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Sand's Reprisal

by Chukwudi Mogbo

“Right here is fine.” I say to Tucker as we hover above the fanciest hotel in downtown New York. The President’s daughter is having her 18th birthday party here tonight so there are guards on every post in Times Square complete with automatic weaponry and sniper rifles.

Perfect.

“You know the drill.” Tucker says in his old hoarse tone. Maybe it came from the years of smoking 3 packs of cigarettes a day, or maybe it’s from the hazardous climates he’s survived in prior warzones. “If you’re not out here in 30 minutes-“

“I’ll be here Tucker, just make sure you’re here when the time comes!” I hiss at him as I place on my horned mask. He always treats me like a child before every mission, but I won’t take it today. This is a huge piece to my plan. I have to focus and Tucker’s “parenting” is not making me concentrate more.

“You know I’m just looking out for you, we’re all we have left” He says as I open the evacuation door. Just another sob story. I guess he feels like I’m the son he never met. While his wife was pregnant he was called to serve his country in Nam. He tried to do everything in his power to stay by her side, she only had a month left of labor to go. Too bad his country doesn’t care about things like family because he was sent on the next plane to Asia. A week and a half in duty and he discovered that his wife was killed in a car accident. Her water had broken and no one was there to drive her to the hospital. He only agreed to fight because the army said they would care for her. Enraged, he went to his commander to find out why his wife wasn’t taken care of and the commander told him, “my job is to make sure we win this war, not play guardian

over your wife. Do your duty soldier, be a man and not a pansy. Will you help us win or do you want to go home and cry?” Wow, even for a commander he was an asshole. This sent Tucker to drink all the alcohol they had in their reserves that evening. Highly intoxicated he slips past the night watch and decided to go on a drunken solo black op mission. I always laugh at part because he said he thought he would win the war by finding the enemy commander and assassinate him while everyone was sleep. Clearly this was the liquor diluting his thought process. That part was funny but the next part is far from it. While loudly running through a field an enemy sniper took one shot at the drunken bastard and it completely blew his right knee off. Tucker screamed for help but no one came as they took him hostage. While being a prisoner of war he endured horrible torture in order to get out information he never knew. He never told me what they did to him exactly but to this day he’s afraid of water. Anyway, the commander was trying to use Tucker as a bargaining chip to the U.S to gain information but they never responded. Tucker didn’t believe the commander at first as the torment continued through the months he understood how expendable he was. After 3 long years of hell he said the enemy just let him walk away. Even they thought his life was worthless. Solitude. All the way up until we connected he was alone. But the worst part of this story is that *I could care less*.

“Tucker?” I say looking into the open door at the nightlife below me. “I don’t have anyone and you don’t have me. All of my people died in the Shade. Now I have to take down your country.”

“I don’t have a country kid” he says.

“And that’s why I trust you, don’t forget that.” I say with my usual evil smirk.

“Hahaha (hoarse cough)” he always laughs when I do that but then he says something he never said before. “You know, the more you wear that mask the more you personify the devil

himself.” This sticks with me as I take off the mask and stare at it. All white in color except for the red designs and of course the red horns. It just covers from my nose up but my black body suit covers everything except my eyes. At first I wore it to strike fear in my enemies but Tucker made it seem like it was taking me over. That sounds quite perfect to me.

“No Tucker, I am worse than the devil” I say as I put on the hood to my body suit, my sword, and the mask. “He lost his fight to God, *THE GOD OF THIS COUNTRY WILL DIE BY MY HANDS!*” Then I grab a parachute and free fall backwards out of the stealth plane. It goes into stealth mode and disappears into the night sky. Just me and the darkness again. Alone is when I’m at my best because it’s all I know. In the night sky I close my eyes and begin to think about my life before the Shade. I was so young back then. Just trying to be the best in my class at our arts, but I lacked the ability. I could barely hold a knife without cutting myself, let alone be the next leader in our village of assassins. I told the leader of our village that I wanted to be just like him but didn’t have the talent and he told me, “That’s impossible because you will be better than me. The race is not given to the swift, nor is the battle given to the strongest warrior, but is given to those who endure to the end. Change, Sand. You will bring change to this village.” Then he embraced me and whispered in my ear, “Will you endure?” People could barely touch him, let alone be embraced. The regular villagers embrace all the time but not with the leader. *Never*. I ran home filled with joy to tell my siblings and mother. Then I looked up and a dark cloud rained chemicals into our eyes. The perfect weapon against assassins. Pain, darkness, *Shade*. Tears fall from my tightly clinched eyes. Peaceful, loving, warm, family. All these words mean nothing in my life anymore because everyone is gone. Hate, anger, fury, and revenge are the words that replace them. As I draw on the string to release the parachute, I let those new words fuel my

reprisal. I land on the rooftop and ditch the parachute. "I will endure." I say to myself one last time before I start the mission.

"Tucker, I landed" I say talking into my headset that connects me straight to the stealth plane.

"25 minutes left, this is what you've been waiting for Sand" he says.

"That's more than enough time" I say as the red sonar night vision lenses cover my eyes. "I have to give the princess her present."

My sonar lenses give me an instant location on the princess and an x ray blueprint of the whole building. 2 floors down is where the party is but the roof and the highest two floors have the most security. They seem prepared but not as prepared as I am. I can see everything about the guards from their social security number and birthday all the way to the brand of gun they are carrying and their registered martial arts level. Even their heart rates. I don't know how Tucker got his hand on this helmet but this technology is surreal. Working with a fake identity for the C.I.A for 20+ years has its perks.

I slip past the guard on the roof and enter the building. There's a huge opening in the floor to where the party is. The ceiling of the ballroom where they are having the party is glass and transparent. I can see that they are having the time of their life. Dancing to music and drinking alcohol. All the things that teenagers do in this country for fun and entertainment. I then I see her, the president's only daughter; Talia. Long, dark hair flowing down her back. Light brown eyes that complimented her caramel skin. She was also shaped like an hour glass of my village. The village that her father took from me in the Shade. Gazing at her I almost forgot my mission.

Up until now she has always been portrayed as a wholesome school girl but tonight she's probably as drunk as Tucker was the night he lost his knee. As she stumbles around I wave from the top floor to get her attention. It took her awhile but when she sees me she is too drunk to realize who I am. If she was sober she probably would have jumped out a window in terror. She goes to get a security guard and when she points at me through the ceiling I instantly pounce from the highest floor through the opening and use my two automatic hand guns that were on my back to shoot through the glass ceiling and kill the guard in the process. I use his body as a landing pad and now I am on one bended knee in front of the president's daughter. The raining glass and the abrupt stop to the music make it almost theatrical.

"Happy birthday Talia." I say raising my head slowly to look at her reaction. I clicked the switch mid-air to change my voice into a more demonic and malicious one. My new voice coupled with the sight of the dead body guard sends heart rate off the charts. The place breaks out into chaos before I slam her to the ground and place my foot on her neck.

"Quiet!" my demonic voice roars. Everyone instantly becomes silent except for a few mumbles. By this time the remaining four visible security guards aim their guns at me. I point one of my guns at Talia and they all drop their weapons. Now here comes the fun part. I act like my guns slip out my hand and their heart rates soar as they dive for their guns. *TOO BAD THEY ARE TOO SLOW.* As they reach for their guns I grab 4 throwing knives and throw them at lightning speed, piercing each of them right between the eyes in a matter of seconds.

That was evil, but I like it better that way.

As they fall around the room I turn to the bar where a security guard has been hiding. With my sonar lenses I can see him clutching his gun but his heart rate isn't as high as everywhere else. He clearly thinks he's hidden, but I have I surprise for him. I grab two throwing

knives and throw the first one above the bar. I throw the second one a half second later at an angle that hits the first knife's handle. This not only changes the trajectory of the first knife but the force from the second knife accelerates it as well. By throwing a second knife and hitting it perfectly the first knife has now pierced his heart. Perfect precision, I'm too good at killing.

I look around the room and watch the people of the party's heart rate continue to surge. This is beyond fear. I snap my head and look at one of her friends and they go into cardiac arrest. Terrified is an understatement.

"Talía" I say while picking her up by her hair. "Let's get daddy on the phone."

"You won't hurt me scum!" She says as she spits on my mask. Clearly the liquor has made her feisty, but she does have a point. What good is a dead daughter to the president? Smart girl but she forgot who I was.

"You're right love, but what about her?" I say while throwing one of my knives without looking to where it was going. My sonar lenses revealed that a girl was reaching for one of the deceased security guard's guns and it just so happen to be Talía's best friend. The knife I threw went straight through her hand, nailing her to the ground. She begins to scream, cry, and die from the wound. I walk over to the girl and spread her other arm away from her as if she was stretching. "What's it going to be Talía? Will you be the reason why she dies?" Before she could answer I send another knife through the opposite palm, unleashing such an unearthly moan from the friend. As Talía falls to her knees and calls her father I look at the looks on some of their faces. Disbelief, fear, sorrow, hate. I'm glad they feel these things, because these emotions have been my best friends for years.

"Speaker phone Talía, I want to hear his voice." I say. Then he answers.

"How's your birthday going sweetie?" the president says.

“Tell him who is here with you” I whisper, trying to hold back the emotion I feel for this man. The source of all of the hate and lust for vengeance is right on the other line of this phone.

“Daddy...” she says as the tears begin to roll down her face. She’s speechless and getting tongue tied. I get angry.

“Tell him!” My demonic voice echoes through the walls of the hotel, alerting the other guards. I shouldn’t have done that, but my hatred took over.

“IT’S THE WHITE NIGHTMARE! HE’S HERE!” she screams.

“Heaven’s no” her father says in disbelief.

“HELL YEA!” I snarl as I pick up a guard’s gun and shoot the sprawled out friend in the head. Blood splatters all over my white jacket as Talia runs to try and aid her fallen best friend, but I intercept her and throw her on my shoulder then we dash out the window before the guards can get a good shot at me. As she screams I grab the phone from her hand and say “Times Square now!” Freefalling from that high altitude and the liquor she consumed makes her begin to puke all over the streets of New York. So much for the wholesome school girl act. I shoot a wire from my wrist and as it connects to a neighboring skyscraper I use it to swing from the hotel to Times Square in one leap. We break our fall by landing on a taxi cab. Perfect landing for me, I not so sure about for the crushed taxi. Talia’s passed out by now. I guess swinging through a city vomiting can have that effect. I slide her under the car and walk to the center of Times Square. Helicopters start to swarm and shine headlights on me. Police officers have now formed a barricade around the square. There are even a few tanks.

I smile to myself because clearly I’m still being underestimated.

As I approach them I stop because all of their guns and lights from every direction are trained on me. Every screen on every surrounding building shows my mask. The White

Nightmare, public enemy number one, handing himself over on a silver platter. This couldn't be more perfect.

"7 minutes kid" Tucker says in my helmet.

"Make it 5, they don't wanna talk" I say while gripping my sword. "I am—" I attempt to say through my amplified voice to the cops before the chief of police yells fire sending a endless barrage of bullets coming from all angles at me.

Now this whole brigade will pay the price of his rudeness.

I unsheathe my sword and begin to use my secret weapon: Bullet reflection. Each bullet they send at me I cut in half and redirect them into two different cop's skulls. The other bullets from the tank's turrets and the helicopters Gatling guns are sent to cars engines and the helicopters propellers, causing mass explosions on the ground as well as the air. Bodies explode with the automobiles and helicopters crash into adjacent buildings. It becomes almost as beautiful as a waltz, me in the center of Times Square twirling, contorting my body while simultaneously bringing the world to its knees. Chaos, carnage, mayhem.

THIS IS THE SACRED ART OF MY PEOPLE.

When I finish I stand in the center of what used to be Times Square. Now it reminds me of one of Tucker's war stories. I look behind me and it just so happen that the one huge screen behind me I unconsciously left unscathed. So everyone who was watching this has witnessed my power. Can this get any better? It would seem so because apparently she gun shots woke Talia up and she has also seen my destruction first hand. I laugh outwardly and I forgot I still had the headset on so now I sound like Satan himself. Perfect, I pick her up by her hair and drag her into the center of the flames. Now my speech directly to the president:

“This is my sword, the devil’s gavel. It is the sharpest sword this world has ever seen. No bullet can harm me, only nuclear weapons Mr. President. My skill is that great. What you have just witnessed is the sacred art that my people died protecting. It’s all I have left because you Mr. President murdered them. You killed every man woman and child in my home. Then you destroyed my culture and decimated our temples. I watched from the shadows as your men executed my family. I am the last. The end. I’m who Lucifer couldn’t become because I will take down the God of this land. What do I want? Just one word that this whole country will understand; REPRISAL!”

Then I throw the wire from my wrist into the sky and Tucker’s stealth plane catches it. I throw Talia on my shoulder and we fly off into the night. As we enter the plane I stare at Talia who hasn’t even blinked since I drug her from under the car. I take off my blood stained jacket and throw it in her face, but she doesn’t flinch. Then I kneel next to her and whisper in her ear, “Do you hate me? Please don’t say yes yet, this is just the beginning...”