

The Tangent Redemptions of an

Anti-Hero



By Richard Dimitri

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<http://www.richarddimitri.com>

i.am@richarddimitri.com

This book is dedicated to all those who will, are, or have travelled the darker path either by choice or circumstance, and made the conscious decision, and ever so complex efforts to change their directions in order not to end up where they were headed.

It's also for those who like this sort of thing.

Enjoy.

- Chapter 1 -

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

It's a long drive but it's worth it. I need to clear my head anyway and Kelowna, British Columbia's not that far from Tijuana, roughly two-thousand-nine-hundred kilometers, a three to four days drive tops without wasting time.

It's a nice drive as well and I happen to love road trips. Something about being alone with my thoughts on the open road and listening to the soundtrack of my life brings me a real sense of freedom.

I've been festering here in Tijuana for two months offering my protective services to a small time, two bit wannabe gangster for five hundred US bucks a month and a walk in, closet space 'apartment' to sleep in, in order to escape the cold and my past which have become synonymous.

This punk didn't even need it either; I haven't lifted a finger since I got here seeing as he was simply fronting a tough dealer reputation, selling catnip while referring to it as '*the best weed in Tijuana*'. He wasn't half off either. I've personally never smoked good Mexican weed to be honest and I've spent my fair share of time in Mexico on and off for the last two decades.

I happen to love Mexico. I've thought of moving here permanently a few times actually, only to be heavily dissuaded time and again by a good buddy of mine who's a mercenary by trade. He's Canadian but lived in Mexico himself for at least half of his life and he's actually looking forward to leaving Mexico City as soon as he's done his job there. Tijuana wouldn't be in my list of choices of places to move to mind you, though it's got its charms, I was looking a little closer to Vallarta.

Instead, it was this character who comically liked to refer

to himself as 'El Gato' who happened to come across my name while eavesdropping on a real deal going down somewhere that got me back in Mexico.

He'd probably heard I'd gone recluse for a while now and strictly doing the odd job here n' there to pay the proverbial bills. It wasn't like I was in hiding or anything; I had just burned out and needed to step away from everything.

He had an entourage of local misfit yes men around him at all times, if not for the only reason he offered them forty percent of their sales to insure their loyalty, and he got it too. No one was offering these guys forty percent of anything let alone a job of any kind. If it wasn't for 'the Cat', they'd be shoveling shit while getting kicked in the head for bread crumbs.

So no one really gave a shit enough to off his silly ass as the bullet or the effort of gutting him would cost them more than simply letting him do his thing. He was nothing but a jester to those that mattered.

Contrarily, they kept him around on purpose as he was a habitual time waster for the three, somewhat still good remaining cops on the force left. Every time they'd try to nail him and bring him in on some petty charge, their superiors released him before the door could shut itself from the time he entered to his way out. Eventually they'll get it.

I figured it'd be an easy gig as well as a good change of pace and weather as the Canadian winters were taking their toll on me, and it was; I feel rested and a little antsy again and besides, one can only eat so many burritos. They were the only decent and somewhat clean meal I could get my

hands on out in these boonies 'El Gato' had us spend most of our time in. There was nothing here for miles but his little campground. It was the set up of his 'operations' for lack of a better word.

Best breakfast though was at La Espadana's which of course, I had to drive over half an hour to get to, and El fucking pussy Gato wouldn't let me half the time and for no other reason than to enforce the fact that he was the boss. It was definitely time to go.

Alright, let's see; one final check up on the ol' Stallion before I hit the road. Besides the clothes on my back, this custom painted metallic silver nineteen-sixty nine Mustang Boss 429 is the only thing I own of any real worth. My father had purchased it for me on my day of birth and he had taken precious care of it just to give it to me on my twenty-first year here.

I would only use it occasionally and on sunny days until only three years ago. I managed to have maintained it in a mint condition except for the fact that it needs a serious wash. Though I am not materialistic by any means nor do I need a hunk of steel to define me or remind me of the love I have for my parents, it's still a sweet ride.

Cash? Check. Luggage? Check. Ash tray? Check. Lighters? Check. Joints? Check. Coolers? Check. Gonna pick up some food on my way out, besides sleep and fuel stops, I don't wanna waste time stopping for anything else. Trusty blades? Check. Sticks? Check. Gun? Check. Yeah, better to have em and not need em. First aid kit? Check. Full tank? Check. Music? Check. Cell phone & charger? Check, not that I ever turn the damn thing on, much to everyone who knows me's chagrin and frustrations.

'Time to hit the road again Nomad.' Nothing like the sound of that sweet Mustang engine revving up when starting it. Well; almost nothing.

My folks were clairvoyant. Either that or I subconsciously felt the ass burning urge to live up to my name. I haven't really had a home since I left them back in nineteen-ninety-four. That Metallica song "*Wherever I may roam*", yeah, that song's the soundtrack of my life. Along with the circus theme song. Ok, more so the circus theme song.

The way I see it, we're dying every single day, every second of every minute. May as well do what we want as long as it isn't at the expense of others. How many times do we say things like *'life's too short'* or *'time flies'*? How many people who repeat those mantras actually start owning and living their lives and not the ones dictated by their parents, cultures, religions and societies in general?

It is my fortieth year here on earth. If I manage to keep my shit together as I have been the last couple of years, I maybe have another forty or fifty years left of it. Just about half of my life is gone with perhaps another half left and it isn't the vibrant, young, strong half either. It's the cynical, aged, experienced, and like it or not, deteriorating half.

Health we have a choice over, ageing; no one yet does. I say 'yet' cause one of my mad scientist buddies assures me we are close to achieving immortality and I must say, I believe him though I am not quite certain how I feel about it. I don't believe I would want to be immortal. As appealing as it may be, it also sounds lonely as fuck, at least in today's paradigm.

However, If the second half of my life goes by even half as

fast as the first, brother, I'll tell ya; there's a fraction left to it in the limitless and grand scheme of life itself and I don't want to waste a moment of it. Ever. I'd take a hundred year extension perhaps.... but not immortality.

The planet we are on is gigantically, well, small. It contains enough varieties of idiots, cultures, life of all kind and environmental diversities to keep one in a state of constant wonder for one hundred-thousand lifetimes. Especially with the idiots alone, and with the internet today, you can have access to these idiots for twenty-four/seven.

It would be and would have been a shame for me not to have explored as much of it as I have; not the idiots, life.... and continue doing so in order to experience as much of it as I could. I deem it an offering of life and it would be insulting of me to reject such a generous and incredible offer.

One life to live and the whole world's still arguing, trying to find the meaning of it. The answer, as usual, is in plain sight and simple as fuck, but alas, so non-appealing to our ever catered egos, very few care to admit it passed perhaps verbalizing it.

We're simply here to serve others along our journeys, those who need a helping hand, and to experience it with every living fiber. Fucking live it with passion and all you've got and all that you are; you owe it to yourselves. It's really worth living your dreams; the journey alone is a fascinating one. To waste it being a societal clone and puppet is insulting to the very essence of life itself.

I took my own advice and decided to drop everything once more, pack my shit, and head off towards the unknown.

It's been twenty-three years since we've seen each other and we didn't exactly part on the best of terms and she seemed to have disappeared until Facebook. Hell, things can change in a minute; what would almost a quarter of a century do?

I'm not who I used to be either, not by a long shot. Though my core is essentially the same, I've seen and done things that would make most people cringe watching it on a movie or television screen. One could say; I'm damaged goods. Matter of fact, some have actually said it. My first wife for instance.

Of course, one could also say everyone is damaged to one degree or another, but I've lived the equivalent of what a war veteran has within the microcosm of the wars of the concrete jungles.

When we met in nineteen-eighty-six, Maeve and I were just in our teens. I was sixteen literally months from turning seventeen, she was fourteen, and months from turning fifteen. For me, it was love at first sight. Our energies were very similar as she was fun and life loving with a smile that could light up the darkest pits of hell. People used to say she lit up rooms with that smile, for me, it lit up my life.

Her Nutella; that's right motherfuckers; *NUT*-ella, not 'noot'ella, brown eyes were inviting and soft and with a hint of teenage mischief. They're nuts, not fucking noots. Unless you're from Australia.

Besides, I don't give a fuck what anyone says about age or how inexperienced or young we may have been, you know when that feeling hits ya cause it's like no other and if you're lucky, you find it the first time around and stick

with it and make that shit work hard as you can. If you lose it, you can only hope to be as lucky to find it again. Some spend their entire lives looking and searching in total vain. I knew at that moment she was the one for me.

She was my first real love and she had broken my teenage heart. We were together for three seasons from spring to fall and she left me for what my frail male ego thought to be, another guy at the time. Turned out, it wasn't that at all. She had left me for the simple reason that the sex back then, hurt. And hell, I wish it was because I had a big penis but alas, I am not that well endowed.

No, as it turns out, because she was a virgin, it hurt her and she didn't know how to tell me because she loved me and we got along famously; so she opted to leave me instead. She just ended up seeing someone else a week or two later which is why I had made the correlation at the time.

We reconnected through Facebook in the early part of two-thousand and eight. I was going through one of my usual bouts of insomnia and, as throughout various instances in my life, Maeve popped into my mind.

Whether I was in a relationship or not, that would never stop Maeve from every once in a while popping into my field of thought. At this particular time, I was in yet another failing relationship after two failed marriages.

When I told Dawn, my girlfriend at the time, that I had reconnected with my very first teenage love, she casually asked me why I didn't go visit her for a while. Yeah, she was either too open minded an individual even for my anal expulsive self or she didn't really give as much of a flying fuck about me as I would have liked, either way, I wasn't

in a place in my life where I felt like figuring that shit out. By that time, I was so jaded it made more sense to cut my losses and walk on as much as it hurt to do so because I loved her very much.

Dawn and I had a very powerful connection almost telekinetic like. For instance, I was off working in the United Kingdom for a couple of weeks and while staying at a friend and co-worker of mine, West's place, I remember explaining to him just how deep the connection between Dawn and I was.

We had connected so deeply we could literally pick up on, and feel each other's emotional energy fields regardless of where we were in the world and at any given moment providing we were both awake of course.

"Bullshit!" West said. Couldn't blame him either, right?

"Watch" I Told him; and I proceeded to make sure that my cell phone was actually on and that she was awake based on the time zone differences. I then simply but powerfully began tapping into the love I felt for her; imagining her next to me, holding her soft hand, smelling her sweet and trance setting scent and within four or so minutes my cell phone beeped letting me know I had a text message.

I didn't even open the phone to see or read the message, I simply handed it to him with a sly smile. West picked it up and looked at me with a puzzled yet intrigued *'fuck you'* look on his face before flipping it open. His look quickly turned to a dismissive one as he flipped the phone open to read Dawn's text message which read; *'I love you too babe.'*

Interestingly enough, several months before I ever thought of leaving her, she had told me that the relationship I would have immediately after ours would be my final one and that I would have a family with my next partner. Not exactly the type of thing you want to hear from the woman you are presently in love with; it wasn't very motivating at the time to say the least.

I believe our time was just off, perhaps in another lifetime sister.

Though I've been in eight to ten full-fledged relationships including two marriages and divorces, I'd had been with at least a hundred women since Maeve. I stopped counting when I reached the early eighties, it wasn't an ego or flaunt around type of keeping track either as I never shared that info with anyone but my closest of buddies; it was strictly personal.

It's not just a guy thing either, women count too; I know several who personally have and still do including Maeve as she revealed to me in one of our E-mails where we curiously and flirtatiously asked each other how many people we had slept with, and she it seems, was keeping up with me in sexual partners.

Most men would cringe at the thought of being with such an experienced woman. Many of the male gender are prejudicially judgmental and threatened by that, hell, most women as well, but not me. Contrarily, as long as she played it safe, the more partners, the more experienced she'd be.

She explored and got to know herself, her likes and dislikes and I very much admire a woman who's had close, personal

relations with her sexual appetites. Self actualization should never omit sexual actualization as it is such a monumental part of who and what we are as a species.

Of course we fucked it all up and twisted it around like we do everything else on this planet, the locust that we are, we have yet not to ruin something we put our primitive little attention spans on, but I digress.

I've been with every kind of woman of every race, nationality and religious denominations including atheists, agnostics and vegans. I have experimented with as many who were just as open with their sexual natures. I believe them to also be more honest with themselves.

It's not that I'm a particularly good looking guy by any means, I'd say I'm average and definitely don't turn heads other than when I open the hole in my face to speak. My face is scarred up and my nose is crooked 'cause it busted more times than I care to recall as I made three quarters of the friends in my life beating the crap out of each other starting with my best friend Felicien, who tried to suffocate me in a snow bank after I punched him in the face when we were nine years here.

But, with the job and the rep brother, that combination didn't make it too difficult at all to be with the opposite sex. The sad part about it was, when we would fall in love, they would fall in love with the icon, not me. Ah, the ying and the yang of it all.

Of course, I'm pretty complex and paradoxical myself. I know I'm not an easy individual to live with, I get that. You get called things like a heretic, a non conformist, a radical, crazy, insane, nuts, or referred to as someone who belongs

in another time, space, dimension or universe enough times by enough a variety of people, you gotta start believing the scientific hypothesis.

I personally feel the late Peter Sellers said it best when he described himself as an empty vessel of which random characters float in and out of. My only consistencies are my inconsistencies. Except for what I'm good at, which happens to be hurting people, there's nothing else definitive about me to me.

I am also not the type to settle for anything less than what I know I want at any given moment and I just couldn't find 'the one' for me no matter how phenomenally close I got and did I ever, especially with one, Aella Lilith.

- Chapter 2 -

AMAZON & DEMONS

I met Aella through work in the early nineties as I was temporarily put on more casual duties while waiting for some broken ribs to heal. Though we worked exceptionally well together and got along famously during our first few gigs together, we didn't hook up till much later as we didn't work together again until we both shifted through the ranks a bit.

We were eventually paired up on many gigs and mainly worked private and corporate security as well as the protective services of high profile clients together. Not to mention our stints in the movie industry which she I believe, still occasionally works in.

We also shared a relationship unlike no other, one that stemmed from nineteen ninety-eight to two thousand and five. It wasn't a healthy one either, as it was born and nurtured in deceit for starters.

When we first got together, I was engaged to what was to be my first wife and Aella was dating one of my friends who also happened to be an occasional coworker of ours, Paul Akil. He would join us on certain operations that required, let's just say, higher deductive reasoning. She however, later left him early on into our relationship while I managed to remain married throughout.

Aella was like the female version of me. A fighter. She was built like a statuesque warrior goddess, a survivor, a true Amazon. I know I sound like Col. Trautman hyping Rambo off to Teasle in First blood, but she was all that and more.

She had been dealt a nasty hand in life and impressively took charge of her shit when she could have easily spiraled down the victim hole like countless others who went

through less than her. Aella was the victim of child sexual abuse at the hands of her father and brother only to later to be cheated on and taken for everything she had by her ex-piece-of-shit-husband.

From her earliest memories, her alcoholic father would enter her room while she was sleeping, with a kitchen butcher's knife in hand and hovered over her whispering "*I may kill you tonight, I may not, I haven't yet decided.*" He began molesting her at the age of five and then sexually abused and beat her till her early teens. He had done the same to her sisters.

Her older brother Tony was another evolutionary mistake that didn't fall far from the decaying tree. A mentally irregular, incest pedophile like his father; he would make his sisters, all of them younger than he, wrestle with him in their underwear and he'd get excited over it and force them to rub him with their bodies until he got off on them.

I don't know if her mother was clueless, in on it or a silenced victim just like the sisters were, what I do know is that she never voiced or did anything about it. To escape, as soon as she turned eighteen however, Aella married the first guy that came along showing any kind of interest towards her.

Though he never physically abused her, her husband cheated on her impregnating another woman and eventually left Aella scamming her of whatever he could and simply taking the rest.

Easy to see and understand why she didn't trust men in general, and who could blame her, every single one in her life had more than let her down to date. Then here I came

along; angry, brooding, matching her passions and with a hell of a street rep to boot, the ultimate ‘bad boy’, and it was like the nuke had detonated.

There are several ways people fall in love when they do, we didn’t *fall* at all. We fucking exploded the way a planet does in a sci-fi movie and it kept burning at levels I’ve never or will ever experience since. She knows what I am talking about too, whether she cares to admit it to herself this day, or not.

I’ve run into her a couple of times since she left me. Both times our eyes meeting at a glance then off with a turn of the head and on with our lives we went. I couldn’t tell much about her current state but the dozen or so mutual friends we shared who have seen and spoken with her since all had something in common to say and that was *‘She’s not the same bro. It’s like you took the life out of her when you left.’*

It’s not like the feeling wasn’t mutual. The life she took out of me when she left was the correct one to take however, because that life would have probably ended by now. We were a bullet train heading towards a brick wall at full tilt boogie.

I believe everyone has a tipping point when it comes to taking abuse, a point where the glass can no longer contain the liquid being poured in.... it’s just that some people have a shot glass while others have Olympic sized swimming pools. Whatever size Aella’s was, her tipping point had finally been reached when her husband impregnated another woman and took off with everything she owned.

She divorced him and began taking martial arts lessons

when twenty-five years here and trained with more heart than Rocky Balboa in the third installment of the series. If you haven't watched that series, shame on you, fucking watch it already, it'll light a fire under your ass unless you're a slug. It'll literally get you writing that book you were always supposed to.....wait....

Aella also enrolled herself in every kind of survival training she could get her hands on and her budget would allow. Various firearm courses, wilderness survival, hand to hand combat, weapons training, defensive driving; she developed so many skills and built herself to stand and look the part of the warrior she became that it opened various doors for her working career.

Her skill set first led her into the entertainment industry where she became a stunt woman and fight choreographer. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't have dabbled in that industry myself. I ended up doing part time stunt work and fight choreography as well as playing nameless henchmen in several B movies which worked to my advantage in the long run. Other times we'd work on consulting for films or simply training the actors for fight sequences, either way, it was a fun experience and served a dual purpose at the time.

Due to my connections at the time though, I had also written a script that was loosely based on my life along with a good friend who's a self made, multi millionaire and former partner in crime of mine. Literally.

It was to be a non-union action film with a budget of one million dollars allocated to us by business associates that wished to launder a few bucks and figured, hey, what better way? The first quarter million was given to the individual who was to direct the film and who also happened to be

the book keeper for several organizations and outfits, along with a contract for my buddy and I to sign so we could get going on the project.

I managed to get my mercenary friend in on the project at the time too as he was to play the lead bad guy. He's connected with various underground rock and rap bands, one rap duo in particular that had gone platinum and had one helluva worldwide cult following, agreed to not only also play lead bad guys in our film, but also do the soundtrack for us. We needed to give these guys a down payment that would guarantee us their time.

I finally got the phone call with the ok and go ahead from the director on a Thursday afternoon with a meeting set for the following day with some of the cast and crew but the brother never showed up. After a week of trying to reach him to no avail we gave up as business had to go on and we couldn't just keep everyone on hold forever with empty promises. Word on the street was he blew the entire quarter mil on blow, partying with twelve hundred dollars an hour hookers.

Needless to say, he was never found or heard from again and I later found out he was hamburger meat. Just as well too, considering my and Aella's self-destructive natures at the time, fame was the very last thing we fucking needed.

Both Aella's street and professional reputations grew which later landed her on Salvatore's crew where her and I met and eventually began working together. It is those who have gone through the depths of hell and back a survivor who make some of the most fascinating, interesting and passionate people we refer to as 'characters'. It is the degrees and depths of the damage along with the choices

we make that will literally sketch out our lives, and everyone we care for around us' lives as well.

Needless to say, she didn't trust the male gender much and she used her pain to forge herself into the cold and calculated soldier of her own life. At first, we hit it off as friends, a year into the job and during a job no less, we were *into* each other, literally.

We were on an out of town job in the Bronx, New York and on our way back late that night, we decided to spend the night at a hotel like we have a million times before. This particular weekend was a holiday one, so every single hotel and motel we went to were booked solid.

After what seemed like endless driving, we had finally found a motel off the cuff somewhere, fuck knows where, but they only had one room with one double bed left available. Like, not even a Queen or anything. A double-bed. Tiny, cheap ass, fifty bucks a night room; that brown stain sprayed across the back wall was unmistakable dried blood.

The kicker was; Aella and I weren't planning on this at all. It just happened spontaneously, and fuck you, no, she didn't trip and land on my penis, we... wait... ok, something similar to that actually; let me explain.

So here we were in this tiny room, both exhausted from the day's work and night's drive. She called her boyfriend up to let him know we were spending an extra night cause we were both too wiped to drive and I did the same with my wife, Jane.

At this point in time, I had never smoked marijuana in my

life and the last time Aella had done so was in her teens. We were however carrying quite a few pounds of the stuff back with us and figured, eh, who's going to miss a fucking joint?

So Aella and I decided, shit, what the fuck, let's smoke a J, order a pizza and giggle ourselves to sleep then drive off in the morning. Fucking sounded simple enough. She rolled a joint up, about the size of my fuck you finger mind you, but a joint none the less, and we smoked the entire thing. We both got so high, so fucking high that first time; the memory of it is akin to the strobe light flashes of fragmented, enlightened moments in a dark cave.

What happens when you take a man and a woman and put them alone in a hotel room when they're high? Wrong. Not right away anyway. Not if the pair happen to be fighters, least not with us, no, we began wondering what would happen if we kick-boxed high?

How would being high affect our fighting abilities and what better way to find out than in a motel room that one can barely walk in without bumping into the bed or a wall - than to kick-box?

Obviously, it didn't work. So what do we decide to do instead? Grapple. On the bed of course. I mean, where else? I Remember facing her, fully clothed, both of us kneeling on the bed. The next thing I knew, the strobe light flash brings us to the bathroom facing the sink, both of us buck fucking naked.

She was bent over the sink with me behind her pumping her like a jack rabbit in heat with my right hand grabbing her hair, my left holding onto her left hip and I'm watching

this in the bathroom mirror like I'm watching someone else in a pay-per-view hotel room porn on an eighties television set. That shit was surreal.

The next morning, the high wearing off but still making an appearance with a flashback of residual strobe waves, we both agreed never to speak about or do this again for obvious reasons. For the longest time we ignored it. Pretended it never happened as she went back to her boyfriend and I went back to my wife; Jane.

Now what possessed me to want to be with Jane fucking Johnson at that time? I have no clue. We couldn't have been more different, more opposite and though they say opposites attract, they most certainly don't make good partners, not in our case anyway. Perhaps it was because she was a challenge and was the only woman to have ever given me a hard time when I had first asked her out. I should've taken the universal hint too.

What ego?

Though exotically beautiful and well put together, Jane was generally rigid, anal retentive, manic depressive, materialistic, money oriented and completely engrossed in personal self conflicts of every kind indoctrinated by her cultural & religious upbringing. Everything I wasn't. Especially exotic, beautiful or well put together.

We spent an entire six years married to each other by title only, with one year of engagement prior and I can literally count on two hands the amount of times we were intimate together and I still have a few fingers left unaccounted for. We didn't even have sex on our honeymoon or wedding night or any night before or after, for months for that

matter.

When we were engaged and secretly living together, as a thirty three years on earth female had to hide the fact that she was living with her fucking fiancé from her clinically insane and neurotic mother and power tripping brother, she blamed the fact that she had negative sex drive on the fact she was lying to her family about us living together. This was of course, supposed to rectify itself once we were married and our relationship was in the open. Load of shit. Never happened.

It was soon after our engagement that Aella and I slept together. Jane was the most un-sexual woman I'd have ever experienced. I kept asking her why? I tried to make things happen for years, but to no avail. The woman wouldn't even use tongue when we kissed, ever. It was like kissing a girlfriend back in grade three. Ok maybe kindergarten in this day and age.

We had a more platonic relationship than the ones I had with my male friends, as at least, they would hug me back when we'd hug in greetings and goodbyes. Jane's arms would dangle like wet noodles at her hips while I hugged her, I'd literally have to grab her by the elbows, swinging her arms back behind me so she'd hug me back, it was like hugging a zombie that had no desire in feeding.

I don't and never have excused cheating on her as I did for all those years, that was indeed wrong. I was an asshole and I will always maintain that because I simply should have left before we were ever even engaged. However, one can definitely see how and why Aella and I commiserated together and the closeness we developed as we were also, each giving the other what we were not getting at home.

Aella and I had an entirely different kind of relationship than Jane or anyone else and I ever had for that matter. It was one unlike any other I have ever had or will ever; ever have again for many reasons, many being unhealthy. For starters, it was our darker sides, our demons that were attracted to each other, our chaotic sides got along more than famously.

Together, we became a force to be reckoned with both at work and on the streets. As clandestine as our relationship was and remained for seven nothing short of incredible years; it was movie worthy making shit... like a book worthy to write kind of shit...wait....

There was nothing this woman and I hadn't done together; worked, travelled, trained, kicked ass, broke sexual boundaries, partied, experimented on so many levels and no one has loved me as fiercely or passionately since.

It was a kind of love that literally leaves a void in the center of your being the minute that other person so much as thinks of leaving the room you share. I believe that was the closest to unconditional love two non-related humans could share. Sanity or lack thereof, notwithstanding of course.

The love was so heavy it could be measured in physical density and it was beyond obvious but because of the pure nature of our reputations then, both as individuals and a pair, no one fucking so much as breathed a word about it; not around us anyway. Not even our 'significant others' and I use that term very loosely.

That kind of love however cannot persevere because it feeds on a fire so fucking intense that eventually, there is nothing left to burn and it begins to consume you at the

very core until there's literally nothing left of you but the dust of ashes.

She'd get turned on when I'd get involved in violent confrontations through work or social occasions such as this one particular night we received some pretty hard news. A young lady we knew who was sexually abused by her grandfather from the age of four until she had turned twelve, had a sister which had just turned four and was getting babysat by her geriatric, sack of festering pus of shit of a grandfucker.

Not a fan of pedophiles. Can you tell? Much less the one's that hide behind their imaginary friend in the sky, humanity's number one cop out.

They were by their book Muslims so naturally, telling the parents would only get the young girl disowned if not fucking having acid poured over her face or killed or some other dumb religious fucking bullshit. And this isn't an exaggeration or a stab at Muslims either; this is straight from the horse's mouth. She was petrified of her father's reaction were he to find out.

