

CORRUPTED BLOOD LORD

Chapter 1: Prologue: Ashes in the Wind

Darkness.

A silence deeper than sleep,

where even thought could not exist.

There was no light, no warmth.

No before and no after.

Only an endless, waiting void.

Then suddenly a wet gasp tore itself from a tiny set of lungs. Air rushed in like a flood, and the world suddenly became loud—almost unbearably so. Screams of life, blurs of movement, too many sensations hitting him at once.

He was small.

He was... born.

"He's breathing! Quickly bring me a towel!"

He heard a man's voice. Deep and unfamiliar.

"Wrap him up! He's freezing!"

An unfamiliar woman. Warm, and looking worried, embraced him in to her arms.

David tried to speak, to move—to understand—but only a sharp wail escaped his mouth.

He was being lifted, massive blankets were wrapped around his skin. Strange scents lingered in the air.

He felt a massive thump of a heartbeat not his own, as he was pressed against a chest.

The overwhelming confusion and panic, suddenly brought tears he didn't even recognize as his.

Through blurred eyes, he saw a giant face, red hair—blue eyes, tear-streaked, and radiant.

"Hush now darling, you'll be alright," she whispered. "Your name will be Teclos, my sweet baby."

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Rewinding back time a bit.

Before he was born anew.

Before this new life... he had been someone else.

Just a normal man. Nothing special.

His days always started the same way—early mornings, aching limbs, and the slow, creeping realization that this was all his life would ever be.

The long day started as usual.

The clock above the industrial furnace ticked in slow-motion, each second dragging like a rusted chain across David's thoughts. The buzz of the factory floor—metal grinding against metal, distant calls between workers, and the steady hum of machines—was nothing new.

It was his everyday symphony. The heat was as oppressive as ever, and the smell of oil, sweat, and metallic dust clung to him like a second skin.

He wiped his forehead with the back of his glove, streaking a line of soot across his skin. The rhythmic clang of the press behind him thudded like a heartbeat. His own heart, though, beat slow. Tired of this hell.

"Hey, spacing out again?" Jonas's voice cut through the din. His tone was sharp but not unkind—serious, as always, but with a flicker of amusement. "That machine's not gonna load itself."

David gave a dry chuckle and hoisted the unrefined metal chunk onto the track. "Yeah, yeah. Just letting the usual existential dread sink in."

Jonas raised an eyebrow. "Let it wait until after the shift. Unless you want the furnace to be the last thing you see."

David smirked. "You're no fun."

"Fun doesn't pay for the busted knees and rent you have my friend," Jonas muttered, double-checking the calibration readout on the panel beside them.

Looking down at his knee, that small remark stung a bit more than David liked to admit.

David knew this routine too well. Get up at five. Eat toast and drink coffee. Spend ten hours at the factory shifting steel and pretending this wasn't going to be his life for the next thirty years. His knee still twinged when he bent too quickly, a reminder that the only dream he ever had—Kick Boxing, ring fights and competition—had snapped along with that ligament in high school.

Now, he watched fights on YouTube and thought about what might've been if his body hadn't betrayed him.

"I'm heading out after work," he said casually, nodding to Jonas as they started loading another crate onto the pallet jack. "Bar on Rine Street. You in?"

Jonas glanced at him, then at the timer on the furnace's control screen. "You sure you wanna drink the night before another double?"

David laughed. "Live a little, man. I'll try to bring Harold too. We'll grab some shitty beer, bitch about work and the boss—and maybe get lucky. There's a party there tonight."

Jonas gave a rare half-smile. "I'll think about it. Could use a night of shitty beer."

They kept working. The hours bled together. David's muscles burned, his back ached, and his gloves were soaked with grime by the time the final whistle blew.

Another shift done. Another day survived.

When the time to step outside came he was greeted by the cool dusk air, the city lights had already flickered on—hazy yellow glow filtering through cracked sidewalks and concrete alleys. He peeled off his sweat-stained shirt, pulling a hoodie over his undershirt as he made his way toward the metro. His legs ached, but the thought of home—of a cold drink and his brother's dumb jokes—gave him just enough fuel to keep walking.

Tomorrow would come like always. But tonight, he had a little space to breathe.

The door creaked open with a lazy groan, and David stepped into the apartment's familiar warmth. The scent of fried garlic and soy sauce hit him immediately.

"You cooked?" David called out, kicking off his boots near the entrance.

From the open-plan kitchen, Harold emerged, a wooden spoon in one hand, a smug grin on his face. "Yes, dear brother. I cook, I clean, I pay half the bills. A modern man, truly."

David snorted and tossed his hoodie over the back of the couch. "Wow. Gotta mark this one on the calendar. What's the occasion?"

"Payday and i can't eat your shit anymore." Harold replied, returning to the sizzling pan on the stove. "Also, figured I'd feed you before you head out drinking with that robot of a coworker."

"Hey, Jonas is alright," David said, grabbing two beers from the fridge. "He's just... perpetually stuck in 'serious' mode, besides there's a party tonight, wanna come with us?"

Harold laughed. "I've seen corpses with better party vibes. And no, i'll watch the game tonight in peace."

They clinked bottles.

The apartment was a decent size, especially for two bachelors who didn't throw wild parties—at least not often. A modest living room littered with empty snack bags, two well-worn gaming controllers on the coffee table, and a crumpled hoodie or two lying about. It was Lived-in and it felt comforting to be here.

Dinner was quick but good—garlic stir-fry, rice, fried eggs and beef strips. They ate in front of the TV, half-watching some random nature documentary while David went on about work.

"They've got me on the floor again tomorrow," David said between bites. "Same shift. Same furnace. Same shit."

"You should quit and become a monk," Harold replied. "You'll be enlightened there and won't complain as much anymore, plus you'd have a kick-ass buzz cut."

"Yeah? And who's gonna pay the rent?" replied David.

Harold nodded and said, "True....But at least you'd finally get some peace, and i'd have this whole place to my self." He gave a sideways glance and continued. "You're unusually philosophical tonight."

David shrugged. "Nah, just thinking. I mean, you ever feel like... we're just kinda stuck? Like we're background characters in our own lives?"

There was a pause.

Harold rolled his eyes and leaned back, sipping his beer. "Oh so it's one of those days. Look, maybe a new oportunity will crash into you like a freight train tomorrow, alright? Stop being such a downer."

"I've had a long day Harold."

After dinner, David grabbed his phone and stepped into the small balcony for some fresh air. The city buzzed below—cars, honking, life rushing by. He pulled up his mom's number and hit dial.

"Hey, Ma."

"Oh, Davey! Look who remembered he has a mother to call!"

David smiled. "Guilty. Listen, you and Dad free next weekend? I was thinking that i could swing by. Maybe fix that leaky faucet in the backyard for the lowly price of a nice dinner."

"Oh that would be lovely," she said, warmth in her voice. "Your father's been meaning to replace that for ages, but you know how he is."

"Yeah. All bark, no wrench."

She laughed. "Bring that lazy brother of yours too, oh and by the way how is he?"

"He's right here, alive and well fed. Still hasn't cleaned the bathroom though."

Harold yelled from inside, "Lies and slander!"

"See?" David chuckled. "Anyway, I gotta head out soon. Just wanted to check in."

"Thanks for calling, sweetheart. Be safe."

Back inside, David freshened up quickly—new shirt, cologne, a glance in the mirror that was more habit than confidence.

Harold leaned in from the hallway. "You meeting anyone special?"

"Nah, just Jonas."

Harold laughed. "Didn't think you swing that way, he doesn't deserve you brother."

David laughed. "Shut up."

As he shut the door behind him, he didn't look back.

Arriving at the bar, David quickly spotted Jonas and sat beside him. They ordered the first round of beers and fell into a debate about their shitty lives. After a few drinks, David noticed two ladies near the counter. With the alcohol boosting his confidence, he easily mustered up the courage to approach them.

Now, David wasn't the best at this sort of thing, but he somehow piqued their interest with his clumsy offer of drinks and company. David and one of the girls hit it off pretty quickly, their conversation flowing easily and filled with laughter. The problem was that Jonas was a bit too stiff and shy to connect with the other woman.

With a bit of help from David and Clara, they managed to nudge the other two along, and in the end, everyone had a merry time.

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The next day the factory loomed like a slumbering beast in the pale morning light, its smokestacks coughing plumes of gray into a sky not quite ready for dawn.

Inside, the air was thick with heat and metallic tang. A low, constant hum came from the ancient furnace units, broken only by the occasional hiss of steam or the groaning whine of machinery. It was just another shift. Another cycle of sweat, routine, and waiting for the daam lunch bell.

David adjusted his gloves and wiped the back of his neck, he stretched his back a bit clearly still tired from last night.

"Morning, sunshine, the star of yesterday night looks half dead today." Jonas called out over the clang of gears.

David smirked "Jealous I hooked up last night? Oh and did I just hear you make a rare joke?" .

Jonas, clad in his usual gray overalls and thick safety goggles, didn't smile. "No, and even the sahara desert gets rain a few times throughout the year....here, have this joke for free."

They shared a laugh. That was how it went with Jonas—few jabs here and there, but always focused. Jonas always shows up when you need him to. Always has David's back, that kind of friend was rare.

The supervisor barked out orders—Unit 3 needed purging, someone had to help with the coolant reset—and David, as usual, got volunteered. He didn't complain. He never did.

The catwalks above Furnace B creaked underfoot as he climbed to the upper levels, the heat rising like a wall. The furnace here was older than most—rust bleeding down its side like dried blood, pressure gauges twitching nervously.

He spotted one of the younger guys, Tommy, a rookie who barely had a week under his belt, struggling to detach a jammed safety valve.

"Hey!" David called out, stepping carefully onto the platform. "That thing's stuck tighter than hell. Don't force it—"

Too late.

A loud clunk. A jet of steam hissed out, screaming through the air. The furnace's groaning turned into a full-bodied roar. A gauge shattered.

The pressure had spiked.

"Shut it down! Now!" someone yelled below.

David didn't hesitate. He lunged forward, yanked Tommy back by the collar and practically threw him down the stairs. "Get the hell out of here!"

But that brief moment of heroism cost him dearly. A metal panel above blew loose and slammed into the walkway, breaking it apart. The catwalk buckled beneath him.

CRASH.

David dropped like a stone, slamming against the lower floor. His leg twisted under him with a sickening crunch—an old pain blooming again, sharp and unforgiving.

The heat was unbearable now. Flames licked at the far side of the room, and smoke poured in from somewhere near the coolant systems.

Then a few seconds later Jonas appeared.

"DAVID!"

They locked eyes. Jonas was trying to push through the smoke, pulling down debris, his usually calm face twisted in panic.

David tried to move—but the crushed leg refused to cooperate. His body screamed in pain.

"Don't! Stay back!" David coughed out. "You'll get caught—!"

"I can get you out!" Jonas snapped, eyes darting for something—anything—to use.

But another bang echoed through the chamber. A pipe burst. Molten metal splashed against the far wall. The main furnace began to glow brighter by the second. First Red then it turned white.

Jonas took a step forward—but David shook his head.

He knew.

"Go," David said, more softly but firmly this time. "Get out you dumbass."

Jonas hesitated. He wanted to push forward—to help—but another worker grabbed him and forced him back, just as the collapse began.

A section of the ceiling gave way. Concrete and steel rained down like judgment.

David closed his eyes.

In that final moment, he didn't think about the furnace. Or the pain. Or the roar of destruction happening around him.

He thought of the ocean. A little house on the shore and a cool breeze brushing past him.

A knee that didn't hurt anymore and a life where he was at peace.

And then—

There was only darkness.