This isn't an intervention. This is a resque mission," Kik i said, grabbing a suit hanging on the wall of Cristos'

hidden armory. "Dom is right, Virtue. We can't allow this to happen. These people are innocent." She began to strip to her underwear. Both men turned their backs to give her privacy.

"We got the alert from Dina, Virtue," Cristos said. "Xavier was the one who sent the distress. signal. Sam is already on his way there to offer assistance."

"Virtue, this is your size," Ki ki said, throwing a suit at me. "If you can save one life, that's plenty. Don't be afraid. You and | will be a team. | nodded my head and began to dress int

the tactical suit.

“You guys are coming with?” Sebastian asked.

“Of course, we’re coming with you. I can’t allow you to have all the fun,” Ki ki said as she zipped up. “Plus, you’re injured and he’s gay.” She pointed to Cristos, stifling a giggle. “You guys need us.”

Cristos sighed. “Fine.” He typed something on his computer and up came the map to the subdivision on the huge monitor on his wall. “We enter through the back near the coroner’s

house in front of the McDowell’s. I will have Dina disengage any security system so we can move freely. No cars just bikes. Make sure you bring your harnesses and your night vision goggles because Dina will be cutting the power to that area. It will be pitch black.” He pushed on a button and up came Dina on the screen. “Dina I need all the CCTV footage you

have of the shooters and when I say lights off, I want the power cut off in that grid. We are on our way to Highland Oaks.” “Copy Prima Dina said “Thie

I have of this mocked men includi as possible location:4/7

## CHAPTER 159 Intervention

Primo. They’ve shot down most of the CCTV cameras, so I’m waiting for Sam for intel.”

Four against seven,” Ki ki mumbled, making sure the assault rifle she picked out of the armory was fully loaded. “I like our odds.” “Come on. We don’t have much time,” Sebastian said, picking up his back pack. “We have a lot of scared people we need to save.”

Xavier

It was mayhem down below. Liam’s mercenaries positioned at the barn appeared to be surrounded, however they had reinforcements, flanking, whom I assumed to be, Pete’s hired

guns.

“X, Link has activated his distress signal,” Dina suddenly said. | was right. Highland Oaks was now a massacre site. “The thugs have shot most of the CCTV’s down, so Sam is my eyes for

now.”

The ultimate cover up. No wonder there was a coroner’s van on standby near the barn.

“Tell Link to stand down unless his life is in danger,” | said. “I don’t want his cover blown.”

“He is currently protecting the Martin family at his home. He says he will not engage unle shot upon,” Dina confirmed. “Primo, Domenico and the girls are at Highland Oaks. They a going over the fence as we speak.”

The girls? Go d forbid.

“Tell them I’ll be on my way as soon as possible.

| was having trouble finding Liam. His driver, Jack and the Sheriff were busy exchanging gunfire with the mercenaries closest to the main entrance of the barn.

Unfortunately, the remaining townsfolk who tried to escape were gunned down in cold blood. There was nothing I can do to stop that. Liam wanted to take control of this town and he had to finish off every single one who was loyal to Pete.

Honestly, | would be doing the same thing if | wanted to conquer a whole town.

| searched for movement inside the barn, but couldn’t see much until | saw Brock walk out

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## CHAPTER 159 Intervention

the back and quickly shot at her without remorse.

Suddenly, the back door opened again and out came Liam, stopping in his tracks, surprised to see Brock. He had a gun in his hand and aimed it at Brock who was smiling gleefully at

him.

| paused my breathing and waited for the wind, then | took the shot.

| saw Brock's brain matter splatter all over Liam's face. | aimed again at the mercenaries near Liam and shot at them, taking them down one by one until there was no one left.

When the coast was clear, Liam quickly went back inside the barn, then emerged at the front. Jack was up against the barn door, wincing in pain while the Sheriff was assisting the coroner's van as the driver backed up at the entrance.

Then, the Colonel appeared. | peered through my scope and saw Liam giving them last minute instructions.

Suddenly, | heard the Colonel's voice on the radio. "Eagle, | need you to trek back to ground

level."

ita)

"Dina, it's time for us to leave. Head over to Highland Oaks. | want to know what's happening there and make sure Cristos, Sebastian and the girls are safe," | instructed, grabbing my gun and dashing down the path to my dirt bike.

As | was making my way down the hill, | noticed Liam's silver BMW.

| quickly hid myself behind some trees. He was looking for me.novelbin

Using my scope, | saw him with a pair of binoculars, surveying the hill. He was there for while until he gave up. They drove off, back towards

the main road.

"X, you need to get off that hill," Dina said. "There are mercs hiking up the hill."

| do Liam a favor and this is the thanks | get for an intervention.

“Don't worry, | have a good hiding spot-”

Out of nowhere, an explosion erupted. | climbed down the hill as fast as | could.

“X, Liam’s car is headed back to the mansion and the mercenaries are fleeing the hill. Sam

placed booby traps before leaving.”

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| heaved a sigh of relief.

“Link has just called Liam. The Martins want out of New Salem

All this for a negotiation?

Liam was on a killing spree. | had a bad feeling he was going to kill the Martins, Link

included.

“Dina, how are Sebastian and Cristos entering Highland Oaks?”

Chapter Comments.

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## Chapter 160

### CHAPTER 160 Purge

Link

After discussing Liam Cohen's terms and conditions with Thomas Martin at Norma's house, I went home.

As I drove past the gates, I saw the people chanting, carrying placards or holding lit candles. The guards and the deputies stood idly by, allowing the people to voice out their sentiments. It was

mostly women in the crowd, while the men, I suspected, were relatives of the various women sexually harassed by Ford.

At home, I decided to stay up incase a riot erupted again. I didn't want anyone to spend the rest of the night in jail. I, for one, knew how it felt to be behind bars. It was the lowest part of my life.

I was arrested once after my former girlfriend was found dead in her apartment. I had just gotten home after a tour of duty and since I had military training, I became the primary suspect of the police.

Sam heard about it. We were acquaintances who happened to bump into each other from time to time during deployment. He sent Beaufort's best attorney to get me out. It was at that moment when I decided I wanted to become a defense attorney. Unfortunately, I didn't have money and I couldn't find an employer who wanted ex-militar to work for them. I went to Sam and asked him if he could help me find a job. He sent me to

see Beaufort.

For me, it was a blessing to become a member of the Blood Disciples. We have helped more people than the ones who call themselves the good guys.novelbin

Case in point... Liam and his circle of friends.

I was happily enjoying a glass of bourbon when I heard gunshots. I stood up from my chair and peered through the windows. The gunshots sounded extremely close.

It couldn't be the Martins... Norma's house was on the other side of Highland Oaks.

Images of the deputies shooting the women gathered at the gates suddenly flashed through my mind. The gates were just a few blocks from this house. It's possible a riot was happening

again.

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| was putting on my shoulder holster when Dina's voice sounded in my ear. | had forgotten to take off my earpiece.

"Link, there are several masked men who have entered Highland Oaks. All are armed and are currently making their way to the mob. I've alerted emergency services, however-"

"They

y are at the Ol' Barn," | said, cutting her off. | glanced at my fancy wall clock and saw that it was midnight.

| holstered my gun, grabbed my jacket and walked outside.

If this was Liam's doing, | vowed | wouldn't leave New Salem until | saw him in body bag.

Taking cover beneath the shadows of the beautiful oak trees that graced each property, | walked up to the gate. There | saw several men in animal masks. Judging by the clothing they were wearing, | suspected they were part of some skater punk gang. | noticed, despite being in muscle shirts, they were sweating profusely. | could tell by the damp cloth under their pits. They couldn't seem to stand still and were acting like crazed lunatics.

| could only assume their erratic behavior was because they were high on drugs. | guess they were paid in crystal meth instead of cash.

"Put down your weapons," a deputy said, pulling his gun out.



“Relax, po-po,” the one in the horse mask said. “We just want to play a game of hide and go seek. Here are the mechanics. We're IT.” He pointed to himself. “While you people are to hide. We'll give you twenty seconds. If we find you, we'll kill you.” Some people gasped while others chuckled in disbelief. Well, how could someone take them seriously when they had animal masks on?

From where I was standing, I could only see four. A horse, a pig, a rat and a dog. Reminded me of the Lunar New Year. “Dina, how many are they?”

“We count seven, but there might be more. They shot down the CCTV cameras, so I'm going blind.” It was possible there were twelve of them based on the Chinese zodiac.

I looked up at the trees debating whether I should climb or not so I could get a better view. My vantage point sucked.

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## CHAPTER 160 Purge

“We don't want to play your stupid game,” a man yelled.

“You don't?” Horseman said, raising his gun and aiming it at the man. The women around him cried out and moved away from him.

“I said, put your weapons down and step away from the crowd,” the deputy said once again. “I'm warning you. I will shoot!”

“Fuck you, po-po!” The masked men began shooting at the guards and deputies. The crowd immediately dispersed, screaming, most of them entering the residential area.

“Twenty seconds starts now,” Horseman yelled before laughing like a hyena.

What was supposed to be a peaceful rally, had suddenly become bloody.

The people ran through the streets, scurrying for a place to hide.

I

walked out into the open, waving my hands.

“Follow me. You can hide in my guesthouse. Hurry,” | yelled, running back towards my house.

To my dismay, only a handful of people had followed me. Well, better that, than nothing. | was ushering them safely inside the guesthouse, when gunshots pierced the silence of the night.

Time’s up. Ready or not, here | come!

| was exiting my backyard to get more people when | saw the Martins banging on my front door like their lives depended on it. “Link, you have got to help us,” Norma cried out “This isn’t random. This is Liam trying to kill us.

I think so too.

“Calm down,” | opened the door and ushered them inside. “Stay here and hide. | need to help

more people get to safety.” | switched off the lights in the living room. “Pick a spot and whatever you do, keep quiet.”

Once | was back outside, | whipped out my personal distress beacon and sent out a distress signal. The signal would activate any Blood Disciple within the area for a rescue

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## CHAPTER 160 Purge

The sound of gunfire continued amidst the screams of many frightened people and the laughter of a bunch of animals. Honestly, this reminded me of the movie Purge.

So many dead people and the perpetrators were so proud

of their handiwork.

Luckily, | was able to usher in more people into the guesthouse. More people, more lives

saved.

“Everyone stay calm and don’t make a sound,” | told the townsfolk. “Keep the lights off, so they’ll think no one is here. I’ve alerted emergency services. Someone will be here soon.”

“T-they killed the deputies and the guards. | saw them do it,” a woman said tearfully “You need to call the governor. We need SWAT.” | nodded my head and placed a hand on her shoulder.

“| understand. For now... Just everyone... please stay calm. | know you’re scared, but we’re going to survive this. | promise.”

| went back inside through the back door to check on my very important guests. They were huddled together behind the kitchen counter.

“If Liam promises us safe passage, I’ll give him what he wants. Never mind negotiating with my boss. My life is more important than her cut Tomas said as | entered. Another gunshot rang out, making me duck down. Even | was afraid.

From his inner coat pocket, he took out the deed of sale | had given him earlier, signed it and handed the document to me. “Here. | signed it. Just tell him to give us safe passage, please,” Tomas begged.

“I’ll give him a call then. You guys stay here in the kitchen.” | grabbed my phone from the living room and dialed that so no fab itch.

He answered. “Are they willing to negotiate now?” | heard the amusement in his voice. It

must be him.

“Mayor Cohen, yes. Mr. Martin is willing to settle,” | said. Now call off your thugs! | wanted to scream at him, but | bit my tongue. | had to act as if | was clueless.

“That’s good news. I’ll be there as soon as possible. | just need to clean myself up.” He

quickly hung up.

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What the f uck did that mean?

“What did he say?” Norma asked.

“He’s on his way here,” | answered, lying. | saw the relief on her face.

However, the relief was only momentary. Gunfire erupted and it seemed to be getting closer.

| quickly turned off the lights in the kitchen which made Norma  
scream.

“Keep quiet or we are all going to die, | warned Norma. She nodded her head and covered her mouth with her hands.

| heard static from my earpiece; it was most probably Dina with an update.

“Link, we’re here.” It was Domenico’s voice. | heaved a huge sigh of relief. | pretended | was answering a call and moved to the living room area.

“| have a guesthouse full of frightened people and the Martins are here.” | peeked through the opening of my curtains and saw several shadows.

“They should consider themselves lucky. There’s a sh itload of dead bodies lying on the street,” he said, dryly. “By the way, do you have night vision goggles? | suggest you grab them. Dina will be cutting off the power soon.”

| grabbed my night vision goggles from the vintage cabinet in the foyer, including my

silencer.

“Goggles check. Gun check,” | whispered, pocketing my silencer while | held on to my goggles.

“Good. There are people running down the street,” Domenico said. “I need you to pull them. to safety while | get a location of the first target. He seems to be hiding behind those trees.”

| went back to the kitchen where the Martins were hiding. “I need you to go upstairs,” | instructed the Martins. “Pick a room and lock it. Don’t open it unless it’s me.”

“What are you going to do?” Norma asked, frightened.

“Help more people,” | answered. “Please do as | say. Now.”

Norma and Tomas scurried up the stairs while Ford stayed behind, placing a hand on my

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## CHAPTER 160 Purge

“Thank you. Now help your parents. They need to stay quiet.” He nodded his head and went

up the stairs.

| walked to the front door, opened it and saw four people running, asking for help. | waved at them, gesturing to them to run to me. They made a dash for it, however, a sudden gunshot rang out. One of the four, a man, collapsed on the ground, causing the three, who were all women, to freeze from panic. | ran towards them, taking my gun out and praying | could bring them in safely. “Dina, cut the power,” | heard Domenico say.

And just like that, all the lights went out. | slipped on my goggles and made my way to the

three women.

“Don’t scream,” | whispered. “I’m Link. | live over there. | need you to follow me. arms and let me assist you.” | felt two hands grab me. | was missing one.

“I can’t,” she whined.

Grab my

“Yes, you can,” | said. “Just hold on to me. | can see where we need to go.” | felt her shaking. fingers graze my arm, so | grabbed her hand and placed it securely under my arm. “Follow me. Slowly and quietly.”

They followed me across my yard without any problems. | quietly assisted them into my house, managing to get them to sit on my leather sofa in the living room.

“One is hiding behind the tree in your neighbor’s yard while another one is using his phone to light his way here,” Domenico said. “| suspect they know the Martins are in your house.”

Fantastic.

“Just keep quiet. I'll be back,” | told the three women before closing the door. “This is Liam’s doing, right?” | had to be sure. “This is definitely Liam’s doing,” Domenico replied. “Expendable crazed addicts. | need you to. shoot at the one walking while | take down the one behind the tree. Call it out after the target has been neutralized so we know how many is left.”

Crouching low, | ran to my driveway, hiding behind my car. After screwing on my silencer, | took a quick peek to locate the one walking towards us. | saw him and aimed my gun at his chest.

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| squeezed the trigger, hitting him in the heart. He went down with a thud.

“One down,” | counted off. Finally, these a ssholes were going down.

At the sound of a smartphone hitting pavement, his friend, who was hiding behind my neighbor's oak tree, went out into the open. Sebastian, who was positioned at the house in front of mine, killed him using an assault rifle.

| knew the sound of the assault rifle was going to alert his buddies, but since it was pitch. black, | doubted if they could find their way here... or anywhere.

"Two down," Domenico counted off.

"There's another one headed towards your direction, D," a familiar female voice said through

coms.

Joy? She's here?

Respect.

"Got it, V, Domenico replied. "Link, hold your position."

Suddenly, a loud gunshot, coming from a distance, erupted. | could have sworn | heard the whizzing sound of a bullet pass by. "Three down," Sam said through coms. "You guys counted seven, but there's three at the and two at the other side of the residential area. Holler if you need me, okay? Right now going to assist the girls."

"Copy that," Sebastian said. "Where's X?"

"On his way. He got held up on the hill. By the way, Link, he needs you to prepare for

extraction."

"Roger," | said, wondering why. | shrugged my shoulders... there is always a reason why.

| opened the door to my house and the three women screamed. | had forgotten about them.

"Hey, hey, hey. It's just me," | said, "No need to scream."

"The SWAT is here, aren't they?" One of the women asked, a hopeful tone in her voice. She

must have board the aeroule

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“Yup,” I answered, hoping the affirmation would help soothe them. All three women let out sighs of relief.

“We're going to be alright then,” one said

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