Fucking religion. I still don't get how in this day and age, educated and otherwise logical thinking people still believe in an invisible loving/mass murdering father/judge in the sky regardless what denomination as they're one as ludicrous as the next other than possibly the fact that it is a program indoctrinated at birth making it nearly impossible to conceive a life without it especially for the weak needing a crutch and/or scapegoat for their predicaments.

Women especially, I can't grasp; bar none, the most oppressed half of our specie till present day, more than the

blacks, the Jews, tran-fucking-sexuals, you name it, no one has suffered more than women and they're not even a fucking minority, they are half the world's population. Imagine for a moment, if women worldwide woke up and realized this? Someone out there sure as fuck doesn't want that to ever happen.

Religion was clearly invented by men and not a single woman could have had a hand in writing that misogynistic heathenry, yet they still believe and fight for their oppression. Hands down, the most powerful program instilled in human beings from birth and the hardest to delete, unless of course, you apply logic and read a non-biased science book or two.

The drivel's that come out of religions, besides the oppression and death is nothing short of fucktarding to the umpteenth degree yet millions upon millions of people flock and live by this shit to the point of hatred, disownment, torture, war and death.

No eating pork, magical fucking underwear, talking snakes, a boat that carries every single species on earth and in couples no less, seventy-two virgins in heaven, not to mention in this fucking day and age? Virgins? Wait... those sick fucks marry five year olds, oh yea, so, where was I?

Sexual relations and marriage with children, can't cut toilet paper on Saturdays, can't have sex unless it's with a hole in a sheet, must cover ourselves up, must wear a Frisbee on our heads, must wear a ninja uniform even if it's fifty-five fucking degrees outside, sex is a sin, masturbation is a sin, public intimacy is a sin but public executions, stoning's and burnings at the stakes are not a fucking problem.... amongst the countless I don't get; the one where public

display of violence is perfectly normal and fine but public display of intimacy is forbidden while preaching peace, what the fuck is that all about?

You gotta dress like an idiot, you have to style or cut or grow your hair or beard like an idiot, pregnant virgins by a god giving birth to himself to save us from himself no less, pedophile priests and prophets, oppression, degradation, guilt, seventy-five million year old aliens blowing up human souls at the foot of a fucking volcano, misogyny, intolerance, mutilation, molestation, circumcision, segregation, blind faith, prevention of birth control, dogs warding off angels, science is evil, evil eyes, exorcisms, demonic fucking possessions, resurrections, walking on water, the universe is ten thousand years old, the earth is six thousand years old, dinosaurs didn't exist. No, wait; they did exist but it is Satan's way of testing one's fucking faith.

There's every fucking religion in a nutshell for ya; worth hating, dying, oppressing, killing and mass murdering for all the while preaching peace and love. Way to go humans. Way to go.

This indoctrinated, brainwashed and idiotic belief in deities has been weakening the human spirit, oppressing and owning the female gender and setting the evolution of the human intellect back since its inception.

Though I am certain we eventually will get passed this ridiculous belief in deities before it eventually fucking ends us as a specie, I wish I could have still been alive to see the day humanity finally deleted the religion program and embraced its own accountability.

Just imagine for a fraction of a minute, a world where

Christianity didn't set us back a thousand years with its dark ages and inquisitions and Islam wasn't in the current process of setting us back yet another thousand years by turning the Middle East into the Middle Fucking Ages and spreading like a terminal cancer.

For one of the few times in my life I felt helpless, there was nothing I could do to help her sister nor was there anything our young lady friend wanted us to do about it either. She just needed a shoulder or two to cry on and express her grief and Aella and I were those shoulders.

The fear and pure concern on this young woman's face set me right off and Aella felt it instantly. I had to blow off some steam, someone, somewhere was going to have a fucking hard night for this.

Myself included but I didn't know it yet.

What ego?

- Chapter 3 -

CONNECTING TRIPS

Aella and I drove several towns down in order not to be recognized. We searched for the hardest, most ill reputed bar/pub there and decided to go have a drink or two both knowing it would be a matter of time before someone started in on us and it literally took but ten minutes and it was bloody on.

We walked in, scanned the environment for every potential threat, improvised weapons, exits, moveable furniture etc. once we mentally secured the place, we each took a stool at the bar and ordered our drinks. Two cokes, as neither of us drank alcohol or were ever anything less than on our A game when in public. Of course, we didn't know how fucking harmful Coca Cola actually was on our health back then but I digress.

“What are you going to do ‘Mad?’” She was the only one who shortened my name that way, no one's ever done that prior or after as everyone simply either called me Nomad or the obvious Nome but to her; I guess I was mad.

“Exactly what you think ‘Ella, exactly what I came here to do. You wet yet, babe?’” She grabbed and pulled me into such a powerful kiss with a tongue that generated enough torque to penetrate the wall of teeth of a shut mouth. I kissed her back and as we released our embrace she bit the tip of my tongue hard enough to draw a drop or two of blood, kissed me again and said *“Make it quick, we got an hour drive back and I don't know if I can keep my hands off you that long.”*

Motivation.

All I had to do was look at someone in the eyes in that place, it was enough to trigger their carefully yet blatantly

hidden insecurities and that's exactly what I did. The male ego is so frail it doesn't take much to challenge it especially when alcohol is involved; a simple glance, a slight accidental bump, the pinching of one of their lady's asses. I opted for the eyeballing.

Only that night, I got a tiny bit more than I was expecting. Within seconds of my eyeballing some guy, who seemed to be just hanging out with one of his buddies trying desperately to pick up women in this classy joint; he jumped at the opportunity to reinforce what he perceived as his manhood.

He came right up to me with his best Steven Seagal scowl and whisper. The first words out of his mouth were "*You got a fucking problem buddy?*" Before I can even start replying, he threw this next gem at me "*Shut your fucking mouth when you're talking to me*".

Now, I'm not claiming to be an English lit major or anything of the sort but that was some fucked up shit right there. How the fuck, do you verbally defuse that? I mean seriously. There's no defusing that; besides, I didn't come here to defuse anything.

Behind him, his friend whom I caught from my peripherally diffused vision, grabbed a beer bottle upside down by its neck and began circling behind his buddy. It was amateur night with these guys as their attempt to ambush me failed. Miserably.

My empty coke mug sat in my hands on my lap, beneath my opponent's field of vision. He never saw the uppercut that came with it hitting him flush under the jaw, snapping his head back with the impact and breaking his jaw and

teeth.

As he staggered back, I leapt off my stool and this time broke the damn mug on top of his head. It didn't shatter or anything like that, just the glass handle broke and remained in my hand as the rest of the mug bounced off his melon and finally broke upon hitting the ground.

His friend in the meantime tried to break the beer bottle on the bar counter top like in the movies only shit in real life doesn't happen like in the movies. The bottle took several shots to break and when it finally did, it cut the moron's hand something fierce. Wanting to save face, he didn't allow the cut to deter him one bit regardless how bad that sucker was pissing blood, and he was all over me in seconds.

He came at me with such explosive rage, slashing from every possible angle with no strategy whatsoever, just blind rage, and he managed to cut the left side of my face a quarter of an inch wide and less than an inch from my left eye, deep down to my skull that just bled out like I was made of the stuff and had enough to feed a small nation of fucking vampires. Not the fucking glowing, pansy ass metro-sexual vampire kind of today either. I'm talking original Lost Boys/Near Dark shit.

The slashing didn't stop though. As I back peddled avoiding every swing, I waited for the timing to enter another one of his loading swings. Once inside, the bottle was no longer a threat.

I jammed his arm, immobilized his weapon hand and simultaneously struck him in the throat with my free open hand and proceeded to bludgeon his head upon the

mahogany bar counter top till he went limp. I wasn't a fan of jamming first and hitting after, it was a bit of a waste of time for me, I much preferred to juxtapose the two together; quicker, and more efficient that way.

In mid skull bashing however, these guys had two other friends who must have gone to the toilet 'cause they just happened to arrive on the scene as I was making mash potatoes of their friend's brain; both grabbed a side of me and pulled me off of their battered buddy. Aella tried to warn me too but I couldn't hear her as I was too involved.

Tactical mistake on my part; but I was on a selfishly emotional rather than survival mission here. Normally in hand to hand combat, the only two safe assumptions you can make to enhance your survivability is to assume your opponent is armed and that he has friends regardless of appearance while always maintaining the situational awareness of such possibilities. This way, if your opponent does pull a weapon out or, case in point, a couple of his friends show up, you won't be surprised, but contingently ready.

Once off of their friend, and with both grabbing a side of me, they began trying to pummel me at extreme close range which made their punches obsolete in terms of having any kind of painful efficiency, let alone knock out effect.

In order for a strike to have power, real power; it requires three integral elements: torque grounding and distance. Take as much as one of these elements out of the equation and any intended strike will lose at least thirty percent of its efficiency. These three elements function as a totality, these guys pretty much had all three missing.

As they were hammering me up close and I was clinching as much as possible to avoid any kind of remotely landed blow, I began literally, ripping into them. A concept actually known as the 'Shredder', put together and developed by another Canadian fighter and martial artist considered to be one of the top in his field named Richard Dimitri of Senshido International fame. Last I heard he retired from international travel to raise his son and strictly teaches locally. He's apparently also taking the time to write a book.....wait...

This brilliant life saving concept was nothing short of a hurricane of gross motor assaults literally ripping, tearing, gouging and, well, 'shredding' anything in one's path using five distinct principles of physical retaliation.

In no particular order they are; economy of motion, non telegraphic movement, nearest weapon to nearest target acquisition, attacking the primary and most devastating targets which debilitate any human being regardless of size, strength or toxicity level; the eyes and the throat, and finally, learning to manage tactile sensitivity, the ability to interpret another's movement through the sense of touch.

When applying these five principles at close range and in flawless unison, one is literally 'shredding' their opponent and that is exactly what I did to these two guys. I simply couldn't take another chance of any kind of hardware coming out, we were way too close for any kind of striking comfort at this range and so, savage I went.

The whole thing was a distant blur really. I vanished in the furthest corners of my mind and let the demons out. When I was done, there were four bodies on the floor; two of them out cold, two of them facially mutilated convulsing on

the ground in horrific spasms.

Their eyes were gouged in filled with pools of crimson blood. One of their ears was missing while another was barely dangling off the side of a cheek by a torn but still attached piece of skin. One of their lower lip was torn wide open in a downward curve exposing all of the right of the inside of his mouth and their necks were badly twisted to the point of having snapped several vertebrae. It was exhilarating to be quite honest, and that exhilaration came with the price of disturbance attached to it.

I stopped to take a breather and before I could gather a single thought or locate Aella, the bouncer grabbed me by my pony tail and pulled me off my feet towards him. I used his momentum to land a low palm strike to his balls upon my arrival. He doubled over behind me, letting go of my hair and up came a vertical elbow slamming under his jaw sending a snippet of his tongue twirling through the air as he must have had it between his teeth when the elbow found its mark.

I grabbed and clinched him before he could hit the ground and obliged him with a perfectly executed Judo hip toss right onto a table which he bounced off landing on the floor next to it.

I leapt on top of him in a fit of rage at this point. I picked up the closest piece of broken glass I could find, snapped his head back with a handful of his hair while exposing his jugular and was about to do him there and then when a female hand and voice intercepted me and said *“Let’s finish the party at my place babe, come on let’s go. I think you freaked the locals’ Hun.”*

Her voice instantly brought me back to the forefront of whatever reality I perceived, the demons subsided and we headed out the back of the pub to attract less attention. I grabbed a dirty, wet towel to place across my open wound as I was a bloody mess. I couldn't tell my blood from theirs as I was covered in it. We got to our car before the police, media and paramedics arrived.

Luckily, I didn't kill anyone that night as close as it got. If I had a dime for every time the cops would show up at my door asking for my passport, telling me to sit still to see if charges would be pressed, I'd have about eighty cents. Not that much I know, but how many times has that happened to you or someone you personally know, eh? Yeah. So it is a lot now isn't it?

Some have questioned why Aella didn't get involved or help me out when it looked like I was in trouble in instances like these. It was simply because they were of my causing and doing. They weren't fateful, accidental, or work related incidents and so if I was to go down, then so be it, my choice, my decisions, and my responsibility at this point. No one forced me to go there and pick a fight; the least these guys deserved was a fair shot and Aella needn't take any responsibility or risk for my personal battles. No, she would just reap the rewards.

We arrived at Aella's place, a very modest apartment on the east end of Montreal. She prepped the bed up and sat me up reclined, lit a Churchill Romeo and Juliet; one of my favorite cigars, stuck it in my mouth and off she went to get the first aid shit. When she got back I obliged her with a set of four oral orgasms in a row, just to warm her up some; she knew how to treat her king, I knew how to treat my queen.

She gently cleansed and nurtured my wound the way a loving mother would care for her hurt two year old. After cleansing the wound well, it looked raw and it was down to the bone, you could actually see the white of my skull; the opening looked as if someone had taken a surgically sharp knife and sliced a perfect incision across the top of a raw chicken. We contemplated going to the hospital for stitches then and there but opted to make love instead.

Two joints, three grams of magic mushrooms later and I'd forgotten the evening and we were off into our own explicit sexual universe. We indulged in all kinds of drugs. Rare was there a time where we engaged in straight sex. We'd do X (ecstasy), weed, shrooms, coke, and a mix of various drugs to engage in the most intense, eccentric, most passionate and most ecstatic tantric sex I've personally ever had. It was like sex in another dimension, experiencing it through a very conscious and lucid dream while feeling every single ounce of it at the most tactile of levels.

We had rented a hotel room one morning at eight on the infamous date of September eleventh, two thousand and one. I for one will never forget where I was the morning 'the world changed forever'. I was engaged in the most incredible sexual fantasy with Aella playing hooky from work.

We had popped an X each, smoked some weed and I popped a Viagra as well, as the X was often laced with speed and coke and it was impossible to get an erection without the Viagra. We spent eight nonstop hours having every kind of sex imaginable, I managed to give her fourteen orgasms in a row at one point. She masturbated with fierce intensity on my shin of all places but whatever the fuck, that shit was hot. It was a free for all.

We re-enacted rape scenes, had rough sex, cut each other using real blades and got off on every bit. We also made love on mushrooms often, so often that this one particular time we decided to do six grams each.

Six grams of magic mushrooms is considered by the general consensus 'in the know' as the "enlightenment" stage of shrooming, you're way beyond dancing colors and cartoon figures taunting you with clown like grins at six grams.

No, at six grams, you dive so deep into your darkest and deepest crevices of your soul and Aella and I were going there together, inside of each other mentally, emotionally and physically.

Our bodies literally became one, our flesh was one, our souls danced above us in the night sky ever so slowly, glued together in harmonious fluidity weaving between the stars in a vibrant blue energetic wave. It was a dream I didn't ever want to end. Shit, if there's really a heaven, a divine eternity after this life, I'd want to spend it in that exact state.

There were powerfully intense moments where at one point I broke a barrier inside of me and begged Aella to leave the room as I was being overcome with a murderous and seemingly uncontrollable rage and I had no idea what I was going to do next.

I was petrified; my entire body trembled and vibrated at an alarming rate doing everything within my power to contain the homicidal urge to rip someone, anyone open with my bare hands and pull all of their insides out to wear them on my naked skin; that someone being her, nothing personal,

simply on mere fact of presence.

Aella, didn't leave. She didn't budge, she sat there holding my hand, told me she'd never leave me, ever, and that no matter what, she'd be there with me and that she was staying by my side until I either murdered her or I got my shit together.

Within moments, as it often is with the mushroom high, I radically switched emotional gears and we exploded in a fit of laughter as we found ourselves sitting side by side all of a sudden, buck naked on the side of the bed together staring at a painting on the wall for what felt like a contemplative eternity. Aella broke silence by blurting out '*We're John Lennon and Yoko Ono*' and off on a laughing spree we went.

Moments later we both shared the exact same hallucination. A shadow of a past long before either she nor I or our grandparents for that matter, were even born.

There was a fourteenth century castle in the distance, an ocean to its east and vast fields of green to the west. A veiled woman in a long white robe made of a sheer material that fluttered at her feet in the wind seemed to be floating out of the field towards us and signaling us to come closer.

She was pointing at something beyond the water, motioning us to look and as we did a ship had sailed in to dock. We both freaked out asking the other if we were seeing what the other was seeing, we both nodded yes and as fast as the hallucination occurred; it had disappeared and the love making went on intensifying.

Real or not, it was moments like these that intensified and

literally bonded our souls, fusing them together as one. In my mind, we were in another dimension, another universe entirely, I could feel every single millimeter of her, her skin beckoning mine, mine yearning for hers to merge into one organism.

Our bodies couldn't physically get close enough, our dark souls literally molded to one. She was in love with the demons inside of me and I with hers, my other selves in the end proved of no interest to hers.

Our relationship intensified through the years. Imagine that. Of course, it being a cloak and dagger relationship was a huge contributing factor. We had to hide it from our friends, my wife, her boyfriend, our enemies and our boss and so it began taking its toll on us, Aella in particular.

She couldn't do it any longer. By the end of two thousand and four, she had enough of hiding and of not being able to hold hands in public, she wanted a normal and open relationship and asked me permission to get a boyfriend on the side which became a point of contention between us until she ultimately left me in the spring of two-thousand and five.

This was of course being long after she had left Paul. How on earth she thought I'd accept such a thing, especially when considering the fact that she knew my wife and I were literally less than over platonic roommates, made no logical sense.

- Chapter 4 -

'UNREAL'-ATIONS

Speaking of my first wife and logical sense; Jane was a.... I honestly, to this day have no idea what the fuck was up with her, truth be told. She was either an oppressed lesbian, a manic depressive, raped as a child and completely blocked it out or she was all of the fucking above but I've seen owls with more emotional content and owned inanimate objects that possessed more capacity for intimacy than her.

She would greet me lying on the couch facing the television barely batting an eye lash, with a monotonous '*hey, how was your day*' after I'd been gone for fourteen to sixteen hours working. She was miserably living the perfect societal life she was brainwashed into having.

We had no significant debts, together we were making a declared hundred grand a year easy; we had a brand new home after renting in some of the most expensive neighborhoods, two brand new vehicles and vacationed yearly if not twice a year sometimes and it still wasn't enough for her.

Little did she know of course that when we vacationed in Mexico, I would kill two birds with one stone and end up working a contract or two while there. I could tell her anything too, "*I'm going to watch this brother named Pedro install bicycle chains on unicycles for a few hours babe, back in a bit.*" "*Sure love, have a good time.*" She'd reply with sincerity.

Her constant state of worry about the financial future was a burden I silently carried and comforted for our entire six years of being somewhat together married. Except for our yearly vacations and maybe an hour at night and on the occasional weekends I didn't work, my time was mainly

spent with Aella. I suppose it was easy to understand Jane's persistent materialistic worries, she just happened to be a banker.

As I said, we couldn't have been more different. She was attracted to the 'bad boy' as she referred to me as; and I to her, presumably to give the corporate world the middle finger.

Though it was believed I worked for the movie industry full time, I however didn't hide the fact that I also worked as a bouncer and bodyguard part time. I just lied about for whom and the fact that it was pretty much the other way around.

I happened to have a good friend who is still operating a private investigation company and I happened to have actually worked for him on a few occasions doing just that, I just never revealed the rest of it.

It was also accepted and perhaps even understood by my family and friends who had no clue of just how far the rest of the iceberg went, because of my personality traits and general anger at the world for the loss of my sister. I was always different, they just never realized how much.

And so, a guy like me walking the streets with a woman like Jane on his arm, pissed off the twenty-four/seven, suit wearing mother fuckers in her circles, especially her psychopathic mother.

I especially loved walking into jewelry stores dressed in sweat pants and a cut off t-shirt, wearing a bandana on my head with my tats exposed and asking to see pieces well over five to ten grand. I was treated like a disease until I'd

pull a wad of cash out of my pocket then all of a sudden every suit in the place is swinging off my dick and did I ever fucking milk it.

What ego?

Jane, like everyone else for that matter, thought that Aella and I were strictly working full time in the movie industry. This of course would have something to do with the fact that this was precisely what we told everyone. It wasn’t hard enough to believe either as we did indeed do enough part time work in the entertainment industry to ward off any doubt for anyone to think otherwise.

This also gave both Aella and I more than excellent reasons for the money we were making as well as the consistent travelling and long work hours. It also gave logical enough reasons for all the ‘special skills’ we had and the occasional bodily injuries that ‘accidentally occurred’ during training, on set or while occasionally working in protective services.

Aella knew all this; she knew Jane and I had no relations whatsoever. So it made absolutely no logical sense in my head what she was suggesting regarding her getting a boyfriend on the side. No man on earth would ever remain with Aella longer than a week without her putting out and no way was I sharing her.

I was working and travelling with Aella and Jane never so much as fucking questioned it. The only reason I remained with her so long and we didn’t get a divorce earlier was because Aella, in her infinite wisdom, catered to my ever so delighted ego with this gem;

“It’s better if you stay with Jane and I stay with Paul that

way our relationship can work, otherwise, we'd get sick of each other if we worked, travelled and lived together, you'd eventually leave me for someone younger."

Sounded legit to me.

I went for it like a lap dog. Of course, she would eventually and shortly after leave Paul due to him being a control freak back then. No clue how he turned out as I haven't seen him since Aella left me and I came clean with him. I owed him that and more. He was disappointed and hurt and who could blame him, I had offered him to hit me if he so wished and I'd take it but he declined.

He accepted my apology and I never heard from him since except through the grapevine. Paul was a good friend of mine as well mind you but as a boyfriend, well, let's just say, his type of woman was more of the submissive type while Aella was anything but.

Jane as far as I last heard, is still bitter and angry to this day. I wasn't proud of what we were doing in terms of cheating on Jane and Paul, I don't excuse what we did; but it was much stronger, even bigger than all of us.

The planets had aligned for Aella and I, very few couples get to say that. We lived and loved with every fiber, cell and atom of our beings for a timeless eternity of lifetimes in seven short years.

I can't say the guilt didn't haunt at least me most times and was probably one of the reasons I drugged myself as such during our sex-capades. Well, not to mention it made the sex literally, out of this world, let's be honest.

As much as my dark side dominated me in those days, Aella's demons were much more vengeful than mine. She went after everyone who ever hurt her in her past with no regards to anyone else along the way that would become collateral damage to her demons thirst for revenge. Me included, as she attempted a lawsuit against me that went nowhere and to hurt me by proxy of hurting others I cared for after she had left.

Her ex-husband got it the worst. He had cheated on her and impregnated another woman. He proceeded to not only leave Aella but to also con and rob her of all she owned prior. When she left him, she had to start over from scratch. A couple of months later, her husband attempted to make a comeback, telling her what a mistake he made, how much he loved her and wanted her back.

Aella played him like a sinister boss. She made him believe she was still in love with him and that she was willing to take him back but not with a bun in another woman's oven. She convinced him to make his girlfriend get an abortion and then leave her and when he came knocking, she told him to go fuck himself and get lost.

The only two human beings she told me she ever cared about at the time, and that she would shed tears for were they to die an untimely death was one of her sisters and me. That was of course before she wished I died in a plane crash on my way back from a work trip from Arizona a few weeks after she left me.

She didn't have the capacity left to care for anyone else; not her close friends, her mom, some of our dear and common friends - not a single one. Though I can definitely empathize with her emotional state, I didn't share her lack

of compassion, hell, I could start balling now just thinking about the day the dog I haven't even purchased yet dies, let alone a friend or family member.

Aella also happened to be the most jealous woman I'd ever been with no doubt. Whether I noticed or not, if a woman she deemed attractive walked by us, she automatically assumed I wanted to fuck her. No matter how many times I told her she was my everything back then, and she was as no one could ever fucking come close to Aella, she never believed me.

Her insecurity and childhood traumas haunted her until they destroyed us. She spent six years worrying I'd leave her for someone else, someone younger, that she preempted and did exactly what she feared I'd do to her, to me and I can't blame her for it one bit really. Though at the time I didn't get it and I had reacted via my pain instead of the love I had for her, I later completely understood her actions.

So of course, when she asked to see someone else I said no. My ego wouldn't allow it, but she did anyway for almost a full year behind my back until she finally fell in love with him and left me, the job and the life. Except for the part time gigs she maintained in the entertainment industry, she pretty much joined the ranks of the norms in society.

She had no other choice; she had to be in control whereas I was her equal. She needed a man who she could dominate and the guy she left me for and later married was just that, fifteen years her junior, impressionable, knew of her reputation and line of work, he idolized her, and who could blame him, I did.

At the very least he was a good guy, which was truly

important to me that at the very least, she ended up with a good guy. She deserved it. She deserved better than me and I her that’s for sure; I again, just didn’t realize it at the time. She seems to have maybe though, at least on a subconscious level perhaps.

She was my second largest heartbreak after Maeve, replacing the one previously left by yet another woman I almost married in my very early twenties. Meg was a fantasy come true for the beginning of my second decade here, only to be completely disillusioned by reality while desperately fighting for the fantasy.

I met Meg at a kick-boxing gym run by a narcissistic sociopath back in nineteen-ninety. She was and still is actually, a simply gorgeous woman with expressive sky blue eyes, shoulder long dirty blonde hair and a cherry smile that would crumple her cheeks and nose in the cutest of ways, one would look for any reason to make her smile.

Yeah, that’s right, I used the word ‘cutest’, wanna make something of it? I probably live too far. She captured my heart at first sight but at the time, we were both in relationships.

Fuck. I’m starting to see a pattern here.

But yeah, she was seeing a Top Gun pilot, Tom Cruise looking mother fucker who just happened to be a fucking Top Gun style pilot un-fucking-believably named Thomas of all names; imagine that. I can’t make this shit up, I swear.

Naturally, my young and primitive ego instantly made me label her as a woman only attracted to that sort of type

so she could never go for a scrub like me. I've got a face that's been punched a few thousand times and my everyday clothes are twelve dollar track pants and some form of offensive T-shirt. I could give a rat's ass about brands, labels and the like, long as it is affordable, comfortable and functional, I wear it.

Besides the fact that I was in great shape which didn't really show unless my shirt was off, otherwise I looked like an average guy. I didn't stand a chance with her outside of fantasy; or so I thought. I didn't even bother at that point.

We became acquaintances and would see each other while at the kick-boxing gym every once in a while. I shortly after moved around some, I know, I know, hard to believe; and ended up leaving the gym I would frequent her at, of course, the narcissist owner who crept me the fuck out didn't make it very difficult to leave.

I volunteered to teach a few kickboxing classes a week for that ego maniac in order to help out and for free use of the gym and he treated me the way he would an abused girlfriend.

It's not like he ever hit me or anything, not out of the ring that is, but he was such a power tripping narcissist, this brother actually believed he invented the English language along with every single form of what he deemed to be functional fighting since the dawn of man.

He seemed to believe he had intellectual property rights on everything including how he decorated his gym. I don't think I've ever met anyone who loved to hear his own name said as much, that brother had a love affair with his name.

In the fields of endeavor I chose for myself, I have encountered every kind of ego-maniac, from the sociopathic narcissistic murderer to the wannabe street thugs from white collar suburbs who’d faint at the sight of blood, and everything in between, his particular brand of damage was that he actually possessed a ‘God complex’.

Not like the classic serial killer kind, though it truly wouldn’t surprise me for a fraction of a second if he ever turned out to be one and later caught; he came across more of ‘the creator’ than ‘murderer’ type though he ruined many, many people’s lives.

He once told me in casual conversation, that he was a genius. I of course, thought he was joking and began to chuckle only to bite my tongue in serious interruption by him proceeding to tell me *‘I’m not bragging either. I am stating a matter of fact. Just like the chair you are sitting on happens to be a chair, Nomad, I happen to be a genius.’*

What could I reply to that? Thank you very much; check please! *“I quit Mr. Bower”*.

The sad and pathetic truth of the matter was, he was a paranoid, delusional victim with a narcissism complex who enjoyed using and abusing people, not a genius. In his mind, everyone was out to get him. Any woman that ever left him was deemed a psycho.

Anyone that ever quit, left him, or just couldn’t put up with his bullshit any longer did so because they were all jealous, petty and insecure of the self proclaimed genius and his success and in his necessary and fabricated delusions, in order to maintain the façade, he would convince himself this would happen because we all had egos too big to be

around a genius of his magnitude.

Of course, while we worked for him, we were awesome, the best, and great enough to literally run his business for him while he was out gallivanting doing who knows what, but as soon as anyone would leave, all of a sudden they were never qualified to teach or run a business, they were amateurs, thieves, con artists and yada fucking yada.

What does that say about the genius' genius when he repeatedly makes the same mistake with people over and over again? You decide. Needless to say today, to those in the know, he's become known as a joke, a loser wannabe who burned so many bridges he ended up latching on to the last sucker he could in desperation to keep conning people into training with him. As they say, there's a sucker born every minute.

A couple of years later, Meg happened to have walked into the new gym I was training at in the heart of downtown Montreal, that brother Richard Dimitri's place I mentioned earlier. Turned out she was single, so was I, we went out for lunch together and to my utter thrilled disbelief, we hit it off.

As she was a fantasy to me, I had also created a fantasy relationship with her in my mind, which of course, she didn't share with me in the real world. No, it didn't involve dildos or anything of the like either, so no, not sexual fantasies, not everything's about sex and violence you know. C'mon.

I blame myself entirely for our ultimate demise as it was certainly the main reason things failed between us, my expectancies VS reality, but another contributing factor was

my double life; my work. I was gone much of the time and when I wasn't, I was constantly surrounded by friends I worked with or preoccupied with work.

People would joke at the time referring to me as Elvis Presley because I was surrounded by my posse all the time. We were together so often and so much we were ironically referred to as 'the Montreal Mafia' as per Elvis' 'Memphis Mafia'. They weren't just my coworkers, we spent so much time together and had each other's backs during so much; we became family.

Meg and I had taken a very rare weekend off together and when we arrived at our destination, she got out of the car and began searching everywhere from the trunk to under the vehicle.

"What are you looking for hun?"

"Your friends. Where are they?" She half joked. Ok, she wasn't joking at all, she actually expected them to be there and normally, they would have too.

I was so busy and consumed with my double life that I completely and totally neglected Meg, taking for granted she would always be there, for we also swore on the stars and the moon to each other. After a heart wrenching back and forth, she finally left me for another man fifteen years her senior.

What pattern?

My ego at the time blinded me and I couldn't see or understand why. It took me several years to get over her and over a decade to understand why and bless her, she

persevered to maintain a friendship with me throughout and I reluctantly had for a long time.

By the time Aella ripped my heart out and played a professional game of basketball with it, I had already been here thirty six years, I had experienced enough to know I'd eventually recover and get over Aella regardless of how long and painful the process; I knew I would heal.

Heal I did and I moved far and beyond, though she will never be forgotten. Aella carved herself into my being. I fundamentally believe we would have eventually self destructed and completely consumed ourselves had we remained together.

The most modern day Bonnie and Clyde to date. We also ended on an unfortunate bitter note when I had found out she was seeing her then soon to be husband.

Things were said and done that could never be taken back and she left wishing me dead. She got part of her wish because when she left, she took a very dark part of me along with her and I found myself no longer able to continue doing the work I was doing at the capacity I was doing it at without her. Tornados of changes were on the way, Maeve being the most catalytic of all.

Speaking of, just another two thousand kilometers to go, figured I'll drive for a few hours longer before crashing for the night.

- Chapter 5 -

INTOXICATING NOBILITY

I have to admit, a sports car isn't the best place in the world to sleep but it does save a fuck load of time and money. My neck's a little stiff and I have to piss something fierce. Covered over a thousand kilometers yesterday, not bad, I may make it ahead of schedule at this rate.

It had been twenty-three years since we had seen or even heard of, or from each other. Not once did life cross our paths, not once did I even run into a friend of hers or anything of the sort, nothing, we had just vanished from each other's lives entirely after what for me was then and for a long, long time after, the most intense love I'd ever felt for a woman. It took me five years to get over Maeve Adira, and the truth is; I had obviously never gotten over her.

All I had left of her were a few pictures we had taken as teens in an old photo album and great memories. I'd often wonder what became of her. Was she married? Did she still live in Montreal? Did she have kids? Was she even alive for that matter? Did she still like to cut up her socks while wearing them and talking on the phone? The fuck did she disappear off too for over two decades?

It was five o'clock in the morning and I was sitting on Facebook making fun of some old friends when she happened to enter the twisted labyrinth that is my mind. I typed her name in and only one Maeve Adira came up. Of course, how many other Maeve Adira's would there be, really?

The kicker however is, there was no profile picture of her, just a sun setting behind a stunning mountaintop. Of course her privacy settings were set to the hilt and I couldn't see anything else but her sunset and no other available info or

profile pictures whatsoever. I figured what the fuck, take a shot; send her a message.

“Hey slut, remember me? The fuck was your problem back in the days you stuck up cun....” no, no, just kidding. Here’s what I really sent.

“Hey there Maeve, not sure if you remember me or not as this is going back almost a quarter of a century but we were each other’s first back in eighty-six, I was just wondering how you were and what became of you. If this is the wrong Maeve or you don’t remember or give a fuck for that matter, please ignore this message and accept my apologies.

Nomad Wyman”

Within minutes I received a reply.

“Of course I remember you! How can I forget? We were each other’s first and I broke your heart, twice; I’m so sorry!....”

Yeah. I forgot to mention she broke it twice. She had left me once for another dude from the hood, an old friend she had a crush on that had showed no interest in her and we got back together a few weeks later. Three months after that, she leaves me for the second and last time. Of course, I got over it. It’s been a while and lots obviously happened since. Anyway, back to the rest of her message.

“...so how have you been? Are you still in Montreal? It’s great to hear from you! Get back to me. Take care. Maeve xox”

Yeah, by the way, ‘xox’ is not a word pronounced; ‘gzocks’

alright? For the laymen out there, it's the symbol for '*kiss, hug, kiss*'; just to clarify. Fuck's sake.

We messaged each other for almost six months before we actually spoke on the phone. Not every single night or anything but almost. She said she was too nervous to hear my voice just yet which carried with it the flair of an innocent adolescence long gone and forgotten.

When we finally did speak for the first time, her ever so distinct voice brought me right back to my parent's basement in nineteen eighty-six. Instant time warp, lots of those were to happen as time went on; more powerful than any scent or song could ever take me back. For a fraction of a minute, I was sixteen turning seventeen again and it felt euphoric. Except for the fucking acne.

She had lived her share of hardships as most do and she was a traveler like me, we shared many things in common including the fact that we both lost a sibling, her brother to a gang fight, my sister in an abduction, and were both single in our later thirties, well, she was; I was on my way to being single pretty quick.

She was a dancer, more of a part time choreographer at this stage of her life than a performer as she suffered an injury while performing when she was in the early part of her second decade on this planet.

Except for maybe ditching school in college to backpack and travel the globe, she led a fairly regular lifestyle; went to work, hung out with friends, remained very active, never married though had a few long term relationships.

She bought a home, sold a home, travelled some more

to finally somewhat settle in Kelowna BC. She was also working in service a few nights a week for the tips gave her the extra cash to maintain her travels.

I on the other hand.... well, let's just say, I did kind of the same, same but different. Perhaps the loss of my sister who went missing when she was five and never found since had a thing or two with the direction in which my life took but you know what mother fuckers, I'm still here.

The majority of my childhood friends all went the traditional and time honored route paved and dictated by society. Shame too because a few of them had such incredible potentials for so much more than the mediocre nine to fivers they became.

Their passions and higher purposes were slammed shut and extinguished at an early age by whatever dogmas instilled in them whereas I was lucky enough to have liberal and open minded parents who allowed me to explore mine fully. I am forever in debt to my parents, if I was lucky in any way, shape or form, it was to be blessed with the parents I have. I Love you guys. Thank you for me.

Most of the friends I grew up with graduated from college and uni, got decent paying jobs, eventually found wives and did the kid thing. Something I've longed for myself but with the lifestyle I chose, it would have been unfair to any woman or child at the time and unless I manage to make a relationship finally work and fast, it may be too late for me to have a child, besides, what kind of father would I make?

They go to work, pay the bills, watch reality tv at night, shop on the weekends, pay their taxes and go on their chosen two to three weeks vacation a year in some mini

USA resort on some tropical beach like all good working class men and women do. Nothing wrong with that I suppose, unless you mind being a societal clone and having your life dictated from cradle to grave by everyone else with the illusion of freedom and choice.

That just wasn't me nor was it Maeve for that matter and that's just it, there was a me I didn't want stifled, I didn't want to be subdued, I had a personality unlike most who are indoctrinated to share the same one. I did not follow the proselytized path at all. I thought differently from others since I was a child and judging by the conversations I've been having with Maeve and the childhood I remember her from, she was quite similar.

When Thailand was hit by a Tsunami in two-thousand and four and Maeve got wind that the money being donated to the Red Cross never made it to the victims, she took it upon herself to raise several thousand dollars, pack her bags and personally go to one of the affected villages and personally help rebuild it.

The airline she and her friend were flying with was so impressed with her that they gave her and her friend an airline ticket for free to pitch in and some rich brother somewhere also heard of her generosity and decided to purchase a new fridge for every home in the village.

She fell in love with the place so much that she decided to live there for a year working in a bar and selling weed under the table for extra cash. Not your typical, every day woman.

As for me, I barely made it through college which other than spending time with my friends back then, friends and

times that would somehow indirectly prepare me for what was to come later in life; college was a catastrophic waste of time for me.

My passion was anything that had to do with combat arts, strength training and self improvement. My father introduced me to Bruce Lee when I was six years here and I was hooked from there.

Though I obviously don't mind breaking someone's face if they deserved it in the street or on the job, I was and still very much am a pacifist; an angry pacifist with the emphasis on '*fist*' when pushed or threatened mind you, but a pacifist none the less.

I trained in as many combative disciplines I could find including boxing, Muay Thai, grappling and various martial arts disciplines from my early childhood on earning several black belts by my eighteenth year on earth.

Between my twenty and my twenty-first year here, and by total fluke, if you haven't guessed it by now; I began working for the mob. The events that lead up to my double life happened while I was working part time at a local weight lifting gym in downtown Montreal in nineteen-ninety-one.

Back in the early eighties and up to the mid or so nineties, the silent, over muscular lone warrior was dominating the entertainment industry kicking all the bad guy's asses and getting the girl at the end of the day.

Lead by none other than legendary bigger than life icons Hulk Hogan, Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jean Claude Van Damme; needless to say, all of my

adolescence heroes if you throw in Bruce Lee, Steven Seagal, Bruce Willis, Mel Gibson, Charles Bronson and Clint Eastwood in the testosterone soup, I modeled myself after the archetype.

All these guys were ass kickers, feared, respected and always fought for the greater good and at the sacrifice of themselves. Of course, they weren't just my teenage heroes, they were and still till today are millions upon millions of others as well.

I was so inspired by these guys and not just on training and becoming the best fighter I could be and what not, but I took it to a whole other level brother. Thinking back now, it was probably quite unhealthy and should've been looked at by someone but then, no one close to me really knew to what extent my motivation and general anger at the world would take me. I lead a double life for quite a long time.

Needless to say, If I wasn't in a martial art school learning some form of hand to hand combat or another, I was in the weight lifting gym either lifting or working as a 'gym monitor' for minimum wage. I didn't give a shit about the money. I just had to be around it all the time. I took every opportunity to learn, train and expose myself to the combat arts and to strengthening myself I could get.

Another martial artist and great friend of mine Kemp Garret, back in my college days who later became one of the top bouncers/doormen in Canada, started a 'fight club' of sorts in the dance studio; it was an open invitation to any and all martial artists and fighters to come and train and exchange ideas and concepts. We had a handful of guys of various disciplines come together and spar, train and workout together.

Kemp ended up later working with me for the mob, we did several jobs together before they made him a bar n' pub 'sweeper' and we had each other's back on more than a few occasions. We had previously trained together so often we knew how the other strategically thought in combat.

On the jobs we worked together and when the chips were down, Kemp and I, along with Aella who joined us on a couple of those occasions before she and I would become permanent partners, would be the only ones left standing. I made some lifelong friends in college during those crazy martial arts training sessions.

I remember one night coming home back in my college days from my girlfriend's house that lived a few towns away on the south shore of Montreal. I would often stop at a convenience store on my way home late at night to purchase martial arts and bodybuilding magazines.

The guy at the counter saw the mags I was purchasing and immediately struck up a conversation with me, as he happened to be a martial artist as well. He asked me what styles I trained in and I let him know the ones I was officially training in which were then mainly striking arts, and he tells me about Jiu Jitsu, a Japanese grappling art made world famous and modified by the Brazilian Gracie family.

I asked him if we could meet sometime and exchange ideas and he says: *"Why not now? The store is locked and any customer wanting to come in has to ring anyway, we can go in the back store?"*

"Sure." I replied, and off we went. We entered the back store and agreed on the rules. I began throwing some

light fancy Van Damme style high kicks if anything but to impress him.

What ego?

So here I am throwing one of my high Tae Kwon Do kicks and this son of a bitch ducks and shoots under it grabbing my supporting leg and nearly tearing my knee out of its joint taking me to the ground and straddling me in ways that would make a pretzel uncomfortable.

Instant learning experience. ‘Mental note; there’s a fucking reason a genius like Bruce fucking Lee said *‘high kicks don’t work in a real fight’*, well fuck me they don’t work too well in a fake fight either Nomad, keep em low and football like. My next step was becoming a more proficient grappler.

- Chapter 6 -

TWISTED FATE

Back in the days and heavily influenced by my silver screen heroes, I began taking steroids to take my scrawny one hundred and forty pound frame to an eventual one hundred and ninety pounds at a short five feet, eight inches tall. With boots on. What inferiority complex and overcompensation?

I'll tell ya though, steroids, like anything else that actually enhances the human being get a bad rap by the media and the likes. Obviously, if abused, they will damage you but to quote Joe Rogan who was referring to weed but is as applicable here, "*Well shit, you can abuse cheeseburgers too, we don't go around closing Burger Kings!*" You can also abuse aspirin, vitamin C and caffeine.

I'm not saying they are great for you. They are a drug, they are addictive, they do have their dark side, but so does alcohol and teens along with hundreds of adults are dying from it daily without anyone raising as much as a fucking eyebrow simply because we have been brainwashed as a specie to believe that certain poisons are better than others, strictly based on both their side effects and financial contributions by and for our governments and media.

So naturally, I'm working at a gym as a gym monitor in the early summer of nineteen ninety-one, not yet on the roids but by this time weighing a hundred and fifty-five pounds as I had put on fifteen pounds of muscle naturally back then and you make your greatest gains at the beginning of course. I didn't use roids till a few years later actually.

Ironically, since I've changed my training methods and switched from bodybuilding to bodyweight and Parkour free running back in two thousand and eight, I dropped back down to a steady hundred and fifty five pounds. I

may not look the part anymore, but looks can definitely be deceiving as my agility, speed and explosiveness today are ten times what they were when I could barely wash my back in the shower.

So I just had to be around it all the time in one form or another and in the early nineties, a bodybuilding gym was definitely one of those forms; and to quote Guns n' Roses, "*on an ordinary day, not in an ordinary way*" my entire life was to take the most radical of turns.

Two Hindu fellows, quite thin and wearing their traditional head wear, had just joined the gym and made their way to the bench press. They proceeded to warm up just lifting the bar with no weight on it. Across from them where the dumbbells were stacked, was this meathead bodybuilder curling eighty pound dumbbells with veins popping out the side of his neck the size of a fuckin fire hose.

The Neanderthal notices the two guys; he drops his weights, which is a big no-no right off the bat and takes his gym towel, wraps it over his head mimicking their religious headwear and begins making mocking ritual gestures towards them.

These two guys of course got very intimidated and did their best to ignore the lowlife and move away from the prick. Now as you know, I'm no fan of religion or the stupidities it makes one do in their lives, but fuck me if you're going to be a direct asshole about it to someone who's not doing anything directly aimed to ruin your day with it.

Being a 'gym monitor' at the time, I head over there and start giving the brother shit and in the midst of my shit storm he shoves me in the chest so hard, I literally fell on

my ass slightly winded. He just stood there laughing at me like I was an insignificant mosquito in his way.

Being the hot head that I still am today but now have under control... sometimes...I got back up, picked up a ten pound iron plate off the closest rack and cracked him in the fucking melon with it making a ping noise off his head, splitting it nice and open. Blood's spurting out the top corner of his head like a busted faucet opened on max and leaving an L shaped opening on his bald noggin, and down the gorilla went.

My next instinct was to crack him another one in the elbows just to fuck with his lifting career but the boss comes running out screaming my name as I raised my arm to take another swing. I froze with the look of Po, the Kung Fu Panda, when he was caught eating cookies. I dropped the iron and he tells me to get my ass in his office pronto.

As I was sitting in his office I could hear the commotion outside, cops and ambulances were called, I figured, I'm going to jail this time. How the hell am I going to explain this shit to my folks?

Minutes go by like hours, hours like days and finally my anxious anticipation is interrupted by the opening of the office door. My boss, Lito Sotti, walked into his office, turned around and closed the door behind him, then turned to face me for what seemed to be a silent eternity.

'I guess I'm going to jail then?' I asked him with a sense of loss. Loss as in; what a fucking loser I am.

'Not quite.' He replies dryly. *'How would you like a promotion kid?'*

'Look I'm really, really sorr... what!? A what!?!'

I couldn't believe what I was hearing, it was like being at a barbecue on a hot day and grabbing your glass of coke from the table you previously left it on, parched for an ice cold gulp, but by accident grabbing someone else's glass of fucking warm goat jizz and guzzling that down instead.

Yeah, imagine the confusion. Not to mention how repugnant that would be which really doesn't fit into my analogy at all here but you kinda get the idea. Sorta. I hope anyway 'cause I'm not giving you another one.

Needless to say he had me at a loss. Here I am expecting to get fired, sued, arrested and thrown in jail and instead, I am offered a promotion. Shit, why the fuck not. Let's hear what this sucker's got to say.

'There's someone I'd like you to meet' he tells me. 'He owns quite a few businesses in town and he's always looking for that 'special' kind of help'.

He accentuated *'special'*. Though I've got no probs whatsoever with homosexuality, the cock does absolutely nothing for me unless it is specifically mine. Yeah, so *'special'* right there - sent my Spidey fucking sense a tingling and suddenly; jail looked more appealing.

"What kinda 'special'... help exactly?" I asked.

'You've got balls kid.'

Oh shit... here we go, fucker's on my balls now, saw that shit coming a mile away too, he'd better take the let down well or we were gonna have a serious fucking problem

there and then. There's no iron plate in his office but that fucking marble cigar ashtray sitting on his desk'll do just fine.

“What you mean; ‘balls’, exactly;.... brother?”

“Moxie kid. You got nerve of steal to open a man up like that in public just because he shoved you down.”

“I didn't do it because he shoved me, brother. I did it 'cause he's trash and a waste of fucking physical matter.”

Of course shoving me didn't help his cause at all either but that wouldn't be cool to tell.

“Feisty.” He replied with a hint of facetiousness.

He looks at me for several minutes not knowing what to do with me. Reason being is that the Nomad that presented himself to work every day was a humble, polite and friendly guy, reasonably obedient and always smiling.

Lito had never seen that other side of me before. Not many have and prior to this particular incident, the last time I wreaked havoc on someone as such publicly, I was just thirteen years on earth, weeks after my sister's disappearance.

An older kid from the neighborhood, maybe fifteen or sixteen at the time, would walk by my parent's place while I was raking the leaves in our front yard. This little prick would kick over all my leaf piles and run off before I could catch him.

After the fourth or fifth time he kicked my leaf piles all

over the place, I set one up for him not far from our hedge where I could hide behind. Surely enough, here he came; this time however I caught his sorry ass, grabbed him by his lapels and threw a right overhand hook knocking his ass down to the ground.

He landed next to my father's Volkswagen Beetle which back in eighty-two, had steel bumpers in the back and I proceeded to smash the kid's head on it opening his forehead up. Not sure why his parents never came around, my guess is that he lied about what happened not to come across like the piece of shit he was.

What anger issues?

So Lito handed me a business card with a name; '*Luciano Salvatore*', a number and a down town club address for me. That fucking name would haunt me for the next twenty years.

But hol'on a sec here, what had happened? I heard the cops out there. How did Lito send 'em off without me so much as even being questioned?!?

"Taken care of kid. No worries."

Wouldn't be the last time I'd hear those words either.

- Chapter 7 -

VIOLENCE, WHAT EGO? & RETRIBUTION

A few days pass, I make my daily presence in college and I take the time to contemplate the events that just took place. The teacher's monotonous diatribe becomes white noise in the background as my thoughts begin to soar and I eventually realize that my classmate and project partner Mara, had been missing from class for the last couple of weeks.

Little did I know at that time that the course of the next couple of weeks were going to foreshadow my next twenty somewhat years.

Concerned after a while as her presence had also been missing in school, not just our Psychology of Sex class, I did a little digging around. After going through the usual channels, I finally reached her.

She'd been at home, healing and she confided in me that she'd been brutally raped by one of the students at the college. I know the fucker too. Not personally, but of his rep. Typical fucking cliché too, but it was a star quarter back football player, good looking, well known and respected; big mother fucker too.

I went to see Mara at home. She looked like she had been through a shredder, then dumped in hell a few times but never quite left it the last time there. I barely recognized her. Her head was shaved to reveal nasty scars across it and the light that was once in her beautiful brown eyes was gone, it was like looking into the abyss.

She was scarred all over where she wasn't bandaged up and was propped up on pillows in a recline-able bed. She could barely speak and had to write most of what she was communicating as not everyone owned a Commodore Vic

20 back in the days.

He had torn every one of her orifices including her mouth. The sides of her mouth were sewn shut where he ripped her open much akin to Heath Ledger's Joker in the Batman movie.

After trying to use his barely functioning dick, like most rapist scum, he got angry it wouldn't rise to his occasion and he violently took it out on Mara. He raped and sodomized her with a rusted steel pipe for seven hours taking breaks only to burn her with a cigar and stab her with tiny sewing scissors only to open them once inside her before ripping them out. He would also urinate and defecate on her.

He had totally disfigured her, her teeth were shattered by the steel pipe. This piece of shit didn't even do her the justice of ending her life for nothing of the Mara I got to know was left or would ever return.

Judging from the depth of his actions, this was most certainly not the first time he victimized a woman and definitely not the last. Knowing both his and her rep, no one would believe her anyway; she wasn't the most conservative woman I had met and rape victims rarely get vindicated. They are often forced to face the piece of shit that ends up more often than not, back on the streets.

She hadn't told anyone except for me and her sister, whom she lived with and like her, didn't want her sister to go through the hell of pressing charges and dealing with her rapist again.

She refused to press charges and this piece of shit was

walking free. Free to do it again and fucking breed. Not for long though. I'm no murderer but this bucket of festering rat puss was never going to rape anyone, ever again nor would he ever reproduce.

Weeks go by. I plan his karma carefully. Several kilometers from where I lived was an old, abandoned and run down wooden cabin in the middle of a butt fuck nowhere forest by a highway that my cousins and I used to play at when we were kids. The closest thing to this forest for human eyes to see without binoculars was the highway, so no one would hear him scream either.

I searched and found an old cast iron chair which I modified and bolted down into the cabin floor which I had to reinforce with triple plywood. I attached Velcro straps for the biceps, wrists, thighs, ankles, neck and head to it and had duct tape to secure on top of the Velcro straps. I purchased a hammer, the smallest hand held blow torch I could find as precision was of great importance; an x-acto knife, a water pistol, a container for fuel, and the mother of all first aid kits.

I had my ninja...yes, a fucking ninja uniform I had purchased from Asian World of Martial Arts, you wish you were this cool; after all, it was still the early nineties and I didn't want him to know who his host was. Now all I needed was him in that chair.

I hadn't told this story to too many people before, perhaps a select handful, but I'm certain one of them whispered it to someone somewhere along the way and on it went like a livewire hitting someone in Hollywood down the years responsible for the Dexter and Hostel series.

Knowing this ego maniac and the kind of revolting excuse for a man that he was, I catered to his ego. I had a female friend call him up pretending to have seen him play football and wanted to get to know him. Had her tell him she was a stripper and she finished late on weekends so she had to meet him after work as the rest of the time, she was in school.

He agreed and I had her meet him at a specific area of a huge mall parking lot where there was a bush garden. Of course, she wouldn't show up. I would.

The dumb bastard agrees and at 4am, he fucking shows up at this parking lot, standing outside of his car by the bush garden waiting for this girl to show, dick in hand. She had told him her shift finished at two, she needed time to go home and wash her night off and she'd meet him at four at this particular location because it was simple and very close to her home. Not to mention, not many people out on suburb streets at four o'clock in the morning.

So there I am crouched behind those bushes in a ninja uniform I put on over my clothes with a large brown paper bag. I jumped out, put the bag over his head and proceed to choke him unconscious with a sleeper hold.

Soon as he was unconscious, I tied him up from his neck to his ankles, literally, the whole body wrapped in thick hardware rope; he looked like a redneck mummy. I gagged him, punched him across the face just because fuck him and shoved him in the trunk of his own car driving him off to the busted ass cabin.

He doesn't remain unconscious long of course, not even ten minutes into the drive with another fifteen to go and I

could hear him wriggling around in the trunk. Once there, I parked the car as close in as I could and proceeded to open the trunk, he tried to scream and growl and I simply turned him around and choked him out again.

I pulled him out the trunk and fire man carried his ass to the cabin and put him in the chair where I wrapped him in Velcro and duct tape making more than certain he couldn't move. Of course, from point A, the car, to point B, the chair, he awoke seven times and I had to choke him out every single time.

I left him there and drove the car off as deep into the bush as I could so it couldn't be seen via any trail or potential passer by's in the morning on their way to work, didn't want his car identified.

Once back, I sat and waited for him to awaken. While I sat there watching him, a thousand things ran through my mind only to land and stop on the memory of my missing sister.

She was taken probably by a piece of human excrement like the one in front of me. What I would give to know... to have *'him'* in this chair instead. But this rotting cunt had to do for now.

He woke up to see a ninja with an x-acto knife standing in front of him. Not exactly a samurai sword but fuck him, I owed him no authenticity and couldn't afford the full accessories at the time anyway.

His first words were "*What the fuck man?!?*" Obviously, utterly confused he was, it's not every day you wake up in an old cabin in the woods to a ninja holding an x-acto knife after being choked out a thousand times over on the way to

being promised a night with a stripper.

“You’re an asshole.”

Ok, so maybe he had a point. Didn’t take anything away from what he did though.

“Takes one to know one.”

Yeah, that’s all I had as an opening line. You know, I thought about some cool, bad ass shit to say to tough talk the guy to death with cause I had imagined shit like that countless times, and how cool I would be like when it’d go down and all, but I never really had the time to make up or rehearse anything so instead; I adlibbed.

“Fuck you man, get me out of this chair! Who the fuck are you?” He struggled frantically trying to loosen himself while throwing vicious death glares at me.

“Isn’t it obvious? I’m a ninja.”

Like I said... I adlibbed.

‘What the f... HEEEEELLLP!!!!’

He screamed so long and hard his voice crackled to a fade at the end. I couldn’t help but laugh which seemed to upset him more; which I grasped really, it could have been construed of as kind of rude.

“Why would I tie your ass up where people would hear you scream fuck head? I’m a fucking ninja.” I tapped the top of his head with my knuckles a few times for effect.

“HEEEELLLLPP!!!! SOMEONE!!! ANYONE!!!!!! I swear I’ll fucking kill you, LET ME FUCKING GO!!!

His struggle resulted in nothing more than exhaustion and tensed pulled muscles. His head, wrist, biceps, ankles and thighs were strapped in and duct taped down into a bolted reinforced chair. He wasn’t going anywhere except maybe a chiropractor after that interpretive dance.

“You know nothing of ninjas it seems.”

This was perplexing and interesting to my twisted nineteen year-exposed mind. I got the panic part, but I didn’t quite get his rhetoric, why the fuck would I let him go after going through all the damn trouble of getting him here in the first place? Not just a rapist, but a fucking moron as well.

“Simple mathematics brother. You hurt someone I know. You took her life away and left nothing but a used up shell. I can only imagine you’ve done this to others and will continue to do so..... so, today; I am your karma.”

I grabbed my x-acto and delicately began to cut off his eye lids one at a time. I wanted him to see everything I was going to do to him in living color. He tried to wiggle at first though he had extreme minimal range of motion to do so, however it was enough for me to potentially slip and cut his eyeball open. It didn’t take long to convince him not too, he quickly saw it my way.

He screamed but not nearly as much as I thought someone would while having their eyelids cut off. I quickly took care of the bleeding and cauterized the wounds with the lowest setting on the blow torch carefully placing a thin metal sheet above his eyes not to fry him blind.

That part...he scam louder than any of his female victims ever did I'm sure. I went real slow with that too. One quick trigger pull at a time with fifteen minute intervals in between blasts. For one, to let the pain settle in so that the next blast hurts just as much and for two, in order not to fry his brain in the process of course. I'm not all that bad for fuck's sake.

"You're insane!" He shrieked.

He had the audacity to accuse *me* of insanity as tears poured down his now, un-shut-able eyes.

"No. I'm not, I'm a predator....You're insane."

"But I didn't do anything to anyone!!!!" He yelled with a quivering voice.

He lied through his teeth...it was thus time to bust a few.

"You're a liar, a rapist and a torturer. You're also a coward and a sloth's nut sack."

I quickly realized the magnitude of the insult I just threw at every sloth's nut suck out there. This for some still unknown reason to me enraged me and I got right into his face screaming like a raving lunatic;

"NOW I HAVE TO FUCKING APOLOGIZE TO THE NEXT SLOTH I SEE FOR COMPARING HIS FUCKING SCROTUM TO YOU, YOU PIECE OF FUCKING SHIT!"

I grabbed the hammer and with a moderate enough strike right under his nostrils, I swung it with a flick of my wrist, no body torque at all, just enough momentum to break the

philtrum and lower chin as well as shattering several teeth. He shriveled in pain and moaned in agony as he spat gobs of fragmented teeth filled blood splatter.

He screamed, growled as he frantically wiggled and then just cried until it subsided. I just sat there silently watching him agonize. It was a rush. It felt fucking fantastic. I gotta say that every fiber of my being felt alive and individually danced hypnotic fire jigs watching him suffer.

Finally, realizing that lying at this point will get me nothing but more pissed off, he muttered through his busted mouth; *“You’re no better than I am. You’re just like me. You’re a fucking hypocrite.”*

Naturally, I had to make him repeat that several times ‘cause I couldn’t understand a single word that was coming out of his busted mouth. Finally, after a few, coughs, wheezes and blood splatters everywhere, I made it out.

What he hadn’t realized was that I was worst than he could ever be. I just needed vermin like him to expose my passionate, raging desires and once I let those fuckers out, it became much easier to open those gates again and again as they eventually almost consumed me.

I leaned in close to his ear and whispered; *“Oh no brother, do not make that mistake... I am certainly not better than you nor am I pretending to be...”* As I made my way to his other ear, I continued *“rather, I am much, much worse than you could even imagine. I just target soul sucking parasites like you.”*

I wrapped my hand around his ear grabbing the entire thing tightly in the palm of my hand and squeezed and squeezed

until with a sudden jerk and torque-full body twist, I ripped the entire thing off with one swift and hard tug. It takes roughly eight to ten pounds per square inch of pressure to rip off a human ear; a toddler can generate that kind of force. Notice I said ‘human ear’ ...not a wild boar’s ear now.

“Oh, how thoughtful of you dude, thank you so very, very much; a souven-ear, you shouldn’t have.” I did my best Van Damme drunk dance imitation from the movie Kick Boxer for him but he didn’t appreciate it as much as I would have, I mean come on man! A ninja holding an ear doing the fucking Van Damme, kick-boxer drunk dance for free!?! Not only was this misogynist a rapist, but a fucking tasteless ingrate as well.

Grant it, it was *his* ear.

He yelled, swore, cried, begged then threatened and his emotional tantrum went on for several minutes until I knocked him out cold with a solid hook punch, fed up of his cacophony. He looked really eerie out cold with his eyes open too... he looked dead. Ew. Crept me the fuck out.

I figured I’d leave him there for an hour or so to anticipate whatever maybe coming next and give me the time to get home, get some breakfast, take a shower and come back to the festivities. That’d give him the time to reflect while listening to the New Kids on the Block.

You see...to ensure the constant torture as I didn’t want to let up on this fuck, I had recorded the New Kids on the Block on a one hundred and eighty minute cassette tape and left it playing for him for when he’d awaken.

Too bad we didn't have iPods and Justin fucking Bieber back then; I'd have had twelve hours of the shit playing on repeat for his jock ass and I wouldn't have had to do anything else to him either. That'd been enough. Fry his fucking mind. Ok. You get the point.

Less than an hour and a half later and I'm back for round two. He doesn't look to happy about the New Kids on the Block. I don't blame him. But fuck him, he pissed and shit on Mara while raping her.

"You gonna kill me?" He asked with a matter of fatal resignation.

"Nah. I'm not a murderer. I prefer to leave you an open wound and empty shell that will never be able to reproduce or rape again. If you want to die when I'm done with you, that's your prerogative."

"I don't want to die." It was settled then, we agreed on something.

"If I may ask..." he said in between blood splattered spits. *"You said earlier that you're doing this for someone you knew? Was it your sister or girlfriend?"*

"Neither". My answer puzzled him.

"Your mother?"

"It was a classmate."

"You...you're torturing me....for a class mate?" he uttered in disbelief.

“Imagine for a moment.....if it was my girlfriend or child?”

He sensed the smile he didn't see through my ninja mask. His energy reeked of it. He quietly understood that had he the misfortune of having hurt one of my loved ones, he'd be in that chair for at least a decade as I would have dedicated every waking second of my life not sustaining it, ripping him piece by tiny piece, feeding him each piece of him to himself and making damn certain he watched the whole thing over and over on video as it would play on repeat with Boy Georges' *'Karma Chameleon'* on loop as the soundtrack.

“So why do you do it?” I asked him. I was genuinely curious at this point and didn't yet understand what made a psychopath as such. I figured, hell, go straight to the source.

“Thuhk uuh, duh yotheng o leh eeh goh!!!.” He spat more blood and just sunk his head in defeat.

“Suit yourself.” I didn't understand a word of what he had said and couldn't bother subjecting either of us at this point through the process of making him repeat himself a thousand times till I did, but I could've sworn there was a 'fuck you' somewhere in there. Either way; didn't really matter.

I grabbed the hammer and one by one, slammed it on one finger and toe tip at a time, right on the nail baby. I enjoyed watching the tops of his fingers explode like fast food ketchup packets.

What I enjoyed more though was his pain. With every scream, every shriek of anguish, I would see Mara's face. I

would imagine him sodomizing her and urinating on her as he laughed.

“You enjoy hurting women. I enjoy hurting filth like you. We have something in common.” I told him as I blow torched the tips of his fingers and toes to cauterize them. I blowtorched them for several seconds though. I mean I literally roasted ‘em down at least a good half inch.

The stench was eye watering and nauseating beyond anything I’ve ever smelled and I used to hang out with guys who drank milk and egg protein shakes. That smell is forever burned into my nostrils unfortunately. Lesson learned that day; never hang out with guys who drink milk and egg protein shakes, their gas is enough to wipe out a small nation. That; and I haven’t cooked another man since.

Of course, he was no longer listening as he had passed out, and I felt....well I felt rather robbed. How fucking dare he pass out while I’m talking? Besides, he was too freaky looking unconscious with his eyes open that way.

Luckily, I brought the water pistol with me which I filled with two parts water, one part white table vinegar and half a teaspoon of finely powdered sea salt. Figured, a squirt or two in his open eyes will wake him up, and oh man did it ever.

He woke up screaming so hard and loud and for so long; he literally lost his voice for the remainder of the process. He sounded like a barking dog whose vocal cords had been removed. Hilarious.

He was wheezing out screams of agony that sounded like Mutley the cartoon dog’s laugh, but in the anguish version,

unable to rub or blink his eyes from the burn of the vinegar squirt and I was laughing my fucking ass off. Lucky there was no internet or YouTube or shit like that back then.

I remembered as a kid, discussing with some friends, methods of torturing someone, just your typical twelve and thirteen years here talking about how to fuck someone up that killed your parents in front of you but let you live. Remember, our heroes were Charles Bronson, Dirty Harry and Rambo.

One of those ways that would always come up in a circle of young brothers discussing such things, was honey all over the testicles then putting a million red fire ants on the perp's balls. Though that sounded scrumptious at this point in time, where the fuck would I get a million red fire ants? The things we don't think about at thirteen.

Thumb tacks, a two-by-two piece of wood, lighter fluid and a lighter had to do. I thumb tacked his entire scrotum to the piece of wood with eighteen thumb tacks surrounding the entire outer, stretched out scrotum sack sparing his balls, while squirting his eyes with the vinegar filled water pistol to wake his ass up every time he'd pass out from the pain. Once his sack tacked, heh, that rhymed, I left him for fifteen minutes to let the pain and visual of his balls nailed to a slab of wood, sink in.

He drifted in and out, his eyes were blood red deep now, the white had vanished completely and his face was swelling; his mouth was covered in both wet and dried blood with tiny little white fragments of tooth dust stuck all over it and his cheeks. His jaw unnaturally hung open, his left ear sitting on his chest. His hands and feet reduced to nubs, he looked like a mutant.

He was still alive. Quite actually, as most of the wounds were cauterized and I took the time to make sure none of his wounds would be fatal; there would definitely be permanent damage there, but he'll live. He wouldn't be doing much anymore, but the fucker'll live.

I continued by pouring the lighter fluid on his thumb tacked nut sack and all over his dick and pubes. I lit a piece of paper up and tossed it on him, his parts going up in flames. I let it burn until any hair was long gone and the skin began to bubble blue and purple and his penis shriveled and shrunk like a fallen burning sausage in a barbecue would, it just smelled way fucking worst.

I literally had to go behind him and vomit it smelled so fucking horrible, in retrospect, I should've puked on the fucker for shits n' giggles. Just fucking thinking about that shit now makes me want to puke; I gotta pull over on the side of the road.....hol'on....

Ugh. Pthew.... Fuck....where's my water bottle at? Fuck... grglgrglgrglgrgl *PTHEW*.... Yeah, every time I think too hard of that stench...bheuh....I fucking puke, can't help it; so yeah, where was I?

So...to put the fire out, I finally doused him with the urine I had been collecting in mall urinals by filling the twenty-five liter fuel bucket I purchased just to extinguish his crotch flame with. Plan ahead my dad always says. If there were such things as DNA back then, the results they would find from the piss search would be from hundreds of different ones negative mine.

"Now you can blame me instead of them for your shit not

working. Just remember to spell my name right fucker, N, I, N, J, A.”

Onto the finishing touches; it had been six hours since I had him captive, nowhere near long enough for anyone to worry or file a missing persons report. This idiot had a rep for partying hard as well and it was Saturday morning. No one was missing him yet. It was time to finish things up before anyone did however.

I really, really wanted this piece of shit to feel the hell he put so many through. I had to make sure he never had the ability or strength to ever hurt any woman again. One by one, I broke every bone I could get my hands, heels and hammer on without endangering his life.

I broke all his knuckles, the metacarpals on his hands, smashed the top of his feet with the hammer, just once though as there wasn't enough left of the fingers to break. I broke his wrists, his elbows and ankles. I broke his knees and hammered his hip bones. This guy had and still to this day has anxiety attacks every time the seasons change 'cause his body reminds him with every ache and pain.

When I was done with him, I had a female friend make several anonymous phone calls from various payphones and parts of the city in another country to the police until they finally decided to take her seriously and check. Problem is, they never did, only when he didn't show up to football practice later that afternoon did people wonder, try to reach him and couldn't.

Eventually someone on his side called the police and the connection between my female friend's phone calls and his family's finally got the cops off their ticket duties and

find him. They finally found him the morning after, barely breathing at that point from shock more than anything.

Last I heard he needed a full time nurse to take care of his rapist ass. Oh, the irony. I hope she's young and hot fucker, so your hell persists. If I had the extra bucks, I'd pay for one. No finger prints, no description, no witness IDs, just a voice behind a ninja mask, they searched for a while but never found the ninja.

- Chapter 8 -

JOURNEY WITH VIOLENCE

More than half way there and I still don't know; how do I tell Maeve all this? Do I lay my cards out on the table on day one? How will she react to my past and the things I've done? Do I wait till after we slept together? No, that would be shitty.

Fuck it, time to stop and gas up, grab a bite, smoke another joint and cross that bridge when we get there. At least she's cool with my smoking weed. The fucking global scam that turned out to be, luckily, Maeve kept herself well informed, beyond what the bullshit mainstream media was shoveling down the disconnected sheeple's throats, one less thing to have to explain.

I'm not all that bad though. I've hurt, maimed and crippled allot of people; sure, none of these were exactly role model citizens to be honest. Every single one of them had it coming one way or another. I'm like a lazy version of The Punisher.

When I had been here eighteen years, I had grown my hair out during the summer as well as, as much facial hair my face could muster then, dyed it with a washable hair dye and during the cold winter months and on the coldest of days, I would bundle up and head over to what I knew then to be the biggest drug dealing place on the south shore.

This place happened to be a bowling alley my friends and I would hang out at to shoot pool or bowl. Without fail, every single time there, a dealer would ask us if we wanted to purchase anything. We never did at the time but I came up with idea of cleaning the place out as I fancied myself a super hero.

I'd head there alone, all bundled up and disguised and find

the dealer. I had watched them make their transactions several times without 'em knowing and I knew a guy that would purchase weed from them regularly. There were three guys dealing and working separate shifts; one day on, one day off rotations.

The transactions would be done at the back of the bowling alley outside, in the rear and seldom used parking lot except for certain busy nights and in between the six, massive garbage containers there. I followed him to the garbage containers and he asked what I wanted and I would reply with whatever appropriate strike, knocking him out, depending on target availability and the proximity between us.

Once out cold, I would make it look like a robbery. Well, in essence, I was robbing him as I took all of his drugs and tossed them down a sewer back in my goody two-shoes and highly misinformed days and his cash as well.

I would do this randomly with a decent amount of time in between in order not to create a pattern or tip them off and with a different disguise every time. They would eventually smarten up after three successful knock out robberies however, and the fourth time I showed up, two guys escorted me to the back, one of them holding me at gun point during the entire transaction.

Considering they didn't recognize me as their attacker, they explained what was going on and why the gun and I ended up having to purchase a quarter of an ounce of weed which I threw down a sewer as well. So much for my vigilante days; I couldn't even clean up a bowling alley.

I've never physically hurt someone who didn't deserve it

as my rage was always well targeted and I didn't always administer a beating either, depending on my mood and the situation, I'd let the fucker go with a psychological lesson.

I was twenty-three years on this earth when I was with a coworker playing pool in some hard reputed pub. Well, trying to play pool, I happen to suck terribly at it. By accident, I had knocked over some biker's beer with my stick, his glass was a quarter full anyway and at best, a few drops spilled out onto his boots.

Now let's get something straight, I've known many bikers, the vast majority, super cool guys with no probs or attitudes, quite the opposite actually, but like anything and everything, there's the exception and that day, it found me. Go figure.

The brother didn't appreciate my knocking his drink nor did he accept my half assed apology either, in retrospect, I don't blame him I guess. I was young, cocky as shit at the time and literally felt like I was indestructible. I sincerely believed nothing could hurt me; I had a fucking super hero complex. I had already been through so much and survived I figured nothing could touch me.

I even survived extreme circumstances outside of violence. I had just been here twenty-years and a few weeks, prior to my meeting Luciano or working for the gym for that matter.

I had purchased myself the only car I could afford then, which was a three cylinder Pontiac Firefly, the absolute base model, this fucking skateboard didn't even have a radio in it, no electric anything, literally four not even rubber, but what appeared to be hard plastic fucking tires and a steering wheel.

On an ordinary day like any other, I was driving off heading to the kick-boxing gym and was on Montreal's Champlain Bridge heading north bound. Moments before reaching the peak of the bridge, I, for some odd reason, got lost in a daydream and before I could realize it, while doing eighty kilometers an hour; the traffic about six car lengths ahead of me and dwindling down fast, had completely come to a stop. I was still doing eighty.

At the very last possible fraction of a second, I slammed on the breaks and swerved from the middle lane to the left, quickly checking my blind spot and praying no one was coming fast, but I had miscalculated and swerved off too late.

The right front corner of my car, hit the left back corner of the car stopped ahead of me hard enough to make it swerve and hit a car in the right hand lane. My car continued only to hit the side left wall of the bridge which was designed to flip you right back into your own lane as opposed to landing you on the other side of the oncoming traffic, and it did just that.

Because of the speed I was going at and how light the fucking Matchbox I was in happened to be, it literally flipped upside down and went airborne for long enough time for me to repeat the mantra 'please don't kill me god' a dozen or so times.

Before you get all up in my face about praying to 'god' after my diatribe on religion and probably coming across like a militant atheist, which I am not, I was born and raised into Christianity only to later question it, research things and come to the obvious conclusions I did. I simply don't understand how others fucking don't is all, as it literally

impedes on collective human evolution; but.....I digress.

So yeah, I was praying to god as my hood landed on the back of yet another car ahead in the left lane this time. The crash caused their car to pop upwards hood first, the landing sounded like an explosion from where I was being tossed around and upon that landing; my car spun several times knocking into three other cars which in turn slammed into a few others in a wicked chain reaction one would see in a Hollywood action flick.

When the dust had finally settled, I could hear voices coming from outside my car as it laid there upside down on its collapsed roof. All the windows had blown broken and one of the voices outside yelled *“Oh my god, they’re dead, no way anyone’s alive in there!”*

I panicked, I had no idea she was talking about me and my car, I crawled out my broken side window, barely making it out through the space left from the caved in roof and several people came rushing to my aid.

I was fine, not a scratch on me from the entire accident, nope, but I managed to cut my arm bad enough to get stitches crawling out of my burning car. Someone suggested I sit down as I must have been in shock and I told them not to worry, that I was a stunt man and did that for living, little knowing then how foreshadowing that statement was to be.

Except for a whiplash and a concussion both the passenger and driver suffered in the car I landed on; miraculously, no one else was hurt. Over a dozen or so wrecked cars, mine a total loss and my only injury occurred after the fact.

It was instances like these and several others along with my anger and skill set that gave me my super human over confidence. So when the biker encroached on me and basically ordered me to get him another beer, in my youthful arrogance, I suggested to him something else entirely.

“Let’s play a game instead. I let you throw the first punch, hard as you like, anywhere you like...” he doesn’t let me finish and he bursts into laughter looking around at his mates with a look like ‘can you believe this idiot?’

“I’m not done. After your shot though; it’s my turn.”

He laughed even harder. *“What makes you think you’re going to be up for it?”* he sarcastically retorts and he laughs on, accepting my challenge.

What he didn’t know was that I had several years of boxing experience and more fights than he’s probably ever had to date. I’ve had my nose broken a few times, the second time around by a guy with brass knuckles and I won that fight.

I knew how to take a punch and I set him up knowing that statistically, ninety percent of the world’s populations are right handed. I knew the body language to look out for, I knew what punch he was going to throw and I knew exactly how to take a punch and roll with it to minimize the impact of the blow.

Of course, had he opted to kick me in the nuts instead, my entire plan would have faded along with any hope of children in the future, my ego and the job at this point, but was I even thinking or considering that at the time? Naaaaahhh....

Low and behold he wound up for a right haymaker. You can always count on good old stats. His left hand and foot moved first. His hand began to lift off from his left thigh and his left foot took a step forward while his right fisted hand began to cock back, picking up momentum for the swing. It was like it was happening in slow motion for me.

“Here it comes” I thought, and POW! Right across the jaw. I rolled with it minimizing the impact, but it fucking hurt like hell none the less. It cut me open under my lower lip pretty bad but I’ve been hit much, much harder than that and didn’t go down.

My first boxing lesson for instance; I walked into the gym and the first thing they did was put me in the ring to ‘see what I got’. I learned later that this was an old school gym, like ‘old ass school’.

If you had any raw talent, they’d work with you as their only reason to, would be to make you an eventual contender to a title and make money off your ass from there, otherwise, you’d spend a year skipping rope in a corner waiting for someone to show you how to tie your hand wraps.

I had no idea at the time of course. I was there to learn how to box for my own personal goals, not to become a prize fighter and money maker, though I missed that fucking boat.

The first round hadn’t started yet and I hear my sparring partner, who I find out later was a fucking Golden Gloves champion say to his coach *“I’m gonna show you the soles of his shoes in a minute.”* Fucking arrogant prick, yeah? We’ll see about that. His coach smirked, told him not to kill

me and slapped the back of his head loud enough to make a smack sound and spray the dude's sweat everywhere from the impact, seconds before the bell rung.

I had no clue what had hit me. He must have thrown a twenty-nine punch combination landing thirty six of those flush. I looked up at the guy from blurred eyes and my first broken nose. He just danced around with a grin on his face. Eight rounds of this assault went on but he never saw my soles.

At one point as he was shattering my left ribs, I'd had had enough and I tackled his ass down to the ground and began ground and pounding him before the term was ever coined. Coach jumped in, separated us and gave me a warning.

"Fight like a man not a girl." He says to me with a heavy French Canadian accent while leading me to my corner.

The beating continued. I was a bloody mess. I had broken ribs, a broken nose and a severe concussion and spent that night at the hospital getting woken by a nurse every hour and a half in case I slipped into a coma.

I was getting beaten so bad, his corner threw in the towel for me. When I left, I yelled out through a broken jaw *'you never thaw my tholezz thicker'*, middle finger highly extended up upon my exit.

What ego?

So this biker's right hook didn't mean shit. I took his punch to what seemed to him flush and full force, my feet stayed where they were originally, my head rocked back and forth some and I looked him dead in the eye from under my

brow, wiped the blood from my mouth on my sleeve, spat a bit out on the floor at his feet and simply said “*My turn*” with a bloody grin.

Speechless as he remained, he had the look Scooby Doo and Shaggy would upon seeing a ghost. After a fraction of momentary confusion on his part, I noticed either a good portion of that beer I spilled by accident landed on his laps or he pissed himself some. Taking a few steps back towards his posse, some sitting still while others just stood there with their gaping jaws, he muttered, “*We cool man, we cool, beers on me...*”

“*You sure brother?*” I politely and kindly asked him, spitting out some more blood.

“*Yeah. Yeah, my mistake man.*” He assured me.

“*Cool*” I said as I extended my hand in courtesy. He gladly shook it and went back to his business. The look on the faces in that pub and my coworker’s; I won’t ever forget and my super hero complex just went up another notch.

- