

THE FIFTH RING
AKA
VAGABOND SAMURAI

Written by

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CHAPTER 1: EARTH

1

INT. ATLANTA HIGH RISE CORPORATE OFFICE - DAY

1

Staring out of the window upon Atlanta, THE DIVINE RULER, 50s, demented oligarch, inhales long and deep, with a disturbed wide-eye mania. The man may snap at any moment. He shakes his head in disapproval and sits at his desk.

Unsheathing a handled blade made from sharpened metal ruler, he inspects each measurement as if it was the only thing in the world that mattered to him. He notices a spot of blood and wipes it off feverishly with a wet wipe.

He removes a raw steak from a mini fridge and cuts it in pieces, devouring it with blood dripping down his chin.

THE DIVINE RULER

A juice so sweet, yet so savory.

(chews loudly)

What a nourishing meal. An earthly treat. The gods on high approve.

Without wiping his face, he makes a call.

THE DIVINE RULER (CONT'D)

Are they all gone yet?

(pauses for reply)

No? The streets must be free! Now!

The Divine Ruler hangs up. He tosses steak fat behind him. Picks up a Rubik's cube. He tries solving it but after spinning it intensely, throws it hard at the wall.

THE DIVINE RULER (CONT'D)

Fuck this! I'm above this bullshit planet, Dad! I'm beyond it!

The Divine Ruler stands and returns to the window, calm.

THE DIVINE RULER (CONT'D)

It's in your hands now, son. Don't let us down. Daddy's watching!

2

EXT. ATLANTA HIGHWAY UNDERPASS/PARK PAVILION - DAY

2

Drone footage of downtown skyline. Top of skyscrapers causes blinding reflection. ECU on SAM, 30s, long-haired, half-Native American, half-Caucasian male, eyes shut, twitches. Trying to meditate, he inhales. MORTARS and GUNSHOTS sound. Sam straightens with palms up.

Slouching in a wheelchair, MASTER SERGEANT, 50s, Chinese-American man with long gray hair smokes a cigarette. He watches Sam deal with his manic tics. Laughs.

MASTER SERGEANT
You a monk now, Specialist?

SAM
Just trying to find some peace,
Master Sergeant.

MASTER SERGEANT
Peace! Didn't you read The Book of
Five Rings? Next you'll want quiet!
How many times I gotta say it?
Peace doesn't exist here, son.

SAM
It has to. I can't keep fighting.
If I hone my mind and body, I can
exit the endless cycle of violence.

MASTER SERGEANT
You're a born warrior, Sam! Peace
comes by accepting our ugly lot in
life. Through owning our grim fate.

SAM
What war we fighting again? Musashi
talks of sword techniques. Useless
advice against any goon with a gun.

MASTER SERGEANT
Read BETWEEN the lines, kid!

Master Sergeant throws his hands up. Taps finger to temple.

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)
It's about wielding our nature. The
Spirit-of-the-thing-itself! It's
about destroying our enemy first!

SAM
Nearly everyone's my enemy. Please
be more specific, Master Sergeant.

MASTER SERGEANT
The REAL enemy hides. Most doubt
our enemy exists. But Make no
mistake, Specialist. We ARE at war.

Master Sergeant shivers. Covers body with a sleeping bag.

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)
 OK, enough lessons today. It's my
 beddy bye time. You up an' at 'em?

Sam nods, frowning.

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)
 Good. You're on fireguard. G'night!

SAM
 You're my only non-enemy, M.S.

MASTER SERGEANT
 Dad, mentor, and best battle buddy
 all in one! I know it! OK! Night!

MS snores. Sam twitches. Opens a beer and a book. Reads. Gets
 a bad headache. Finds faded pill bottle. Pops two pills.

Sam's eyelids fight gravity. Finally relaxing, he passes out.

3

EXT. ATLANTA HIGHWAY UNDERPASS - NIGHT

3

In darkness the sounds of blunt attacks correspond to groans.

Sam stirs, wakes to see three masked assailants staring at
 him. One gives Master Sergeant one more blow. They flee.

Sam observes the battered and bloody M.S.

SAM
 Oh fuck! M.S.! NO! NO!

Sam leaps to his feet to kneel and tend to Master Sergeant.

MASTER SERGEANT
 You-- you slept on duty, Sam?

SAM
 I-- rested my eyes. For a minute.

MASTER SERGEANT
 I trusted you. Now I'm-- I'm--

SAM
 M.S.! I-- I'm sorry. What happened?

MASTER SERGEANT
 They broke-- the truce.

SAM
 Who? Who did this?

MASTER SERGEANT

It was-- Sergeant-- Hollis.

SAM

Hollis? The ol' man at shares with the crazy hats? But why'd he do it? What can I do? Tell me! I'll-

MASTER SERGEANT

I'll- forgive. If you- avenge. Here- Use my Tanto. I wasn't able to-

M.S. coughs blood. Unsheathes and offers katana dagger. Frozen, Sam accepts the blade. M.S. dies. Sam wails.

SAM

Wait! Please! I need you here M.S.!

4 Sam kneels over the corpse of M.S., paralyzed. Sirens sound. Police lights flash. Sam's nervous shake stops. He grabs the blade. Looks one last time at M.S. Runs.

5 EXT. TENT CITY - NIGHT

5

With wild-eyed and determined adrenaline, Sam searches the settlement, scanning visible inhabitants and tents. He leaves unsatisfied, as DAHLIA, 20s, short-haired natural beauty in a trench coat, enters bearing a sack of fresh socks.

Dahlia hands socks out with a smile. Sam and Dahlia make eye contact. She grins and waves at him. He panics and flees.

6 EXT. KROG STREET TUNNEL - NIGHT

6

Sam walks at a brisk pace. He conceals the blade against his forearm. Scans each face in the darkness. Turns, wide-eyed, looking behind. Shoulder-checks a man without apology.

Suddenly, he stops, remembering intel. Storms forward.

7 EXT. UNDERGROUND ATLANTA - ENTRANCE STAIRS - NIGHT

7

Sam races downstairs. CAPTAIN HOLLIS, 60, sways, dazed.

SAM

Why'd ya do it, Hollis? Why him? Fuck you! Get ready to die!

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Huh?! What? What I done did to who?

SAM

You murdered M.S! Please don't play games with me, Sergeant Hollis!

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

SERGEANT? I got my degree! Gots my commission! It's CAPTAIN HOLLIS to you! Put respek on my name, son!

Captain Hollis bows up to Sam. Sam retracts in thought.

SAM

You're- Captain Hollis? Who the hell is Sergeant Hollis then?!

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Oh-ho! Best not even mention THAT Hollis's name 'round ME, boy! Nope!

SAM

Cut the shit! I need to know who he is. Where he is. Now.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Oh. He'll come to you, hang 'round here long enough. He loves it here.

Captain Hollis looks into distance. Salutes. Smiles at cops.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (CONT'D)

In fact- here dem boys comin' through right now! Oh! Good luck!

Police lights fill the peripheral. Sam runs downstairs. Flees deep into underground. Encounters dead end. Uses his robe to conceal himself on the ground along the wall.

8

INT. UNDERGROUND ATLANTA - UNDERGROUND SHOPS

8

Two police officers, OFFICER MUSA, 30, and OFFICER VASQUEZ, 30, patrol downstairs, wielding flashlights palming holsters.

OFFICER MUSA

Why not just detain the man right there? Now we're on a goose chase!

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Ya gotta leave the scene and come back as a hero. Didn't you learn about crime in Nigeria, bro?

OFFICER MUSA

I moved to Atlanta at age 10. Never learned proper lawbreaking protocol for cops, though no.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

You're no fun, Musa. That's why Hollis don't like you.

OFFICER MUSA

He doesn't like that I'm from Africa, Vasquez. I'm no dummy.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Boo hoo. I'm from Miami! He also doesn't like me! I'm not whining! Just learn the ropes. Do the job.

They approach Sam at the dead end. Sam unsheathes blade.

OFFICER MUSA

This big operation he put together. "Curing homelessness". Africa did teach me what genocide looks like.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

A dirty job, but somebody's gotta do something about the streets! Let's start by finding this perp.

They notice Sam move under robe. They draw arms. Sam sees shoes advancing. The sound of the radio startles them all.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (O.S.)

Hey knuckleheads. Get the scumbag?

OFFICER VASQUEZ

That's a negative, sergeant. I reckon we're close though.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (O.S.)

Stop pullin' ya puds! He'll turn up. But we got metrics to hit tonight first! Meet me at our spot!

Officer Musa shakes his head in disgust at Vasquez.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Don't gotta like the gringo. Just gotta work with him. Wanna end ATL crime, gotta get rid of criminals!

The officers exit. Sam sits, shook. Upholds the blade.

SAM

I shoulda been up. But I let the swine take your life. This is-- shame. I know what I must do now.

Sam raises to kneeling position for seppuku, ritual samurai suicide. He raises the blade. Hears familiar voice. Drops it.

MASTER SERGEANT (O.C.)

I'll forgive, if you avenge.

SAM

How, Master Sergeant? I'm so fucked up. Against the law? How?

Master Sergeant appears, beaten and bloody in his wheelchair.

MASTER SERGEANT

I died like a dog, but you still have a chance to act as a tool of vengeance. A true force of justice.

SAM

Seems like a suicide mission.

MASTER SERGEANT

Life is a suicide mission. I know how strong your spirit is, Sam. Wield that as your weapon.

SAM

I found peace, maybe that was my one glimpse into heaven on earth, before knowing this new hell.

MASTER SERGEANT

It is what it always was. There is no escape. Take the honorable path. Straight to the warrior's forest.

Master Sergeant is gone. Sam stands. Sheathes blade. Nods in understanding of his next destination. Sam exits.

9

EXT. WEELAUNEE PEOPLE'S PARK - PARKING LOT - DAWN

9

In the empty parking lot, SERGEANT HOLLIS, 35, reclines across the hood of an unmarked car, arms folded. He smiles upon the forest. Frames areas with fingers.

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Wish ya could see this daddy. Maybe you can! The good work I do.

Sergeant Hollis spits. Breathes in the fresh air.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

This'll be OUR OWN city soon. OUR safe space. Hollywood'll shoot big movies here. We'll all get famous!

The arrival of Musa and Vasquez interrupts Sergeant Hollis from his excitement. They step out of the car. Approach as Hollis stands, parade rest. He spits too close to their feet.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

You dummies spent all night fuckin' off, huh? One dumbass bum shouldn't be that hard to find, gentlemen.

Cringing, Musa stifles animosity. Vasquez shakes it off.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Sergeant, y'know how many zombies walk the streets. More every day! He's a needle in a needle stack!

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Whatever, losers, I don't care. Just sayin' it sucks to suck. Haha!

OFFICER MUSA

We patrol up and down each street downtown. How would YOU find him?

SERGEANT HOLLIS

I'd put out a lil' lemonade stand that said "Free Crack and Meth"! The dirty hobo couldn't resist!

OFFICER MUSA

Not every single one of these guys is on hard drugs, sergeant.

SERGEANT HOLLIS

That one sure as shit WAS in a drug coma. Couldn't even hear me kickin' his sugar daddy in the face! Haha!

OFFICER MUSA

OK. Sun's up. Enough shady shit. I go home now to my wife and my kids.

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Oh WIFE AND KIDS! Real family man! G'on Musa! You, Vasquez, take the rest of the day to relax! Fuck!

Officer Musa gets in the driver's seat of the car.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Ease up on him, alright? You know I got your back here no matter what.

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Easy to say before goin' home for hot sex. G'on, Vasquez! I'm just gettin' my shift started! I'm fine!

Officer Vasquez gets in the passenger seat. They drive away.

Sergeant Hollis, paces, battling a panic attack.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

So much stress. Maybe I need a nature stroll. Might even catch some hippie terrorist trespasser!

He walks toward the tree line. Screams cause him to do a 180.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

To hell with that.

More guttural screams. Hollis fires his gun into woods.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

OK. Maybe I should get some shuteye myself. Out here, hearin' thangs!

Sergeant Hollis approaches his car. Makes call. Voicemail.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Hey, baby. Look Lisa. I love you. You know that. Let me come home. I'll never do it again! I swear!

Sergeant Hollis sighs. Gets in the driver seat.

10 INT. CAR - DAY 10

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Guess here's as gooda place as any.

11 Sam sits up behind him in the backseat. 11

Sergeant Hollis reclines his chair back. Sam waits in the backseat, tanto drawn to Hollis's brain stem.

SAM

Keep reclining and it's suicide.

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Hey! What the fuck!

Sergeant Hollis scrambles to pull back and around, fumbling for his gun. Sam raises and presses the blade with enough force to draw blood. Sergeant Hollis collapses into seat.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

What? Who are you, man?

SAM

A sharpened tool of vengeance.

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Oh, you're the runaway bum, huh?

SAM

I didn't run away. I'm right here.
Cuz I need to know: Why? Why us?

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Ya think solving the bum problem was my idea? It's from higher than my pay grade. It's the dawn of a new day, bub! A city without crime.

SAM

What about your crimes? You aren't judge, jury, and executioner. You're a pawn, a foot soldier fighting for the false gods.

Hollis reaches for gun. Sam slices his hand. Hollis yells.

SAM (CONT'D)

Was our crime living on the street? Reminders of how our system fails people? How our bravest warriors are used up to kill starving children in occupied lands?

Sergeant Hollis rolls eyes, bored.

SERGEANT HOLLIS

You're doomed no matter what, but we can't sit here all day. I hit my squad alarm. Y'got two minutes max.

SAM

Huh. You wanna know who I am?

SERGEANT HOLLIS

You're a dead man yappin'! So, I don't care who ya think you are!

SAM

You should care. I'm your enemy.

ECU on SAM who plunges the blade in. Retracts. Blood spray.

Sergeant Hollis dies.

Sam sits in unsatisfied silence. Dull-eyed. Looks upon ATL.

The tops of skyscrapers sparkle in the sun. Sam takes this as a taunt. Suffering from sudden anxiety, he tries to get out of the car, but realizes both backdoors are locked.

He leans over Sergeant Hollis, but both front doors are on some kind of auto-lock as well. He attempts to get the keys from the front floorboard. Creeping SIRENS startle him back.

Frantic, Sam twists around to see the cop cars pulling up, as red and blue lights flood the scene.

Sam grips the blade. Raises it slow, high above open abdomen. Freezes. PULSING BLOOD syncs with red and blue lights drowning view of the bloody blade suspended mid-air.

Sam exhales.

THE END OF EARTH

CHAPTER 2: WATER

12 EXT. PIEDMONT PARK - DAY - FLASHBACK

12

Along a tree line, far enough away for privacy but still able to watch out for enemies, Master Sergeant smokes while Sam practices some kind of yoga.

MASTER SERGEANT

I only like to say things once. Are you listening to me, Specialist?

Specialist Sam comes to a resting pose, exhales, inhales.

SAM

Always, Master Sergeant.

MASTER SERGEANT

Good. Now I'd like to pass on some important points about The Book of Water. It's not just about fluidity or being like water, like Bruce Lee advised. Did you read that one yet?

SAM

Yep. Read it twice, M.S.

MASTER SERGEANT

Good. Let's cut to the core of it. I know you don't have a sword of your own yet, but one day you will.

Master Sergeant pauses for effect blows a smoke ring.

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Musashi reminds us of the importance in how a warrior carries themselves, spiritually, mentally, and physically. The strongest warriors often appear to be doing nothing. They just appear. Quiet.

13 EXT. WEELAUNEE PEOPLE'S PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

13

Approaching Sergeant Hollis's car with gun drawn and sirens flashing behind, Officer Vasquez approaches the car. The doors open, releasing clouds of smoke.

Sam gets a chance to escape out the other side and run for the tree line, avoiding several GUNSHOTS by Vasquez.

Vasquez almost chases him but sees the murdered SGT Hollis and attends to him. He grabs the phone of Hollis and in a shock, he decides next actions. He dials one number.

THE DIVINE RULER (O.S.)
 Yes, son? Hello? No, it's not you.
 Who has his phone? Who dares to
 disturb work of The Divine Ruler?

Vasquez gulps, hangs up, shakes his head and dials another.

PFC HAWK (O.S.)
 Hmmmmmm?

OFFICER VASQUEZ
 Private Hawk. It's Officer Vasquez.
 Good to know you didn't pawn the
 phone we gave you.

PFC HAWK (O.S.)
 Thanks for refreshing priorities,
 Plodboy. Give it time. What now?

OFFICER VASQUEZ
 Had a big fuckup with the lead you
 gave us. Sam killed Hollis. He's on
 the run. May come for me next, bro!

PFC Hawk is silent for a moment. Laughs.

PFC HAWK (O.S.)
 An existential crisis for ya? Had a
 few myself, when I believed in such
 delusions. Good luck then plodder.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
 This is your problem too, Hawk!

PFC HAWK
My problem? No problems *here*. Hawk
 gave names and locations, for \$20.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
 Well then, if Hawk brings me the
 head of Sam, *Hawk* gets \$50.

After some silence and a long hum, PFC Hawk replies.

PFC HAWK
 69's fair. That buys shaved ribeye,
 and a bit o' speed to celebrate!

PFC Hawk hangs up.

Officer Vasquez calls another. Officer Musa answers, groggy.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Musa. We have an emergency. How soon can you meet me?

OFFICER MUSA

Oh Jesus, what now? Don't you guys sleep? Uh, give me three hours.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

OK, we need a new rendezvous. I'll drop a pin soon. Standby.

OFFICER MUSA

OK cool. I'm going back to sleep.

Officer Musa hangs up.

Officer Vasquez looks around the car for any clues. Looks back at the phone of Hollis. Finds a longer video file labelled: IN CASE THEY GET ME, AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL. Vasquez clicks on it and begins playing the video.

14

INT. HOLLIS CAR - DAY - PHONE VIDEO

14

Sergeant Hollis struggles to get the video started, trying to fix his hair and teeth first.

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Oh dammit, man! I'm already recording? I'll edit it later. Damn I should have memorized everything. Or rehearsed or something.

SGT Hollis groans and rubs his eyes to remember his lines.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Ah well, OK. If you're hearing this-- hopefully it's Officer Vasquez and not that *other guy*, or anybody else-- it means I got killed in the line of duty, doing God's work.

Hollis begins to cry thinking about his own death.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Don't cry for me. Instead, tell Lisa I love her, and see this as a big reality check curb stomping. We're dealing with wild animals out here on the streets.

(MORE)

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

They are dangerous and need to be eliminated at any cost to make the city safe, for the good people who play by the rules and pay us to risk our lives and maintain law and order in our once great nation.

Hollis looks outside of the car wistfully.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

In this video I'm going to lay out everything I know, all the tricks of the trade, so you can carry the torch I'm passin' ya without settin' yourself on fire!

Hollis laughs at himself, then realizes something.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

First thing's first however, if this is Vasquez or Musa and you're still hanging out around my dead body and the crime scene, call the paramedics ASAP for crying out loud and get out of there! This is no weather for corpses, man! And you want to be far away from the scene when the detectives come! Go now! And watch the rest of this later!

Officer Vasquez snaps out of his trance and gets in his car to flee the scene.

15

EXT. DOLLS HEAD PARK - ABANDONED CAMP - DAY

15

Through the thick woods, Sam flees the scene of the crime. Finally, he slows down out of breath. He takes in his surroundings, looks down haunted by the blood on his hands.

He progresses through the woods until he finds an abandoned homeless encampment. He studies the evidence left behind. He stumbles upon the actual Doll's Head Trail, decides to camp.

Fighting nerves, he tries to meditate again. He keeps seeing the blade, plunging into Sergeant Hollis's neck.

Suddenly his stomach growls with intensity. He looks around.

SAM

All this water but no fishing pole.

He moves to the water to clean off the blade and hands.

He watches for fish, sees one or two, and tries to stab them.

SAM (CONT'D)

Guess I'll sneak into the city
tonight for food and supplies.

Staring at the pond, he gets lost in the scene. Lost in sky.

He shakes himself out of this trance, overcome with
loneliness and a lack of purpose. Looks down at the tanto.

SAM (CONT'D)

Who am I kiddin', goin' on living
alone in this fucked world. Hollis
is gone. My job's done, right?

He kneels. Places the blade before him. Hesitates.

SAM (CONT'D)

Why can't I do it? It's not fear.
There's a nagging feeling that I'm
forgetting something important.

The flashback of Hollis's last words come back to him.

16 INT. HOLLIS CAR - DAY

16

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Ya think solving the bum problem
was my idea? It's from higher than
my pay grade. It's the dawn of a
new day, bub! A city without crime.

17 EXT. DOLL'S HEAD PARK - DAY

17

Sam opens his eyes again. Begrudgingly accepting his answer.

SAM

I guess I'm just getting started.

He stares out upon the sky, absorbed and looking for answers.

In a trance, he slowly slips into a nap.

18 EXT. PIEDMONT PARK - DAY - FLASHBACK

18

Specialist Sam pushes Master Sergeant in the wheelchair.

MASTER SERGEANT

You may feel like some small fry
weakling, but don't worry.

(MORE)

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Musashi talked about making
yourself bigger than you are.

Master Sergeant breaks to eats peanuts. Points out to the
skyscrapers, overlooking their otherwise tranquil park.

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)

He told us to extend our spirit
above and beyond the enemy's
spirit. Never cringe in fear, and
never fight without your spine
being straight.

19

EXT. DOLL'S HEAD PARK - DAY

19

Sam awakens from his nap and sits up. He extends himself up
through utmost concentration, and breathes in deep.

He looks straight up at the bank and sees PFC Hawk there
above him, looking upon the scene too as if he was alone.

PFC HAWK

Oi, Sam? Didn't see ya there, mate!

SAM

Hawk? The fuck you doing out here?

PFC HAWK

Me? Oh this husk, right? Just bird
watchin is all. At one with nature!

Sam eyes PFC Hawk with grave suspicion. Hawk grins eerily
beyond Sam, still unable to focus on him. Wields his hatchet.

SAM

Why ya got that tomahawk in hand?

Hawk just laughs. Caresses his cheek with the blade.

PFC HAWK

Why ya think? Chop down a tree!

Sam wields his tanto at the ready.

Hawk whacks a nearby tree with hatchet, sticking it.

Hawk lights a cigarette and leans on the tree.

20

EXT. CORPORATE PARKING LOT - DAY

20

Officer Vasquez sits in his car, biting his nails and
imagining so many scenarios in a state of paranoia.

20A INT. VASQUEZ'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

20A

Vasquez goes back on Hollis's phone and is about to pick up where he left off, when Officer Musa taps on the car door.

Vasquez retaliates with a jolt and pulls his gun. Shakes his head after realizing it was his partner. Musa gets in.

OFFICER MUSA

Long time no see, Vasquez. What the hell is going on. What's the big emergency that needs *me* here?

OFFICER VASQUEZ

You're not gonna believe it. I was gonna tell you over the phone, but better in person. It's- Uhh-

OFFICER MUSA

It's what? What happened?

Officer Vasquez leans over the steering wheel like he's going to throw up and cry. Shakes his head in denial.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

He killed Sergeant Hollis. In his car. Right after we left him.

OFFICER MUSA

Not really a surprise. This seemed like a half-baked plan of poking the hornet's nest. What now?

Officer Vasquez looks bewildered back at Musa.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Whattaya mean, "what now"? We were *there* bro. We had a hand in this shit. If it gets out, we're done.

Musa is hearing him, nodding, but not feeling the direction.

OFFICER MUSA

I never wanted this. You guys said it would get me a pay raise. Now ya want to keep hunting this guy?

OFFICER VASQUEZ

At this point, we just need to cover our tracks. Any involvement we had. Sam needs to go extinct.

Musa is suppressing rage, staring out the window.

OFFICER MUSA

If he murdered Hollis, I'd prefer he go to prison. We both know it was revenge, but who cares, right?

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Exactly! Who cares. Arresting him is better than nothing. At least then, we can make him disappear.

OFFICER MUSA

Wish I'd worked the beat, or even traffic, and never knew you guys.

Officer vasquez laughs. Musa's words are pointless to him.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

No, you wanted to be a part of the action. That's what you said. This is where the shit gets real, buddy.

OFFICER MUSA

I didn't know it meant going to war with the homeless! It ain't right!

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Right and wrong don't matter. This is *not* a war. It's a slaughter.

Officer Musa tries to reply but feels nauseous. Looks out.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

Good news is, SGT Hollis left us a video manifesto, to help us. He knew what we were up against.

Officer Vasquez tries to get the video to play on his phone.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

Ok here it goes. Listen man!

21

INT. HOLLIS CAR - DAY

21

Sergeant Hollis nods and rolls his fingers, implying that the person get away from the scene and to a safe place.

SERGEANT HOLLIS

OK, now I trust you're far away from problems. For now. Cuz, The Divine Ruler knows, we got nothing but problems out on the streets. It will be a process, a work in progress, that we're only starting.

Hollis looks out at his natural surroundings again.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

I believe in nature too. Darwin was a genius. Natural Selection, Survival of the fittest, even married his cousin too. He said it best! The only rule out here in a natural ecosystem is survival, no matter what it takes.

Hollis sighs and takes a moment to think.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

I know we dealt with, Private Hawk, one of the craziest maniacs out here, to get the intel we needed on Sam and his keeper, but just know, this is the tip of the iceberg.

Hollis leans back and pops his collar. He's on a roll.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

These rules don't change. These fucks will do whatever it takes to not only survive, but get whatever they want. The same as any of us, but with more desperation. They are exposed beasts, naked under the scared or apathetic stares of society. Their lifespans are much shorter, and they know it. It gives them all the more reason to try and kill us first. We can't let them. We'll get them to kill each other --

The speech is interrupted by a radio call.

21A INT. VASQUEZ'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

21A

RADIO DISPATCH (O.S.)

Officer Vasquez, we have an officer down at Weelaunee People's Park. Your partner SGT Hollis. Standby.

Vasquez shoots a quick glance over at Musa.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Our guy's taking care of Sam now. You're acquainted with PFC Hawk.

OFFICER MUSA

Wish I wasn't.

Officer Vasquez cranks up his car and they drive off.

22

EXT. DOLL'S HEAD PARK - DAY

22

PFC Hawk stares out at nature, finding some sense of peace beyond himself. Puffs his cigarette while Sam watches with acute paranoia and distrust.

PFC HAWK

Say, Sam, ya ever got locked in a staring contest with a five-eyed demon, just to realize you were lookin' at yaself in the mirror?

SAM

No, can't say I have.

PFC HAWK

Y'know Sam, never much liked ya. How ya got seconds at the food shares. The Yankee greed in ya!

Sam laughs in confused defense.

SAM

I never fuckin' liked you either, weirdo. Why bother me? Fuck off!

PFC HAWK

Ey! Wasn't finished mate. Yanks love talkin' over each other! Was bout to say, ya deserve my respect.

SAM

OK, then. Thanks?

PFC HAWK

No worries, mate. Real soldiers, right? Got somethin' to fight for, always did. Vague memories of a childhood in the bush south of Darwin. My father, the pure scumbag he was sent me out between sessions of him havin' his way with me, sent me with a buck knife to catch our dinner. Hard for lads to catch prey out there in Northern Territories. Hares, the rabbits much too scared and too fast for a chase. Crocs they'd eat me alive! Now, feral dogs, dangerous rabid animals, least they wouldn't run.

(MORE)

PFC HAWK (CONT'D)

They'd go toe to toe with a boy my size, had some close calls, but always brought home bacon- of the dingo!

Hawk laughs in a disturbed nostalgia. Sam is just disturbed.

SAM

Man, why the hell are you telling me this? I'd love to be alone now.

PFC HAWK

Hold on, mate! Just gettin' to the *good part!* Just been a while since I had someone to talk to, who might *understand*. Ya see, even when I left down under nothing got easier. Went to Vietnam in '69 for rough-house fun. Came here, to this god-forsaken land for a better life, but, goin' to war for no good reason was the only thing I was ever good for. Volunteered for some special assignments, and had to be OK with the ol' lysergic acid. Free LSD! Sounds like a dream! When I left that warehouse in Montauk, it may have been six months, or sixty years, but one thing, I knew, is: Identity is a grave illusion. It doesn't matter what year it is, I don't even exist. None of us *really do*. And in a few minutes, that'll be especially true for you, ya fuckin' feral dog!

PFC Hawk spits at Sam. Removes his hatchet from the tree and lunges down upon Sam still in the water.

Sam meets this initial strike with a deflection and parry. He ducks under and away from the hatchet strike and tries to pull Hawk into the deeper water.

Hawk recovers and straightens up, laughing at Sam.

SAM

Who the fuck sent you Hawk?

Hawk chuckles. Feels the edge of his blade along his arm.

PFC HAWK

Cunt with more cheese than you. \$69 was my counter-offer, I'll have you know. An honest half-day's wage!

PFC Hawk strikes again. Deflected by Sam. Pushed back deeper, Sam dodges Hawk's second hacking attempt. Sam starts to run along the outside of this perimeter to get back to land. They collide and lose their blades while thrashing and grappling in the shallow water.

Sam gets the upper hand with his hands around Hawk's neck, nearly drowning the mercenary before a defensive punch lands, sending Sam back toward land.

Hawk struggles to jump up, coughing out water, rubbing his throat. Red-eyed, he spots Sam fleeing, finds his hatchet in the water and shouts.

PFC HAWK (CONT'D)

Where ya off to, mate? We weren't done conversatin'!

Hawk aims as if he's going to chuck the hatchet at Sam's head, but then decides against it. He runs towards Sam as Sam climbs on to the bank. Lunges to try and take his legs out before he can get to shore. Misses.

Emerging from the water as if he was baptized and a new man, Hawk scans the perimeter now empty of Sam. He shakes his head as if in disbelief. Whistles a tune.

PFC HAWK (CONT'D)

OK. Cat and mouse game, ey? Didn't want ya to have an easy death.

PFC HAWK stretches out his neck and shoulders as he emerges from the water, sniffing for a trail. He detects bootprints and follows these into the left side of the trail.

Traveling along this trail of doll parts and junk art installations, Hawk inspects some in passing but keeps his eyes on the prize, on the shady corners and alcoves where Sam may be hiding.

At the end of the long brick wall, where Sam is hidden as Hawk approaches, Sam remembers advice from Master Sergeant.

23

EXT. PIEDMONT PARK - DAY

23

Sam pushes Master Sergeant in the wheelchair for a while, but eventually they stop for a rest. Sam starts to peel an apple.

MASTER SERGEANT

It's always hard to *know* the enemy.
They take many forms, but once you
identify an enemy, do not hesitate.
(MORE)

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Approach the enemy slowly without fear, and tower over them with your spirit, strike with no remorse.

They sit in silence for a while. Sam peels the apple and gives it to Master Sergeant.

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Remember, as you submit yourself to the spirit of the thing itself, the spirit of the thing itself submits itself to you. Then, Strike!

24

EXT. DOLL'S HEAD PARK - DAY

24

Upon the end of the brick wall, as Hawk passes, Sam leaps out and slices his calf with the tanto.

Hawk screams and leaps forward away from pain. Turns back toward Sam, now ready to fight.

PFC HAWK

Cheap shot, ey mate? OK no worries!

SAM

You don't deserve anything else.

Hawk reaches down and feels blood on his leg, grinning.

PFC HAWK

Dad said I was savage! Glad to know I'm *not* the most dangerous game!

SAM

You're injured. How bout you back away now? Go about your business?

PFC Hawk just shrugs and chuckles, stands up to challenge.

PFC HAWK

You are my business, mate.

Hawk and Sam charge toward each other simultaneously. The tanto and tomahawk clash and lock up. They grind their weapons together for an instant trying to get an edge.

Hawk flings his strike upward and ends it, doing a 360 and dropping to the ground to try and take out Sam's legs. Sam is too fast and drops back, wielding his sword against PFC Hawk, prowling upon the ground.

SAM

Why fight against me? We're the same on these streets. Alone.

Hawk leaps forward, testing his weight on the injured leg. He shrugs and laughs more at the naivete of Sam.

PFC HAWK

Earth doesn't permit survival of fools. Told ya. Got paid to give em ya name, soon I'll be paid to bring in ya head! Hope ya don't mind!

The two clash again and after several strikes and parries, Sam delivers a fateful blow to Hawk's abdomen.

Hawk crawls away to the brick wall and leans upon it. His hatchet is still in hand and he uses it to fight invisible spirits all around him. Sam approaches closer with sword drawn, ready for a death knell if need be. He is instinctively drawn to kill him.

PFC HAWK (CONT'D)

Nice one! Why'd ya fight so hard?

Sam gets close enough for the kill but pauses with tanto ready. Thinks hard and shrugs.

SAM

No other choice. These monsters killed the only person I loved.

PFC Hawk seems disturbed and confused by that statement.

PFC HAWK

Love? A foreign language. What a strange emotion. The only feeling I've ever knew was -- pain.

Sam is empathetic toward the disturbed fellow warrior.

SAM

We don't have to live our lives like this, as you said, like dogs. We could look out for each other.

Hawk laughs and holds his wound. Shakes his head.

PFC HAWK

Y'are what ya eat, mate. I'll never be more than a dog! As for you? G'on, eat the pigs with the money. Then someday you can be a pig too!

SAM

Who hired you to come after me?

PFC HAWK

The bogan Hollis hired Hawk first, gave drugs out of their evidence room. Now Vasquez his left-hand man wants a clean-up crew. Don't expect tranquility anytime soon, mate.

SAM

Where can I find this Vasquez?

PFC HAWK

No idea mate. The city streets is their office. Poke your head out to learn their exact whereabouts.

Sam is considering this new information and a strategy. Hawk groans and rolls his fingers to expedite the process.

PFC HAWK (CONT'D)

Right, mate. An open and shut book. Gave you everything. Now finish me off, or let me die in peace.

Sam shakes his head in refusal.

SAM

Peace doesn't exist here. No, I won't kill a wounded man on the ground. I'll leave that to you.

PFC HAWK

Oh so be it. Makes no difference.

Sam is utterly disturbed by the calm nature in which PFC Hawk is allowing himself to die.

PFC HAWK (CONT'D)

Fought for nothing, believed in nothing, cause me life was nothing. Now, I fear it *was something*. True Nothin' lies beyond the horizon.

Sam overcomes his desire to help. Shakes his head and leaves.

Hawk waits for silence. Smiles at the creepy art around him. Staring into the sky, he extends the hatchet at arm's length, gathering up enough strength until it shakes. The camera cuts away mid-strike, before the hatchet reaches his jugular.

THE END OF WATER

CHAPTER 3: FIRE

25

EXT. BROWNWOOD PARK - PAVILION - FLASHBACK - DAY

25

Underneath the pavilion, Sam does pushups. Master Sergeant stares blankly ahead. Sam's training distracts him.

Master Sergeant cracks open an unmarked bottle of brightly colored swill. He coughs and offers some to Sam, who hesitates, but accepts the drink. Sam also coughs and scowls.

MASTER SERGEANT

Oh relax. This shit is good for ya.
Makes you grow up big and strong.

Sam shakes his head, shaken by the raunchy taste and effect.

SAM

Yeah I don't know, Master Sergeant.
That can't be good for anything.

MASTER SERGEANT

Oh nonsense. This shit right here
will test the will of one's soul.

SAM

By test, do you mean "kill"?

Sam goes back to doing pushups.

MASTER SERGEANT

I said what I said. Throw your soul
into the fires of hell to forge it,
while the world burns.

(focused on Sam)

Warriors, rise above the ashes of
temporary empires upon what Musashi
called "the way filled with soul
and feeling". The fight for truth.

Out of breath, Sam has reached the cap on his daily pushups. He takes a long analytical look at Master Sergeant, shrugs.

SAM

What's the truth?

Master Sergeant takes a gulp of the bottle. Dribbles a bit.

MASTER SERGEANT

That we're all fucked. Not just us
wasteland scavengers, but the game
players too.

(MORE)

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)

At least *we'll* die on a real
battlefield. Die a *real death*.

26 EXT. ATLANTA DIRT ROAD - DAY 26

Sam comes to from the flashback, overcoming a hyperventilating fit. He looks all around him to get his bearing on the backroad that leads to the downtown skyline.

Sam stares ahead toward the skyscrapers with renewed fury. Looks down at the blood caked on the blade unsheathed while the other hand holds the sheath. He tries to wipe the blade off on his robe, to no avail.

He sheathes the blade, conceals it, and marches ahead.

27 EXT. ATLANTA TRAIN TRACKS - DAY 27

The tranquility of a long view down the old train tracks, is broken by Captain Hollis, entering and sprinting down the tracks. Every so often he glances behind him and ducks.

Officer Musa and Officer Vasquez enter the scene behind Captain Hollis, sprinting and shouting. Musa is leading the chase and Vasquez is losing his breath, shouting.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Fuck! Stop, vendejo! This running!
Don't make me shoot yo ass!

Vasquez pulls his gun to shoot the legs of Captain Hollis, but Musa sees him and intervenes.

OFFICER MUSA

Drop the gun, my guy! We don't need
to shoot him. *I* can catch him!

Captain Hollis sprints, weaving to duck potential bullets. Looking for an exit through the train track fence.

Captain Hollis throws a loose deck of playing cards behind him in a failed attempt to deter his pursuers.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Yall wannabe robocops will never
catch Hollis the Human Fox! I'm
untouchable like ya mom's coochie!

Captain Hollis runs across the tracks and aligns with the fence, feeling in passing for a weak spot.

Musa picks up speed, leaving Vasquez in his wake. Vasquez gives up, while Musa gains ground.

OFFICER MUSA

Why ya runnin' brother? We just wanna talk! Thought ya mighta seen some ish. Now you just seem guilty!

Captain Hollis panics at how close Musa has gotten to him.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Oh hell no! I didn't do shit, and I got nothin' to talk about! Just leave me be, ye heathens!

OFFICER MUSA

I ran cross-country in college, sir. I can run all day, but sooner or later, I'm gonna catch you!

Captain Hollis gets a burst of energy and tries to gun it across the tracks again.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

If you catch me, get ready to fight for ya life, youngblood! Big Papi Hollis don't play lil boy games!

OFFICER MUSA

Why the threats of violence, sir? I don't want to hurt you. I want to find out who killed my colleague.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Who'd you and your colleague kill first? That's the better question! Violence begets violence! Doofus!

Musa finally corners Captain Hollis, who then puts up his dukes. Officer Musa puts up deflective palms, to diffuse the beginning of a fist fight. Hollis swings wildly, mad as fuck.

OFFICER MUSA

Stop it, sir! I'm not looking to fight, but I will end one. Better me end it than my partner end it!

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Oh hell no, fuck you. How dare you threaten me or my life! We all know what you really stand for! Traitor!

Officer Musa extends a collapsible baton. Moves in.

OFFICER MUSA

You're testing my patience, sir. I don't wanna take your old knees out, but I will. If you don't chill the fuck out and talk. Who did it?

Complying without giving up his hostile stance, Captain Hollis shrugs. Spits.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Y'all already know who did it! He sounds like a good friend to have.

Officer Vasquez stands far behind them, out of breath. He checks his phone. No messages. Calls PFC HAWK. No answer. No voicemail set up. Frowning, Officer Vasquez makes a phone call, walks toward others while talking.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

I'm calling for a nail technician. By referral of Sergeant Hollis. Name? Rikomi. Yes. Got a mobile job I believe only Rikomi can do. \$500 for one polish. I'll drop a pin.

Vasquez approaches Officer Musa and Captain Hollis. He gestures at them to get a status update.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

Cat out of the bag? Did he talk?

Musa just throws up his hands in disgust.

OFFICER MUSA

Nah this old man, ain't saying shit. Says he doesn't know Sam.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Wouldn't tell ya shit if I did know git. But I'm his new biggest fan.

OFFICER MUSA

He is a sympathizer.

Officer Vasquez approaches defiant Captain Hollis. Acts as if he's about to pistol whip him. Hollis doesn't flinch.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

I say we cap his ass just for that.

OFFICER MUSA

No, we shouldn't. Haven't we done enough killing today?

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Speak for yourself, Musa. Softie.
El Papi Real is just getting
started. I'll drop as many fools as
I need to make Sam a ghost.

Captain Hollis, staring down during the debate over his life,
stares back up at them.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

I don't give a fuck what y'all do
to me at this point. Make me a
martyr, the supreme architect of
the universe has my back forever.

Frozen by the terminology he recognizes, Vasquez smiles.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Supreme architect of the universe.
(impressed)
Wow, are you -- a Mason?

Captain Hollis scoffs at Vasquez.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Ya don't gotta be a Mason to
acknowledge the architect. But yeah
I used to be active in the Prince
Hall Lodge downtown.

Officer Vasquez nods, relieved.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Once a brother, always a brother.
I'm still active at the Marietta
Lodge. We have each other's backs.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

(confused)
Right.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

We shouldn't be enemies. We can
help each other, Captain, was it?

Smiling, Vasquez inches closer to the tense Captain.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

Wanna get off the street? Get your
own place? No *Mason* should be out
here. Work for us. Pay *and* perks.

Captain Hollis gulps and assesses his situation.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
Sum tells me I don't have a choice.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
Everybody has a *choice*, amigo! This
is a democracy, after all!

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
Huh. Can ya find me some pussy?
This asexual desert's killin' me.

Officer Vasquez slaps Captain Hollis on the shoulder.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
Bro, we popos get pussy galore. Why
you think we become cops?

OFFICER MUSA
That's not why I became a cop.

Vasquez turns arounds and SHUSHES Musa.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
Nobody asked you softie.

Vasquez turns back to Captain, eager for an answer.

Reluctantly, Captain Hollis shifts his weight and sighs.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
Just what exactly do y'all silly
ass crook muhfuckas need from *me*?

28

28

29

INT. CITY PARK - CENTER - DAY

29

In the park, Dahlia sets up the serving station's plates of food and gatorade cooler with a purpose. She looks over her shoulder throughout the process.

Houseless folks scattered across the park and sidewalks, rustle from dormant states guided by their hunger.

FOX, 20s, black trans-femme in a worn out dress, approaches Dahlia with excitement, eager to help.

FOX
OMG ho! My crystals were tingling
as I was suckin' a nigga off this
morning. I knew it was a sign!
Where ya been, Dahlia Face?

Dahlia smiles and gives Fox a warm hug.

DAHLIA

Been dealing with personal shit,
y'know. I can only help so much.

Fox holds Dahlia in her arms a bit longer. Nods.

FOX

I know baby, I know. No need to
explain. You slay as is, and we *all*
appreciate you out here, girl!

DAHLIA

Feels like I should be doing *more*.
I can't imagine what it's been like
out here for y'all. Since...

Fox stands back and shakes her head, laughing.

FOX

Oh since "*they*"
(finger quoting)
Nuked the shit out of DC and NYC?

Fox offers a pained smile at Dahlia and looks around at the
park and people getting closer to get a meal.

FOX (CONT'D)

Ain't shit changed. Same hunky dory
hell hole. Old dude got murdered
last night. They called him 'Master
Sergeant'. Ring any bells?

DAHLIA

Oh, Fox. Master Sergeant Nguyen?
Yes. I knew him. Oh my God.

Dahlia crosses her arms on the verge of tears. She addresses
the first diners of the day.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)

Howdy, Clarence. Looking good sir.
(speaking softly to Fox)
Are you doing OK? Can I help you
out in any extra ways? I mean --

FOX

You mean, besides finally letting a
working girl relax in your arms and
see what that thang taste like?

Dahlia laughs and smiles sheepishly while dishing up and
handing out a plate of food.

DAHLIA

Well, I like you Fox, and I'm flattered, but --

Fox crosses her arms and acts offended, scoffing.

FOX

But, y'ain't gon' lemme eat ya booty. OK. Fox ain't for everybody. But... ya got an extra room?

Dahlia dishes out more plates, smiling at those taking them.

DAHLIA

Darrell's history. Roommates moved out. Paying rent alone on a non-profit social worker salary's BS. But, last time I let you stay --

FOX

Oh baby, I won't turn tricks out ya crib again! But, the place is nice. Imagine all the money we'd make!

Dahlia shoots Fox an incredulous look. Fox grins.

FOX (CONT'D)

I'll be good. Work on my Karen-whisperer customer service voice.
(pretend phone call)
Thanks for calling Total Power, this rebranded pyramid scheme, where we all have Stockholm syndrome and hate our lives but get paid just enough to not starve and die by pretending we love worshipping soulless corporate culture. How can I help you?

Dahlia laughs affectionately. Nods.

DAHLIA

Not bad. Bet you'd get promoted. There aren't many job options now.

FOX

You'd like my way of getting fucked for money more. Might even orgasm!

DAHLIA

Uh, if you say so Fox. I'm a bit too paranoid of STDs.

FOX

Oh, most of those go away!

Dahlia looks away, seeing Sam watching her from a distance. She smiles and waves. He shakes his head and makes a cut throat gesture. Beckons her to join him.

With a more serious expression, she makes a heaping plate of food. Looks back at Fox who is lost in thought.

DAHLIA

Fox, I need your help. Hold down the booth. I'll be right back.

Dahlia begins walking away. Fox calls out excited.

FOX

Aye, Aye, Cap'n! Wait! So are we partners now? I can stay with you?

DAHLIA

Sure! And sure!

Dahlia walks off toward Sam.

30

EXT. CITY PARK - WOODED AREA - DAY

30

Dahlia approaches Sam with his plate of food. He looks at her with a sense of unease and down at the food. She hands it over and he takes it, bowing his head in gratitude.

They make prolonged eye contact. Dahlia's bright eyes only offer unconditional love. Sam nods, looks down again.

DAHLIA

It's good to see you, Sam. Six months felt like an eternity to me.

Sam nods in agreeance. He swallows, trying to find the words. His stomach growls and he looks at the food again.

SAM

I -- It's been --

Sam pauses, pained, shakes his head on verge of tears.

DAHLIA

No need to explain. Eat. Bet you're hungry. After all you been through.

Sam stares at her.

SAM
You -- You know?

Dahlia places a tender hand on Sam's arm and nods.

DAHLIA
I know enough. I know how close you
and Master Sergeant Nguyen were. He
was a great man. I'm -- so sorry.

They both look at the ground now, sharing the silence.

SAM
Found who did it. Took care of him.
But this is --
(pauses)
far from over. MS knew. Now I see.
(stares back at Dahlia)
This war. They won't stop until the
street natives are all gone.

DAHLIA
You know I'll have your back no
matter what. The others too.

Dahlia glances back at the food share table and sees Fox
playfully chatting up folks.

SAM
There's nothing you or anyone else
can do for me. I'll die out here.
I'm fine with that fact.

Dahlia turns back, outraged.

DAHLIA
You're *not* alone! Don't submit to a
defeatist attitude. We win... by
fighting side by side. Together!

SAM
If you say so, Dahlia.

DAHLIA
Yeah, I say so. I know so. Now stop
talking mad shit, sit your ass down
and eat up like a good soldier!

Sam cracks a reluctant smile and sits on the bench.

SAM
Yes, ma'am.

Sam starts eating ravenously. Smiling, Dahlia sits by him.

DAHLIA

My -- Darrell left me. Said I spent too much time trying to save the world, instead of trying to save myself, or our relationship.

Sam contemplates this, while finishing chewing a mouthful of food, and regaining life.

SAM

Well, fuck him then. A real man knows the separation between the self and the world is an illusion.

Sam shovels another mouthful of food. Dahlia blinks a few times, shakes her head in newfound appreciation and smiles.

DAHLIA

Maybe I need to go for the Buddhist monk types. But, I heard they don't like sex. Well, neither did my ex!

Sam nearly chokes on his food. He stops and swallows, nods, and looks over at Dahlia in a newfound light of potential.

SAM

It isn't all about the sex for me either. That's the easy part.

Dahlia looks Sam over without restraint.

DAHLIA

Oh, is it? Elaborate.

SAM

Yes. That's just physical. Without emotional and spiritual connection, it's just an empty exercise.

DAHLIA

Lemme guess, you're emotionally and spiritually unavailable right now?

Sam looks around confused at the change in mood.

SAM

Clearly I'm not in a place for any type of romantic relationship. The only human I loved in the world was murdered on my watch last night.

DAHLIA

Only human you loved in the world?
Why does no one else deserve your
love? It's not a finite resource.

SAM

True love I gave in the past, it's
always been weaponized against me!
(pause)
I'm wanted for M.S.'s murder now.
Since last night, I've taken the
lives of two men, with this blade --

Sam unsheathes the bloodstained tanto and Dahlia flinches.

SAM (CONT'D)

-- and I'm sure I'll kill more at
this rate, or be killed myself.
It's way too late to prove my
innocence and I've come too far to
walk away, without severing the
head of this snake sabotaging us.
(pauses)

I *like* you, Dahlia. A lot. But
shacking up with a homeless combat
vet with a fun bag of mental health
issues isn't good for *your* health.

Dahlia frowns and feels a pain in her chest. She stands.

DAHLIA

I get it, Sam. Who was she?

Sam shakes his head in confusion.

SAM

Who was who?

DAHLIA

The one that broke your heart?

Sam clams up, triggered, eyes wide upon the dirt, suppressing
another unresolved source of PTSD.

SAM

She's none of your business, Dahl.
(looks at her)
I appreciate you, more than you
know. But I can't give in to a
sensation masquerading as love,
only to end up hurting you, or see
you hurt because of me. I can't.

DAHLIA

I can.

Dahlia sighs, begins to walk away, stops.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)

I've *always* loved you. Now, more than ever, I'm willing to take on that risk. You're welcome to stay with me, at my house, where we can keep each other safe.

Sam stares at Dahlia longingly for a moment, wanting to accept the offer. He closes his eyes and shakes his head.

SAM

No thank you, Dahlia. You'll be safer if you never see me again.

Dahlia crosses her arms, on the verge of tears. She scoffs and walks away, leaving Sam alone... or so he thinks.

Captain Hollis approaches from the rear.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

God damn, Specialist, that was a dumbass rookie move!

Sam leaps up to his feet with blade drawn as Captain Hollis moves into clear sight with hands raised, laughing.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (CONT'D)

How ya gonna turn down a gal *that fine and* room and board? No one taught you the way of the cum-bum?

Sam takes a step back as Captain Hollis takes a step forward, and sits on the bench.

SAM

What do you want, man? You the next one in line to kill me?

Captain Hollis laughs, slapping his knee. Gets serious.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Kill you? Me? Nah I gotta bad back from that IED in Fallujah. No --

Captain Hollis fishes in his pocket. Sam preps in defense.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Relax Honky Blue Jeans! No stabby!

Captain Hollis raises his hands, holds a cheap burner phone.

SAM
What's the phone for?

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
It's for you! Duh!

SAM
I don't get it.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
Ya seemed a bit slow, when ya thought *I* was *Sergeant Hollis*. No time to explain. Just take it. Read the messages, and stay tuned.

Captain Hollis hands the leery Sam the phone and stands.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (CONT'D)
I saw everything. I saw what they did to your guy. They did em dirty! Now, I'm out here playing Yojimbo, if ya catch my drift.

SAM
Playing Yojimbo?

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
Man! You need to watch more old samurai movies! Anyway, I used to be a cav scout, so I might act like a goofy mug out here, but it's part of my recon, man. I'll be your eyes and ears out here, brother.

SAM
My eyes and ears work just fine, Captain Hollis.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
Yep but ya only got two of each. Everybody gotta blind spot, kid.

Captain Hollis gestures to the phone again and goes to exit.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (CONT'D)
Saved my number as "OG Hollis".

Captain Hollis exits.

Sam stares at the phone. Finishes food in a few big bites, tosses the plate in the nearby can and exits.

31 INT. VASQUEZ'S CAR - NIGHT

31

Vasquez glares out the window. Musa in the passenger seat glances over at Vasquez, uneasy. Vasquez punches the steering wheel, triggering the horn. Musa flinches, shakes his head.

OFFICER MUSA
Vasquez, chill man.

Vasquez shoots Musa a murderous look.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
Never tell me to fuckin' chill!

Musa looks straight ahead out the windshield.

OFFICER MUSA
It's just getting late again. We've been at this manhunt all day.

Vasquez scoffs at Musa in disgust.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
Ya wanna give up, huh? After one day? You think Hollis would've given up that fast if it was you?

OFFICER MUSA
He might have given up faster.
(pauses)
I'm not giving up.
(pauses)
Just wanna call it a night. Hawk never rang. You called in backup. What else can we do?

Vasquez clenches his fists to punch the horn again. Holds.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
Sam coulda ran to the hills by now.

OFFICER MUSA
And if he did, so be it. Good riddance. Out of our jurisdiction now. Nothing else to do about it.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
You don't get it! The USA is dead! We're paid by the one who runs *the world*. *That's* our jurisdiction now!

OFFICER MUSA

After the hassle of immigrating here and becoming a US citizen, I keep forgetting it's all gone.

(sighs, looks out)

Still, let's take the night off. We can only do so much. We need rest.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

We let this fucker get away, we let Hollis down. Maybe you can live with that failure, but I can't.

They sit in silence for a moment.

OFFICER MUSA

Play the next part of Hollis's instructions. It's helped so far.

Vasquez shrugs and pulls out the phone and SGT Hollis video.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Last will and testament continued.

32

INT. HOLLIS CAR - DAY

32

Sergeant Hollis sips out of a Big Gulp and fixes his hair.

SGT HOLLIS

One valuable lesson my pops taught me: that ol' divide and conquer tactic never fails. Just ask the biscuit eaters in England! Just a few small groups of armed men around the world, conquered over half the map! How else could they take India and China and make em lil baby bitches to the crown?

Sergeant Hollis stares out the window and frowns.

SGT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Of course it's only a matter of time before they catch on and have their little revolutions. Then we come up with a new way to divvy em up and put em to work for us. The almighty dollar was one thing they couldn't fight against, but even that bubble had to burst. Now--

Sergeant Hollis smiles at the camera, menacing.

SGT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Now we don't even need the dollar to keep 'em in line. Just brute force, plenty of guns, and the balls to shoot the motherfuckers. Like the good ol' days. Anybody wants to rebel against us now gets a bullet between the eyes. They don't wanna work, send em to a camp. It's simple. Zombies still on the streets we starve til they crawl on all fours for our help. They need us. We don't need them.

Sergeant Hollis reclines his seat to relax more.

SGT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

And say one of these scalawags is a tough cookie to crack, we can't get him for whatever reason, and none of the hard-up brokedown psychos on the street can get em, I have a few professionals I'd run down.

Sergeant Hollis rustles through the glove box and pulls out a folded sheet of paper, skimming through it.

SGT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Oh. This here is a good one. They call the fucker Rikomi. No idea what the hell that means, and I got no clue what the asshole looks like, no other info on em. But this Rikomi has a solid rep as a killer for the Yakuza in Tokyo. One of those ninjas or some shit doing crazy ass kung fu. 99% success rate, 99 corpses out of 100 jobs. The lone survivor was the big man upstairs. Dad was able to evade death by Rikomi's hands, thanks to his divine grace. That miracle and an unrivaled stipend was enough to convince Rikomi to stay in Atlanta in dad's stable. If Rikomi can't get the job done, no one can.

SGT Hollis holds up the paper to the camera.

SGT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Here's the number to call in case of emergency and you need a pro.

33 INT. VASQUEZ'S CAR - NIGHT

33

Vasquez and Musa look at each other.

OFFICER MUSA
Sounds legit. Gonna make the call?

Vasquez grins mischievously.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
Already did, playboy!

Vasquez cackles and punches Musa in the arm.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
All I do is win, by staying twelve
steps ahead. Called while you were
chasing down our snitch.

Musa rubs his arm and nods, impressed but also uncertain.

OFFICER MUSA
Damn, well that was smart, I guess.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
What can I say, I'm a genius.

OFFICER MUSA
I still think we should detain him.
Being judge, jury, and executioner
out here doesn't feel right to me.

Vasquez sighs and rubs his temples annoyed.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
I know you got a conscience. This
is neither the time nor place for
it. This is unsettled business.

OFFICER MUSA
Business?

Officer Vasquez shushes and shoos Musa.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
Take tonight off rookie. I got more
work to do. No rest for the wicked!

Officer Musa side-eyes Vasquez, shakes his head.

OFFICER MUSA
Alright. Be careful. Call me if
need be. I got your back, catching
this cop killer. Good night.

Musa exits.

Officer Vasquez receives a text alert to his phone.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (TEXT)
 He's in the city. Empty warehouse
 by South woods. Did what ya asked.
 Now leave me alone, shitbags!

Vasquez smiles, loads a clip into his gun and cranks the car.

34

EXT. ATLANTA DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

34

Along the trail, Sam walks silent, scanning peripherals. Movement in shadows. He pauses, crouches, unsheathes blade. Satisfied it's an animal, he continues walking.

Up ahead, a flickering flame from a garbage can lights a clearing. A figure can be seen next to it, warming hands.

Sam picks up the pace but stays in stealth mode. Hearing a noise behind him, the light from the fire reveals another shadowy figure to the rear. Frozen, Sam rubs his sleep-deprived eyes and confirms the figure is still there.

Sam continues forward, toward the fire and its figure.

Nearing the garbage can fire, Sam sees the warehouse. Racking his mind for a change in plans, he reapplies his hood and approaches the fire and stranger with back turned.

SAM
 Howdy stranger.
 (approaches slowly)
 Nice night for a fire, even if it
 is hot as balls. Mind if I join?

The hooded stranger at the fire turns just enough to acknowledge Sam's presence and nods.

STRANGER
 (gruff voice)
 Why not? Fire is one force of
 nature that doesn't discriminate.

Sam moves in, concealing his face, turning toward stranger from the rear. He puts his hands out to feel the warmth.

Sam tries to make the campfire stranger, still cloaked in shadow. The distant shadowy figure draws nearer.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Running from something? Or someone?
Must be one of those nights.

Sam breathes nervously and nods.

SAM

It's one of those lives.

Sam tries to look at the man's face, who feels familiar.

STRANGER

Trust me, I know all about it.

SAM

Feels like I know you. Your voice.
Have we met out here before?

STRANGER

You only think you know me.

Stranger moves into light to reveal an odd smile. RIKOMI, 50s, is the spitting image of Master Sergeant.

SAM

What the fuck? Master Sergeant? No.
Not another delusion. I keep seeing
you alive again, but this is -- you
are different. I've lost my mind.

RIKOMI

Life may be one great delusion, but
I'm as real as anything. And you--
(pauses, laughs)
--didn't lose your mind. Can't lose
what wasn't yours to begin with.

SAM

But -- how can this be real?

Rikomi laughs and pauses as the figure who had been tailing Sam enters the light. It is Captain Hollis, doing cut throat gesture frantically. Sam's speechless at the surreal moment.

Captain Hollis turns his hands into a megaphone.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

You didn't get my texts? Run, Sam!
That's him! That's --

Captain Hollis is cut short by the flying dagger thrown by Rikomi. Captain Hollis ducks it enough to avoid death, while his face suffers a gash.

On the ground, Captain Hollis yells bloody murder at the sight of his own blood.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (CONT'D)
 Oh shit! This motherfucker done cut
 me! Oh, that's a lotta blood bruh!

Captain Hollis panics. Faints.

Rikomi smiles a sinister smile.

RIKOMI
 I'll introduce myself, thank you.

Turns back to Sam, who is creeped out by the monster's grin.

RIKOMI (CONT'D)
 I may have the same DNA as your
 mentor, but, he --
 (to Captain Hollis)
 -- was correct. You should've run.

Rikomi draws a katana. Sam flinches but waits.

Rikomi holds blade over flames. Sam is paralyzed.

SAM
 I can't believe this... nightmare.
 (on the verge of tears)
 This ain't real. I won't fight you.

Rikomi shrugs. Holds the red hot blade up, satisfied.

RIKOMI
 OK then. Thanks for the easy money!

Rikomi swings the blade at a horrified Sam, who instinctively ducks and parries back, narrowly escaping the second jab.

Rikomi laughs. He holds the blade over the flames again.

SAM
 Don't do this. There's real good in
 you, even if you're not the *real*
 Master Sergeant. The spirit-of-the-
 thing-itself is alive in you.

RIKOMI
 Huh? Spirit of what? The *real*
 Master Sergeant? Ha! Hate to be the
 bearer of bad news, but there's no
 such thing.

Rikomi lunges with the blade. Sam ducks and rolls out of the way of the blade. On all fours, he finally draws his blade.

SAM

Don't know what kind of abomination you are, but you're a liar. Master Sergeant was real. My best friend.

RIKOMI

Or was he a clone himself?

Rikomi strikes a few times, this time, their blades connect.

SAM

No way in hell.

RIKOMI

Perhaps he was your handler? Since your time as a soldier didn't end when you got your dishonorable?

SAM

You're just fucking with my head!

Sam plays defense but holds his ground when their blades lock up and they stand face to face.

RIKOMI

No reason to do that. I can easily kill you in combat.

SAM

This is psychological warfare. All lies! I got out years ago.

Their blades free up from locking and Sam ducks a strike aimed at his neck. Sam starts to overcome his aversion to killing this man, as rage fills him. Rikomi laughs, swinging his blade just for the hell of it.

RIKOMI

You got out of the military. The military never got out of you!

Sam retreats a few steps dodging Rikomi's advances, slashing and hacking as if he was an artist painting a portrait. The dipping and rolling Sam, narrowly avoids the damage, instinctually ready for this to his surprise.

SAM

Stop! This is enough.

RIKOMI
It's only enough once I serve your
head on a pike to my new master.

SAM
Don't force me to kill you.

Rikomi smirks, shakes head. He is winded and surprised.

RIKOMI
Don't you wonder where you actually
learned these skills you possess?

Rikomi delivers a near death blow to Sam who steps out of the way as if he were a graceful matador.

RIKOMI (CONT'D)
How could you learn all this from
some old coot in a wheelchair?

Sam thinks about this but rapidly remembers a scene with Master Sergeant.

35 EXT. BROWNWOOD PARK - PAVILION - DAY

35

Master Sergeant reads a certain part of the book.

MASTER SERGEANT
Oh yeah, I almost forgot this part.
Do not hesitate. Never let the
enemy sense your hesitation. This
is fear. This is weakness. Yell,
scream like an animal if you have
to. Strike fear into the enemy with
your wild spirit to kill the enemy.

36 EXT. ATLANTA DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

36

Sam enters a frenzy of screaming like a maniac, charging Rikomi like a boar, hitting combos with the tanto. He slices Rikomi's arm, who leaps back, holding the wound in awe.

RIKOMI
Lucky sonuvabitch! I played nice
with you, pup, but now, I'll
unleash the whole underworld upon
you and gut you like a sea bass.

Abruptly, Captain Hollis swings a tree branch at Rikomi's head. Rikomi ducks and blocks another strike from Hollis.

Sam dips his tanto blade into the fire, scooping embers.

The tree branch smacks Rikomi's arm, but he catches it. He disarms Captain Hollis and moves to cut down the unarmed man.

SAM

Hey! Rikomi!

Rikomi turns toward Sam. Sam flings embers from his sword into Rikomi's eyes. Rikomi screams, blinded.

RIKOMI

Ah!

(swinging wildly)

Fuck you! Think you're special?

Sam thrusts tanto into Rikomi's abdomen.

RIKOMI (CONT'D)

You're a tool like the rest of us!
More soldiers will come for you!

SAM

That's enough of you. You sure as
shit ain't Master Sergeant.

Rikomi collapses.

RIKOMI

No one is Master Sergeant.

Rikomi stares into the black sky.

SAM

More lies? Even on your deathbed?

RIKOMI

I remember -- all the *other* times.
Death's nothing. A blink of an eye.

Rikomi dies.

Sam blinks, breathless. He sits down by the body of Rikomi, closing his open eyes.

Captain Hollis approaches, looking down also dumbfounded.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

That was some crazy ass shit.

Sam, looks up at Captain Hollis, and a comedic look surfaces from the darkness of the moment.

SAM

You really hit a professional
hitman with a tree branch?

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

What can I say? *Nature's my weapon!*

Captain Hollis gives Sam a hand up. He acknowledges that Sam is bleeding from a slice under the ribs.

Upon seeing it, Sam has a wide-eyed reaction and clutches at it, gasping. He groans.

SAM

Didn't feel it til I looked at it.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Seeing is believing, or something
about quantum physics and reality
influenced by the observer?

Captain Hollis looks at the wound in the firelight.

SAM

How bad is it, Cap'n?

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

You need stitches but you'll be
fine. Say, we best dip, before --

They are frozen by the loud Officer Vasquez in the distance.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (O.S.)

An eye for an eye, pendejo! Haven't
you ever heard of Hammurabi's code?

END OF FIRE

CHAPTER 4: WIND

37 EXT. ATLANTA DIRT ROAD - NIGHT 37

Sam is distracted by a storm that seems to cover the night sky above. His mind wanders off in a daze.

38 EXT. BROWNWOOD PARK - PAVILION - DAY 38

Master Sergeant winces as Sam tries to cut his boot off over a swollen foot.

MASTER SERGEANT

The fuckin' gout certainly didn't make my feet smell better. Sorry.

Sam holds his breath but shrugs and cracks a smile.

SAM

No worries, Master Sergeant.
(pulls, strains)
Sure I'd want some help if tables were turned and my foot was stuck.

Master Sergeant laughs.

MASTER SERGEANT

When you're my age and need help, all you'll have to help you are zombies, aliens and robots!

EXT. ATLANTA DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Captain Hollis HISSES and gestures for Sam to recede back into cover. They hide behind some rubble.

Officer Vasquez enters the clearing and sees Rikomi's corpse.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Holy shit.

Vasquez rushes to the corpse and kicks it to see if it's still alive. He holds the phone up and looks at the sky.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

OK, Musa, I'll have to continue with this voice message later so I can call a new hitter. I think it's time for some overkill.

Vasquez gets a new final thought to share.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
 And by the way, I know you hate
 listening to my voice messages, but
 this is the easiest way to
 communicate big ideas! It's faster
 than texting. Get used to it!

He ends the voice message and tries to exit, but fucks up.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
 Ah shit. I hit send. Oh well.

Vasquez sits on an area off the cut, near to the hiding place
 of Sam and Captain Hollis.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
 Big Bro? Jeremy Hollis referred ya.
 (pauses, smiles)
 I heard you were that motherfucker
 to call when the grim reaper ain't
 cuttin' it. You on call tonight?
 (pauses)
 Good. His name is Samuel Creek.
 Specialist. Served in the First
 Water War. He's turned the last
 merc into a fresh corpse. That
 means he hasn't gotten far.

39 INT. COFFIN - CONTINUOUS

39

Unseen man in a tight space lit by blacklight, looking as if
 he is buried alive, smiles, so that we only see gold fangs.

BIG BRO
 Should've called me first. Coulda
 saved your bottom-rung fall guys.
 (opens his eyes)
 I ain't cheap. Money is worthless.
 I'll take him out tonight if you
 can get me a battle tank.

40 EXT. ATLANTA DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

40

Officer Vasquez is baffled, stuttering.

OFFICER VASQUEZ
 Uh -- did you say you wanted a
 tank? Like a full gas tank to get
 here? Or one with a cannon on it?
 (MORE)

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

(pauses)

I don't think that's possible.

41 INT. COFFIN - NIGHT 41

Big Bro scoffs.

BIG BRO

Then me slaughtering Sam is not possible. Good night.

Big Bro moves to end the call.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (O.S.)

Wait!

42 EXT. ATLANTA DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS 42

Officer Vasquez sighs. Shakes his head, not believing this.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

I'll get a fuckin' tank man! Or I know where you can get one easy. The armory has an old guard on the graveyard shift. Sleeps on duty.

43 INT. HUMAN COFFIN - CONTINUOUS 43

Big Bro smiles. His bright eyes open.

BIG BRO

Consider Sam a poltergeist.

CLICK.

44 EXT. ATLANTA DIRT ROAD - NIGHT 44

Officer Vasquez looks at the ended call. Sighs. He plays with his phone as a distraction. Pulls up Sergeant Hollis video.

45 INT. HOLLIS CAR - DAY 45

Sergeant Hollis straightens, looks at the camera for more than a creepy silence.

SERGEANT HOLLIS

Those bastards, the commie Muslims, and all the other third world savages.

(MORE)

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

They thought they could go blow up our great nation's capital and we would just disappear.

Sergeant Hollis sheds tears thinking about it.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Well, obviously we're still here. We aren't going anywhere. You, watching this, are my brother. I believed in law and order, more than anything. God knows I wasn't perfect. I may be going to hell.

Sergeant Hollis stares out the window in fright.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

But at the end of the day, that doesn't matter. While I was here, I did my best to protect law and order, to spare my family from the evils of the world, and fight alongside my best friends, the bravest police officers I know. Y'all joined me on an impossible mission to clean up this city. You faced the darkness of mankind and entered the unknown, knowing you could easily die. You fought for something bigger than yourself.

Sergeant Hollis closes his eyes, as if in a trance.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Soon, the one true God will return to this earth. The chosen vessel is already among us. My father. Maybe that makes me Jesus! Me? Jesus?

Sergeant Hollis laughs at the ridiculousness but also believes it, stopping with a serious look into the lens.

46

EXT. ATLANTA DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

46

Vasquez ends the video. He places his face in his palms. Suddenly, he lifts his head up and dials another number.

The phone in Sam's pocket RINGS. Captain Hollis and Sam stare at each other in horror.

Confused, Officer Vasquez twists around to identify Sam and Captain Hollis there. Before he can hop up and draw his gun, Sam is there with blade drawn to his neck.

SAM

Don't move, unless you want to end
up as a brain in a jar.

Officer Vasquez raises his hands. Nods while cursing.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

You must be a lucky man. Always in
the right place at the right time.

SAM

Whether it's luck, fate, or
coincidences in a state of chaos,
I'm no longer questioning it.

Officer Vasquez howls with laughter. Tries to move but Sam
tightens blade against his neck.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Start questioning, putito!

SAM

Why couldn't y'all just fuck off?

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Why? Ya don't remember our training
together do you? How you went AWOL?

Captain Hollis stands up, confused. He remembers something
too, but puts his finger up to gather details of the memory.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Wait a minute --

SAM

Went AWOL? I never walked out on
the Army before my discharge.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Who said anything about the Army?
(looking back, smirking)
You were never in the Army. They're
weak as fuck now, anyway. They just
get used as a filtration system to
find the higher calibre warriors.

SAM

I was a soldier in the US Army.
You're fucking with me, man!

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

I -- knew both of y'all.
(pauses, finger up)
Before this street shit out here.
(MORE)

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (CONT'D)

(eyes closed)

I was a different person there. I recruited both y'all muhfuckas. I thought it was a fucked up dream.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Nope. You were our commander in the legion of Total Power. We all went to the Amazon together to secure the water pipeline construction.

SAM

Why don't we remember this shit?

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

I do remember, now. We did a lotta killin' down there.

(pauses, pained)

I came back home and tried to get out into the world and write a book telling what I saw down there.

(pauses)

They black bagged me, took me to an all white room with the light always on 24/7. They -- hooked me up to some machine that changed my memories, my personality, identity.

(staring angry at Vasquez)

Twisted fucks! Who am I?

Officer Vasquez laughs with an uncomfortable air.

OFFICER VASQUEZ

Some PMC POS like the rest of us!

Vasquez looks at his watch.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

And we don't tolerate traitors. So in a few minutes, you'll both be a couple of John Does in body bags.

Locked in a standstill, Sam becomes bewildered by the additions to the revelation. Captain Hollis becomes angry.

Officer Vasquez yawns.

OFFICER VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

Actually? I don't feel like helping the psycho killer on his way here steal a tank tonight.

(lowering arms slightly)

So might as well take care of y'all myself, free of charge.

Officer Vasquez reaches for his gun and draws it. Before he can turn and raise it to Sam, Sam instinctively lunges and cuts Officer Vasquez's throat.

Officer Vasquez bleeds out on the ground, trying to work out some final words but failing in a gurgle.

Captain Hollis and Sam stand over the body in a numb shock.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
Goddamn, son! These streets fucked!

Captain Hollis glances over at Sam, who is still in shock.

SAM
My whole life is a lie.

Captain Hollis puts a hand on Sam's shoulder.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
Nah bro, you're the truth.

SAM
How would you know? You're basically in the same boat as me.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
I know because, I'm the truth.
(smirks)
They may try to erase our identity, but that's only surface level. I'm still as real as it gets, and as they say, real recognize real.

Captain Hollis looks down at the bodies.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (CONT'D)
Can't say the same for them. They chose their side. Chose their fate.

SAM
Feels like I'm so deep in muddy water, can't tell which way is up.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
Feels. Least ya still feel sum!

SAM
I don't know where to go now.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS
You act like you knew before!
(pauses)
(MORE)

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (CONT'D)

As if we had anywhere left to turn.
Well, you do, anyway.

SAM

I do? You know something I don't?

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

That kind hearted dime Dahlia
begged you to join the sleepover!
I'd run fast to her warm bed. ASAP!

Sam shudders. Looks at the blood on his hands. Shakes head.

SAM

Nah, I can't do that to her.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

What? Yes, you can.

Sam stifles laughter, inspects Captain Hollis with concern.

SAM

What about you?

Captain Hollis chuckles and tips his hat.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

I'm gonna get as far away as I can
from these two peas in a pod.
(pauses, looks both ways)
Starting now!

Captain Hollis throws up the deuces and starts sprinting out.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Sullong, Sam! See ya round town!

Sam exhales every ounce of air, not wanting to move.

SAM

Godspeed sir.

Sam moves to exit. Vasquez's phone rings. Sam freezes.
Officer Musa enters, using his phone as a tracker.

They make eye contact. Sam sprints. Officer Musa draws gun.

OFFICER MUSA

Freeze, Sam! Stay put!

Officer Musa fires a round and misses as Sam disappears.

OFFICER MUSA (CONT'D)

Dammit, man!

Musa sees the corpses of Officer Vasquez and Rikomi on the ground. He holsters his gun and runs to Officer Vasquez.

OFFICER MUSA (CONT'D)
Fuck! Vasquez! No, man, no!

In tears, Musa shakes Officer Vasquez in vain.

OFFICER MUSA (CONT'D)
We're partners, Vasquez! Why
couldn't you wait for me?

Musa sits up, in shock. Wipes tears and clears his nose. Fishes cigarettes out of Vasquez's pocket. Lights one up, sitting by his body. Exhales smoke.

OFFICER MUSA (CONT'D)
Now look at you. Leaving me as the
lone wolf. The last cop standing.

Officer Musa fishes in Officer Vasquez's pockets and pulls out the two phones. He uses Sergeant Hollis's phone to play the rest of the post-mortem instructions.

INT. DAHLIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dahlia and Fox sit together on the couch, where they sip wine and smoke a joint amidst laughter.

With the joint to her lips, Fox cracks up and tries to hold Dahlia's hands, showing her a secret handshake.

DAHLIA
The hell you tryin' to do?

FOX
This is the secret shake to enter
my fave sex dungeon. You'd love it!
First, ya need to get on the level!

Fox goes to show a stoned Dahlia how to slowly dap hands,

FOX (CONT'D)
It goes dap, then to rocket ship --
no, you're the flickering flames!

-- the pointer-finger of one person (Fox) goes straight up, while Dahlia's fingers do jazz hand flickering flames connected to the bottom of the pointer.

FOX (CONT'D)
Whee! We're going to the moon,
Dahlia! You and me, baby!

DAHLIA

I always thought I'd thrive on another planet!

FOX

You'd thrive anywhere! You're doing great on this planet. Look at ya!

DAHLIA

Yeah, I don't know. I'd give it all up for real happiness, a true purpose, a life with love in it.

They start the secret sex cult handshake from the top.

FOX

I could give you purpose on the streets, but the other stuff? Meh.

Dahlia looks at the worn out smile of Fox and sighs.

DAHLIA

How'd we as a society get so lost?

FOX

Not sure. How you stomach working for Total Power? But hey, more power to ya, sis. I'm grateful!

Up top they lock hands. There's a subtle growing of intimacy triggered as Fox lowers Dahlia's hand down to eye-level.

FOX (CONT'D)

This is how it ends. Don't forget!

Fox works Dahlia's hands so when both their hands are interlocked Fox pries them open to look through the hole.

FOX (CONT'D)

Could be a butthole or a keyhole, but look through it to get inside.

Fox flips two OK symbols upside down to show their eyes.

FOX (CONT'D)

Then do this, to hide your true identity. We can't afford those Illuminati sex cult masks.

Dahlia mimics and they both look at each other masked and laugh. Fox makes a move and kisses Dahlia gently. Dahlia is shocked but not fully opposed to it, looking into Fox's eyes.

A knock at the door startles them both from romance.

Dahlia jumps to her feet and Fox follows suit. Crouching and nearing the door, Dahlia grabs a baseball bat near the door.

Fox scrambles, grabs a gymnastics statue and holds it by the gymnast, using marble base as a hammer head. Dahlia gets up to check the keyhole but Fox stops her and checks instead.

DAHLIA

Who is it?

FOX

It's that weird street dude, they say killed the old guy last night.

DAHLIA

What? Sam, you mean?

Dahlia jumps up and checks. She shakes her head at Fox.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)

He didn't do it, Fox! He needs help. I told him to stay here!

FOX

Wow, so I wasn't the only one?

Dahlia shrugs, sighs, and unlocks the door.

DAHLIA

We all need some kinda help these days, Fox. You know I love you!

Dahlia opens the door.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)

Hey Sam! Come in!

Dahlia gestures the exhausted Sam inside. Sam enters with a dazed look in his eye. He nods at Dahlia and Fox as his vision blurs and he collapses on the ground.

EXT. BROWNWOOD PARK - PAVILION - DAY

Master Sergeant smokes. Sam is under some kind of hypnosis.

Master Sergeant tsks. Ashes.

MASTER SERGEANT

Have you been able to forget who you are yet? Or what you've done?

Sam snaps out of the trance to look at Master Sergeant.

SAM

Who I am -- What I've done?

MASTER SERGEANT

You're a cold blooded killer, Sam.

SAM

I did it for my country. I thought.

MASTER SERGEANT

You thought? No, the war you think you fought in, those delusions are manmade. Not for any country.

SAM

I don't understand.

MASTER SERGEANT

We aren't meant to understand.

Master Sergeant points a finger at Sam to get his attention.

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)

You're meant to kill, but not for *them*. You kill for us. All us *human* survivors out here. And you're only getting started.

Sam shakes his head.

SAM

I remember another life. Don't know which to trust, or if I can trust anyone or anything as truth.

MASTER SERGEANT

To trust *any* other person is to assume they will put *your* best interest above their own. Unwise!

Master Sergeant takes another drag.

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)

And what makes you think, the life you remember and the life *I know* you lived, aren't both real enough to shape your mind? In both realities, you killed people.

SAM

All nightmares. Is it too late now for me to have a pleasant dream?

MASTER SERGEANT

It is, if you don't wake up! Sam!

INT. DAHLIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dahlia holds a wet towel over Sam's forehead. She uses a rag to clean and stop bleeding from the slice between his ribs.

Fox stands in the background, arms crossed, pouting, pacing.

DAHLIA

Sam! Sam! Wake up! Look at me!

Dahlia looks back at Fox who shrugs.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)

He's lost a lot of blood. I need to keep him awake to do the stitches.

FOX

Stitches? This is such a buzzkill!
I told you this guy is trouble!

DAHLIA

Please, Fox! Can you run up to my bedroom and get the big bag under my bed? He needs our help. Now!

FOX

Okay, sis. Anything for you!

Dahlia turns back to Sam and wipes his face with the towel. She kisses him on the forehead with eyes closed.

INT. SAM'S CHILDHOOD APARTMENT - DAY - FLASHBACK

SAM'S GRANDMOTHER, 60s, Native American woman, kisses YOUNG SAM, 10, sick with fever, upon the forehead. She says a prayer for him under her breath. She looks at him and smiles.

GRANDMOTHER

You are protected, Sam. Great Spirit lives through you. This troubled land needs you.

She lifts her head higher and realizes JOHNNY, 13, Sam's Older brother, is watching them, jealous.

JOHNNY

What about me? Does the Great Spirit live through me?

Grandmother offers a pained smile to Johnny.

GRANDMOTHER

Yes. Time will tell what all lives
through you, Mr. Johnny Black Bear.

She tenderly touches his shoulder as he gets moody.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

We all have a purpose here, dear.
Yours will be great. This troubled
land needs you just as much as Sam.

She holds Sam's hand and gives Johnny a hug.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

And your grandmother loves ya both!

Johnny smiles, but retains a sinister look in his eye that he
directs down to the half-conscious Sam.

INT. DAHLIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jumping to present moment, Sam stirs while Dahlia still
kisses his forehead with eyes closed.

Fox enters and looks disappointed, dropping the bag for
Dahlia at the couch and disappearing into the kitchen. Dahlia
looks after Fox and back at Sam having a bad dream.

DAHLIA

(to Fox)

No need for this drama! You both
have a safe place here with me!

Fox sticks her head back into the room, doe-eyed and
overcoming the bad mood with a thawing out smile.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. SAM'S CHILDHOOD APARTMENT - DAY

Grandmother is startled by the DOORBELL RING as Young Sam
returns to consciousness by the sound. Young Sam looks at
Johnny in confusion. Grandmother stands and walks to door.

As soon as she opens the door, a GUNSHOT erupts.

INT. DAHLIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The DOORBELL RINGS.

Both Dahlia and Fox look at each other, breathless. Fox grabs the gymnastics statue. They both realize Sam is already on his feet, focusing on both of them and the room.

THE DOORBELL RINGS.

SAM

I got this one.

Sam draws his tanto.

DAHLIA

Sam, you're not going out there!

Sam offers a tired smile and exits.

Fox looks over at Dahlia and shakes her head.

FOX

Told ya that motherfucker was nuts.

Fox stares with a surreal glaze at the statue in her hand. Looks around the room for something.

FOX (CONT'D)

Bitch, it's the low-key post-apocalypse and you're a single female. You don't own a gun?

DAHLIA

I still have enough faith in humanity to not need one.

Fox looks deeply offended.

FOX

Dumbest shit I've ever heard.

EXT. DAHLIA'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH

Sam inches silently into the night and the purple-lit porch. WIND BLOWING and WINDCHIMES CHIMING are the only noises heard as Sam closes the door behind him.

Sam scans the scene. He breathes in a remembered cadence to combat fear. Using the tanto to clear the air ahead of him, he moves to get an eye at the front yard and the street.

With one eye to his rear, he covers a 360 degree view while moving back to the door and to the edge of porch. Leaning a bit over the railing to get a good look at something that appears to be moving, a cat flees into darker shadows.

Pulling back over the rail, Sam's side-eye catches the sheen of a blade hurtling toward him. He ducks and rolls to corner railing. Blade comes down hard, sticking into wood railing.

BIG BRO, 30s, gym rat cyborg with gold fangs, laughs and yanks the large Bowie knife from the wood railing, advancing.

Sam shakes out a chill upon initial eye contact with Big Bro, and grips his tanto tighter.

SAM

Do I know you?

BIG BRO

No. You can't know me.

Big Bro switches up his blade to be pointed downward and lunges full-force at a cornered Sam.

BIG BRO (CONT'D)

Not til ya know death by my knife.

Sam meets the offensive strike with blade to blade contact.

Big Bro surges, knocking Sam back. Of a few slices from Big Bro, Sam ducks all but one, which slices his forearm.

Shouting in pain, Sam retreats a few steps from Big Bro's eager lunges and rising satisfaction. Sam feels the blood.

SAM

You almost cut a vein, you bastard!

In a sudden death rage, he hacks and slashes back at Big Bro, who laughs at the challenge, deflecting several shots with ease, before Sam slices Big Bro's pinky off.

BIG BRO

Ah! My finger! Ya fuck!

In an adrenaline fueled rage, the two blades clash and lock up, as they fight to keep the fire in their eyes. Sam looks down and notices the tiny dreamcatcher charm on Big Bro's neck. Looking up into his eyes, he realizes who it is.

SAM

Johnny?

This reduces murderous intent as Big Bro is triggered by the use of his first name, while having trouble remembering who that person was and who this other man before him is.

BIG BRO
Johnny? Is that my name?

Big Bro looks down in contemplation and shoves off from Sam, holding his severed pinky.

BIG BRO (CONT'D)
Haven't heard *that* name in so long.
No longer need a name. *BIG BRO!* And
My number suffices now.

Sam steps back, holding his bloody arm and wincing at it.

SAM
If you say so. I can't remember
much, but I remember you. You're my
big brother. We grew up together.

BIG BRO
I lived in a home. I try to forget.

SAM
Me too. Grandmother was killed in
front of us. They split us up. You
enlisted after aging out --

Sam strains to remember his own lost memories.

SAM (CONT'D)
-- But I thought you died! I forgot
for so long too, but I just dreamed
of you and Grandmother. That night.

Big Bro is frozen for a moment, and his eyes light up.

BIG BRO
Sam? Damn. It is you!

Big Bro embraces Sam in a bear hug. Sam groans but faintly returns the hug with back pats.

BIG BRO (CONT'D)
They were gonna gimme a tank if I
killed ya, but I like this outcome!

Big Bro lets go, spotting his pinky and picking it up.

Sam loses color in his face, and wobbles a bit without an equilibrium. He leans against the rail.

SAM
I lost too much blood in 24 hours.

BIG BRO
Don't ask me fanon. I'm tapped too.

Officer Musa enters into the front yard with gun drawn.

OFFICER MUSA
Just the two mercenary brothers I
was hoping to find tonight!

Officer Musa lowers the gun and smiles.

Sam passes out.

Big Bro gives Musa a thumbs up on the pinky-less hand.

BIG BRO
Lost a pinky, but we got him.
Which means that tank is mine.

Officer Musa approaches, holding up the phone.

OFFICER MUSA
First and foremost, there's
something we should all see.

INT. DAHLIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As Officer Musa and Big Bro struggle to carry Sam into the house, Dahlia is already in motion, getting some of her medical supplies prepared out of a larger kit.

She set up blood bags connected by tubes, and injects herself with a needle that begins filling one bag with her blood.

BIG BRO
(staring at needle)
You know what you're doing?

DAHLIA
(focused)
I was a combat nurse in San Juan.
(pauses)
I don't make that past job known.

Sam lies unconscious on the couch. Big Bro and Musa step back. Dahlia moves in to inject a needle and tube into Sam's vein. She lets more of her blood flow into him.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)
Also, I'm type O positive. So
anyone can take my blood.
(thinking)
(MORE)

DAHLIA (CONT'D)

That must be why so many vampire
fuck boys have been drawn to me!

An extended speechless moment ensues of transfusing a pint of
blood into Sam, Officer Musa remembers the task at hand.

OFFICER MUSA

I watched the last part of Sergeant
Hollis's long-winded video. Here --

Officer Musa gets his phone out to play the video.

Dahlia sighs and breaks down the assembly and leaves the
room. The FAUCET RUNS in the kitchen sink.

After giving him bedroom eyes, Fox gathers courage to speak
to Big Bro.

FOX

Hey, you're Big Bro, right?

BIG BRO

That's just what people who don't
know me call me, which is everyone.

Fox laughs loudly at this misanthropic behavior, as if it was
the cutest thing she has ever seen.

FOX

Oh my God! I thought so.
(puts sensual hand on him)
You don't know me, but I know you!
We go to the same sex dungeon!

BIG BRO

(sheepishly)
Oh, right. I try not to talk much
about that stuff when I'm not down
there, living in the moment.

FOX

Like wow! Small world, right?

BIG BRO

It could be bigger.

FOX

That's what *she said!*

BIG BRO

That's what *who said?* Guarantee
she's a liar!

Officer Musa points to his phone, impatient.

OFFICER MUSA
Guys? Please. Pay attention!

Dahlia returns with a rag. Applies it to Sam's forehead.

Sam begins to stir and opens his eyes, looking at all of them. Officer Musa is happy Sam is awake and pushes play.

INT. HOLLIS CAR - DAY

Sergeant Hollis is in the middle of a crying fit. Stops.

SERGEANT HOLLIS
Of course, I hope my wife knows I
loved her. If she doesn't know,
please tell her I said that in this
final farewell video.

Sergeant Hollis blows his nose and straightens his posture. He looks more hopeful and focused into the camera.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)
My friends. I hope you enjoy heaven
on earth that comes when my father,
The Divine Ruler, opens the channel
between his body and all worlds, to
allow the gods to use him as true
earthly king, guiding our society
back into more righteous times.

Sergeant Hollis himself seems to enter a trance.

SERGEANT HOLLIS (CONT'D)
He'll do this by making a mass
offering of a thousand souls, the
dirty street dwellers we amassed in
the detention centers beneath the
Total Power building downtown.

(pauses)

This is nothing new. It's tradition
that predates human history. We are
protecting and upholding the ways
of those angels who created human
civilization in the first place!
They won't die in vain.

(smiles)

I won't die in vain either. We
sacrifice in order to bring in the
new age of enlightenment and peace,
through Total Power and its
prosperity. I may not live to see
it, but I can see it in my mind:
the pure paradise promised!

Sergeant Hollis beams wide and cheesy at the camera, winks.

INT. DAHLIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The group finishes the video and sits in silent aftermath.

SAM
Well, fuck.

FOX
Yep. I'll say.

Officer Musa puts the phone away and stares at Sam.

OFFICER MUSA
You killed the Divine Ruler's only
heir, Sergeant Hollis. He gave me
direct orders to deliver you alive.

Dahlia and Big Bro hop to their feet simultaneously.

DAHLIA
No one's taking him anywhere.

BIG BRO
I concur. Wholeheartedly.

Sam looks at each individual among them and back at Musa.

SAM
Feels like my lonely days are gone.

BIG BRO
We got ourselves a squad.

SAM
Now we need a plan.

Sam extends his wrists to Musa, to be handcuffed.

SAM (CONT'D)
It's time to take me in. And up to
the top of the ivory tower.

END OF WIND

CHAPTER 5: NO-THING

EXT. RURAL DRIVEWAY - DAY

Grandmother drives the old truck down a bumpy dirt road. Johnny sits in the passenger seat, playing with his toy car and little green Army man driving. Young Sam in the middle tries to see over the wheel, curious, frustrated.

SAM

I'm not having fun. And I don't know where we're going.

JOHNNY

Oh boo hoo, whiney hiney baby! You shoulda brought toys! Duh!

Grandmother looks over at them both, annoyed.

GRANDMOTHER

Johnny, watch your tongue before I feed it to a crow. Not everyone is as easily entertained as you!

(to Sam)

I'm not your hired entertainment, or chauffeur taxi driver! I'm your Grandmother! And I told you, Sam --

She looks down at him, smiles and ruffles his hair.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

We're goin' to the powwow! To have some fun! Let loose!

SAM

Oh.

Grandmother frowns, concerned.

GRANDMOTHER

Too good for powwows now?

SAM

I don't feel like I belong there.

GRANDMOTHER

You'll *always* belong here. This is our home. Nothing will change that.

(pauses)

At the powwows, we all care for each other. They care about you.

(MORE)

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

You share an unbreakable connection
with these folks. It's an honor!

Sam sticks his head out the sunroof. Laughs. Returns.

SAM

I think I like being alone, more
than being around strangers. And I
like the animals more than people.

(pauses)

I share an unbreakable connection
with foxes in the forest. And owls.

Grandmother laughs and pinches Sam's cheek, while Johnny
drives his car over Sam's forehead.

GRANDMOTHER

My little shaman. You're going to
make a fine freedom fighter
someday! I reckon both of you will!

(flicking both of them to
get their attention)

Just remember whoever survives,
writes history. You can and will
endure the worst of times, and live
to see heaven, here on earth.

INT. SKYSCRAPER - LOBBY - DAY

With Sam, Dahlia and Fox all zip-tied, Big Bro and Officer
Musa march their captives through the entrance and to the
front desk. The FRONT DESK AGENT, 50s, eyeballs them all and
looks down at his sheets of paper.

BIG BRO

Tell the big man upstairs that I
come bearing gifts.

Officer Musa glances at the mercenary, annoyed.

OFFICER MUSA

Hey asshole, you didn't do it
alone, remember?

BIG BRO

Oh yeah, well you were there.

The Front Desk Agent looks them all over again.

FRONT DESK AGENT

So you put aside your differences,
one on salary and one on contract,
and brought us three stragglers?

BIG BRO

Something like that, yes. These strays put up a helluva fight.

FOX

You're lucky I didn't get a chance to scissor your balls off... yet. Not like you need them.

BIG BRO

Shut up, trick.

OFFICER MUSA

We need to deliver these two femme fatales to the holding cells, and take this punk up to the boss, who wants to behead him himself.

The Front Desk Agent clicks his tongue and laughs.

FRONT DESK AGENT

Heh heh! Well, there may be a space on the floor in those smelly cramped cages they can sleep, but they won't be staying long.

DAHLIA

What do you mean, are the prisoners held here being transferred?

The Front Desk agent signs them in on different sheets.

FRONT DESK AGENT

You ask a lotta questions for a corpse. Don't worry bout it.

(looking up at Big Bro and Officer Musa)

You two can split up, you, the merc, Old Bro, take the dirty hippie upstairs. You -- Musa? Take the gals on down to the dungeon!

Dahlia leans forward upon the man's desk, placing her front-tied hands on the surface for emphasis.

DAHLIA

No! Please. There has to be another place, it isn't constitutional. It's a human rights abuse!

FRONT DESK AGENT

Human Rights? No such thing! The Divine Ruler doesn't need a piece of paper to tell him what to do.

Officer Musa escorts Dahlia and Fox to a freight elevator to the left. Big Bro yanks on the resistant arm of Sam to get him to the regular elevator. Fox whispers to Dahlia.

FOX

Was that acting, or did you really expect a different response from that pencil pushing chode?

DAHLIA

Nothing surprises me anymore. I expect disappointment. But he wasn't expecting me to snag these.

Dahlia holds up scissors and Musa panics.

OFFICER MUSA

What? Put those down. Stop talking. You're gonna blow this.

DAHLIA

Just wanted to prove I could get free, even if this wasn't staged.

The elevator opens. Musa gives them a gentle push, glancing over at the Front Desk Agent who is now watching him and raising the walkie-talkie to his mouth. Musa steps in and frantically punches the button until the doors close.

On the other side, the Front Desk Agent studies Big Bro and Sam, who silently stand side-by-side waiting on their lift.

BIG BRO

Ready to fuck shit up, lil bro?

SAM

It's the reason for my being.

The elevator opens. Big Bro winks at the suspicious Front Desk Agent still on the walkie-talkie. The brothers enter it.

BIG BRO

That's the spirit.

SAM

Of the thing itself.

BIG BRO

Huh?

The elevator doors close.

EXT. BROWNWOOD PARK - PAVILION - DAY - FLASHBACK

Sam is visibly disturbed to an unbearable degree. A patient and calm Master Sergeant studies him.

MASTER SERGEANT

Is that a spike in suffering I see?
What's the inner turmoil today?

Sam snaps out of his trance violently, fixating with difficulty upon his teacher.

SAM

Same ol shit. The everpresent shadow of death, the possible judgment of the bitter end. Doesn't it bother you?

MASTER SERGEANT

Death? Nope. I'm not bothered by it, because that's what I am.

SAM

What do you mean?

MASTER SERGEANT

They say life and death are two sides of the same coin. I disagree. We are mostly death, and spend eternities on either side of our brief lifetimes, enshrouded in the timeless darkness. I welcome it as a return to my true nature.

SAM

I can't stomach all of this shit, being all there is, senseless suffering for no reason. It feels like a test I failed the moment I chose to take another's life, and can't help but think I'm going to be judged or judge myself upon my death bed, before being ushered to my soul's total punishment.

MASTER SERGEANT

Souls? We do have such vivid imaginations, don't we? That quirk may be our biggest downfall. I say you reach a verdict on your judgment *before* your last day --
(puffes on cig)
-- hopefully a day that isn't so pitiful that you die in a warm bed.

(MORE)

MASTER SERGEANT (CONT'D)

That illusion of comfort would certainly render all your suffering in this cold world meaningless. Learn to love it for what it is. A god damned shit show, where the bliss of nothingness is the only true heaven that may await us.

Sam seems disturbed in a deeper way.

SAM

You are one nihilistic son of a bitch, Master Sergeant. But I can appreciate your insight.

MASTER SERGEANT

Someday, you'll appreciate it even more, and on that day, I hope you channel all the passion you put into imagination and beliefs about this life, and slice through that veil not with fear, but with love, knowing you made it home.

Sam winces at Master Sergeant and turns, closing his eyes.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Big Bro watches Sam glare off into the void with a smirk.

BIG BRO

You still stare off into la-la land like that, huh? Man, Sammy, you ain't changed! Missed you buddy.

Sam snaps out of it and registers his place with Big Bro. He struggles to smile but starts to find it easier.

SAM

Yeah, I missed you too, Johnny. These years haven't been easy.

Big Bro shrugs and laughs. Unholsters his pistol and checks to see how many rounds it has.

BIG BRO

The hard life has gotten easier though. Easy is over-rated. Boring! I tried to go back to a stable, cookie-cutter life. No can do.

At that, the elevator freezes, not quite to the top floor. The doors seem to be stuck.

SAM

I don't know. Easy sounds real nice
right about now.

Big Bro sighs. Pulls his pistol back out with right hand and
unsheathes Bowie knife with his left hand.

Sam unsheathes his tanto and says a silent mantra.

BIG BRO

What the fuck bro, I like blades
too, but you need a gun now. I know
you can use one. I got an extra.

Sam shakes his head in defiance and opens his eyes.

The bell dings, signifying the doors are about to open.

INT. BASEMENT DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Dahlia, Fox and Musa exit the elevator into a room where one
LOWER GUARD, 40s, grubby goblin of a man stands post over a
cramped holding cell. He looks up from a nudie magazine.

LOWER GUARD

Got some fresh meat, for me? Oh,
lord, some hotties too!

Officer Musa shrugs and shakes his head.

OFFICER MUSA

No sir, just a couple run of the
mill perps. Was told to drop em off
here, where they can be kept safe.

LOWER GUARD

Oh right, safe! Of course.

Officer Musa gets a cold shiver in his spine from the creep.

Dahlia glances away, toward the nearby cell filled with
houseless individuals. She gets a sharp empathetic pain in
the heart. One captive, is Captain Hollis. They lock eyes.

Fox leans in, whimsical, to study the Lower Guard's face.

LOWER GUARD (CONT'D)

Whattaya lookin at ya, freak?

FOX

Oh, I'm the freak? It took a minute to recognize you, since I only know the back of your head and the sound of your squeals.

LOWER GUARD

The fuck are you talking about? I don't know you!

Fox laughs as Lower Guard glances nervously at the other two.

FOX

Oh I think you do. You pay me \$50 a pop to peg you in the alley by Centennial Park! Own it, big man!

LOWER GUARD

Shut the fuck up! You're a liar!

Fox cocks her head back and nudges the others. Musa frowns and shakes his head in disapproval.

OFFICER MUSA

You probably got him confused with somebody else, who --
(looks guard over uneasy)
-- looks just like him.

FOX

Nope. I never forget a John. It's all good though. This powderpuff is just ashamed of who he is, like most of the toxic gays out here.

LOWER GUARD

That's enough, ya faggot whore!

The Lower Guard stands frenzied and draws his firearm on Fox.

FOX

Oooh! That's the dirty talk I remember! Whatcha gon' do, shoo --

BANG. The Lower Guard fires a round through Fox's head, to his own surprise. The captives in the cell and the others look around in horror. Fox twitches and bleeds out quickly. Dahlia overcomes her shock and jumps to aid.

DAHLIA

Fox! No! No, please. Hang tight, don't die on me!

Fox bleeds from the mouth struggling to speak as Dahlia darts eyes around the room for a solution that doesn't exist.

FOX

We -- shoulda fucked.

Fox dies. Dahlia cries in a silent tremor. Officer Musa stands in a blood-curdled pose, nauseated, before turning his sights on the slack-jawed Lower Guard. Musa draws his weapon as the Lower Guard points his back at the Officer, panicking.

OFFICER MUSA

What's your problem?! Why kill her?

LOWER GUARD

It was an accident, man! These things happen. Stupid cunt should have kept that whore mouth shut!

Musa shakes in rage.

OFFICER MUSA

I'm taking you in for murder one. What's your badge number?

LOWER GUARD

Badge number? Ha! Bitch, I'm not a cop! I work for Total Power. We don't have badge numbers!

OFFICER MUSA

Regardless, drop the weapon and put your hands on your head! I'm placing you under arrest.

LOWER GUARD

Like hell you are, cowboy. You're in Total Power country now!

Lower Guard fires a round at Musa. Misses. Musa fires back, but the Lower Guard has dropped down beneath his desk, shooting from under the crack, clipping one of Musa's feet.

Musa hits the ground with a groan, but quickly gets sights on Lower Guard, firing a death shot to the chest that incapacitates the man hiding under the desk.

Once satisfied the foe is dead, Officer Musa sits up examining his wounded foot in disbelief. He glances over at Fox, whose face has already been covered with a dirty towel.

Dahlia uses the scissors and a bobby pin to pick the lock to the holding cell. Captain Hollis and the other captives shuffle out behind her in rank, rejoining Officer Musa.

DAHLIA

Fox sacrificed herself for *us*. My best friend. Now, she's my hero.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

They were about thirty minutes from turning this place into a straight up slaughterhouse.

The elevator dings with an impending passenger on board.

DAHLIA

They haven't given up on that yet.

Captain Hollis grabs the gun from the dead Lower Guard. Cocks it. They all find cover, look at each other and prepare as the door begins to open.

INT. OFFICE FLOOR - DAY

A unit of five armed Total Power agents stand wait as the elevator doors open. A smoke grenade is tossed from the elevator into the office, with the agents choking and thrown off guard. Sam lunges out of the smoke, blade drawn, coming down over an agent who missed his shot. The smoke spreads to cover Sam and his victim.

Big Bro bum rushes a goon out of the advancing cloud, covered again just before FIRING a GUNSHOT and knifing with a THUD.

As the smoke covers the view completely, the SWOOSH of the samurai blade and CLANG of the buck knife both sound, with a barrage of GUNSHOTS sent back and forth.

When the smoke clears and Sam lowers the protective scarf from his mouth, he sees the two remaining officers are dead, but Big Bro has been shot in the neck.

SAM

No! Johnny!

In a frenzy, Sam drops to the ground near Big Bro, trying to help compress the wound with his scarf.

Big Bro chuckles, blood squirting. He shakes his head.

BIG BRO

Don't bother -- brother.

Big Bro tries to speak more and chokes on blood. He realizes he must choose his last words more wisely, as they are few.

SAM

Finally reunited after all these years being used in unjust wars. I need you to fight the real war.

BIG BRO

Ya needed me to get this high up. Now ya go it alone. Take my gun.

Big Bro hands the .45 handgun to Sam. Sam winces at the device that feels natural in his palm, a fact that disgusts him. Sam cries, looking back down upon his brother growing pale while bleeding out.

BIG BRO (CONT'D)

Six bullets left. Use em wisely. Get outta hell. It's possible. Even now. It's here. Heaven is here.

Big Bro stares around them, smiling at scenery only he sees. Sam is disturbed by this, but tries to see it for himself.

BIG BRO (CONT'D)

Here. Now.

Big Bro dies.

Sam leans over him and sobs.

All is still, as he lifts his head back up and becomes straight faced again. He looks with Stoic respect upon Johnny, and bows his head to honor him.

SAM

Thank you brother. You showed me how to face death with honor. I only hope in the end--

The elevators ding to announce an imminent arrival to the floor. Sam glances toward the elevator doors and down at Big Bro again, shaking his head as he grabs the gun and tanto and sprints toward the stairs, exiting the scene.

The elevator doors open and Captain Hollis, Officer Musa, and Dahlia all file out confused.

DAHLIA

I guess the elevator stops here.

Officer Musa checks his phone.

OFFICER MUSA

Yep. Only cleared individuals get to the so-called Divine Ruler's penthouse office.

Big Bro's phone VIBRATES and RINGS.

The three of them look at each other and find the body of Big Bro behind a divider wall.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

They got Big Bro! But where's Sam?

INT. ATLANTA HIGH RISE CORPORATE OFFICE - SAME TIME

The Divine Ruler, wearing a face shield, holds a golf club, dialing a number on the speaker phone on his desk. It RINGS.

Sighing with a great deal of impatience, he swings the golf club at a ball on the tee, which SMACKS the glass with a CRACK. He moves with a monocle hanging from his chain to inspect the damage. He shakes his head unsatisfied.

THE DIVINE RULER

They declared this glass to be bulletproof! But alas, a puny dimpled ball exposes its frailty!

The Divine Ruler begins to cry. The phone rings.

THE DIVINE RULER (CONT'D)

A shanty unfit for a king! This will not do. We'll need a castle, a fortress worthy of my kingdom come.

He stares over at the ringing phone. Hangs up. Makes another phone call. Paces. Swings golf club at another ball, chipping the glass further. He screams at the top of his lungs.

THE DIVINE RULER (CONT'D)

Why's no one answering me?! We must prepare the chattel for release!

He advances with the golf club raised as a weapon, ready to beat the hell out of the phone, before the call is answered.

THE DIVINE RULER (CONT'D)

Hello? Is that a mortal human there? Did you slay the abominable bum? Better if you brought him alive. His unruly blood must taste truly divine, a treat for the gods!

A silence ensues on the other line.

OFFICER MUSA

Officer Musa here. Sadly, the merc
Big Bro is dead. But, yes, Divine
Ruler. Sam is ready to deliver to
you, sir. Can you buzz us in?

The Divine Ruler cocks his head to the side, puts the golf club behind his neck and laughs.

THE DIVINE RULER

This little flea-infested heathen
really put up a fight, huh? OK
bring him in, I'll get my Golden
Ruler sharpened for his gullet.

The Divine Ruler puts on jazz music, tosses his golf club across the room and brandishes his sharpened ruler blade from the desk drawer, sharpening it further on a grinding stone. He whistles with glee. Then hears the KNOCK at the DOOR.

The Divine Ruler buzzes the access on the door.

Sam kicks it in, with tanto drawn.

With a piercing shriek turning into a wry smile, the Divine Ruler raises his own ruler blade.

THE DIVINE RULER (CONT'D)

My most expensive chattel.

The Divine Ruler checks his watch.

THE DIVINE RULER (CONT'D)

Just in time for a divine download.

Sam advances.

SAM

I'm your personal grim reaper. Here
to download you to the underworld.

THE DIVINE RULER

Hell. A peasant's belief. A banal
fantasy for losers. I shall do you
a favor like I did the others, and
release you from your pitiful
existence as a worm in the dirt.

SAM

Only one way to know what awaits.

Sam charges The Divine Ruler. Their blades hit with a CLANG.

They strike blades a few more times. Sam cuts The Divine Ruler's wrist and kicks him square across the floor.

SAM (CONT'D)

Guess you aren't a God after all.

Sam approaches with the determination of settling this score. The Divine Ruler puts up his hands to pause the conflict.

THE DIVINE RULER

Wait, stop. No, I'm not a God... yet. The ritual was interrupted, but I have a backup supply of dirty sheep ready just in case.

Sam pauses.

SAM

Dirty sheep? You mean human beings you're holding in a cell? What the fuck is wrong with you?

THE DIVINE RULER

Stop viewing the world as a mortal, and you may learn some valuable life lessons here. Of course I have a safeguard surplus of souls.

(laughs, taps watch)

The more difficult, violent ones. I never put all my eggs in one basket. All I need to do is send a message, and the sacrifice begins.

Sam menacing, approaches with blade ready for death knell.

SAM

Where the fuck are they?

The Divine Ruler shakes head, clutches his dagger. Sits up.

THE DIVINE RULER

You think saving humans makes you a hero? Look around. I'm not the first to point out the cancerous growth of Homo Sapiens. Their time to thrive is long over. The gods gave them countless chances!

(pauses)

You, on the other hand, have proven yourself a worthy warrior.

(MORE)

THE DIVINE RULER (CONT'D)

You conquered every foe, overcame every obstacle, to come face to face with the God of your rotting world. You want to kill me, but my dear human, there's no *killing God*.

(stand on two feet)

One can *worship God*, to subsist through darkness of the void in proximity to his providence and light, or one can *become God*. You are the type that I believe would prefer the latter, indeed, I know, you are a God, Sam. Like me.

The Divine Ruler smiles, moving his Golden Ruler into a parade rest position behind his back.

THE DIVINE RULER (CONT'D)

So thus, I grant you a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. You can be here, with me, holding my hand as the sacrifice of earth's victims commences, and we both channel the true deities within and beyond time and space. We will become immortal and rule this planet *together*.

(pauses)

With my strategic intellect, and your military command, we will bring in a new age, the utopia, the heaven on earth, prophesied and promised to us for millennia. This is your chance to join the winners, and say goodbye to a hard life of suffering, to bid adieu to death.

Sam lowers his blade for a moment, and shakes his head.

SAM

I've dreamed of this moment, since you had Master Sergeant murdered. I knew I would hack and slash through as many obstacles and enemies as needed to stand here, and enact justified bloodshed. Vengeance. I knew I'd get my chance to kill you, but couldn't decide exactly HOW I would kill you.

Sam backs up, confident in his assessment of the situation.

SAM (CONT'D)

A square kick to the chest would send you straight through that cracked window, to fall from your tower of delusions, splattering back to the hard reality of earth.

Sam pushes a button on the desk, triggering a buzzing noise.

SAM (CONT'D)

But that'd be too fast, and selfish of me to be the only one who gets to take your life. Instead, I'll let the people have you.

A starved and manic group of twenty houseless captives in white uniforms flood in through the door. Dahlia, Captain Hollis and Officer Musa enter behind the angry mob.

THE DIVINE RULER

What? No! How could you? I offered you heaven! I would have given you the world, Sam.

The shouting group waste no time in bombarding The Divine Ruler. They shove him to the ground.

SAM

Neither Heaven or Earth were ever yours to offer.

Sam watches with satisfaction as the violence intensifies and the mob beats and kicks The Divine Ruler. Dahlia looks away in horror. Captain Hollis looks on with enthusiastic intrigue and Officer Musa with a neutral acceptance.

SAM (CONT'D)

And I don't want the world. I don't want anything anymore.

Sam proceeds to exit coldly as the mob tears The Divine Ruler to pieces. Dahlia stops him with a gentle hand.

DAHLIA

You don't want anything, huh?

SAM

There's more to life than desires.

DAHLIA

Is there? Say, where you goin'? This is history. Revolution!

SAM

This is only the beginning.

DAHLIA

The beginning of us, I hope.

SAM

No. The beginning of the end.

DAHLIA

The end? Of what?

SAM

The end of the true scumbags,
wannabe Divine Rulers of machines
competing to destroy our world and
our spirits. The end of me.

DAHLIA

We need you here, Sam. I need you.
Let's stay together. Heal together.

SAM

You don't need me, Dahlia. I'm a
self-destructive monster on a one-
way rampage. You stand a better
chance alone. I'm headin' to the
next town, then the next. Knocking
off bosses like dominoes til our
open-air prison topples.

DAHLIA

OK. Sure we'll see each other
again, in this fucked up life or
the next.

SAM

(aching smile)

Yep. Maybe in our sweetest dreams.

They share a pained final look of longing, where Sam is the first to break the trance of desire and exit.

Dazed, Dahlia returns to the onlooking Captain Hollis and Officer Musa. Hollis laughs to give some awkward comfort.

CAPTAIN HOLLIS

Ya should know by now not to be
fuckin' with them cum bums.

DAHLIA

Oh. It's time we put the past
behind us. Along with impractical
fantasies. So. What next, fellas?

Officer Musa continues watching The Divine Ruler, now dead, being devoured beyond recognition by several starving men.

OFFICER MUSA
We fight. For a brighter future...

EXT. ATLANTA HIGHWAY UNDERPASS - NIGHT

Sam walks solemnly down the street, toward the underpass where Master Sergeant died.

OFFICER MUSA (O.S.)
For a society of mutual respect and care.

Sam sees there is a memorial for Master Sergeant, with flowers, candles and some photos. Sam picks up a photo of himself pushing Master Sergeant in his wheelchair.

SAM
(fights tears)
Dahlia... I remember that day.

OFFICER MUSA (O.S.)
For a city where folks feel safe.

Sam sits down in the spot where it happened. He looks at the picture in his hand and over at the blood stains on concrete.

Sam straightens his posture. Closes his eyes to meditate.

In the silence, we can hear the CHEWING sounds of the men eating The Divine Ruler with ravenous ferocity.

OFFICER MUSA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
A home for us all, where no human being ever goes this hungry again.

THE END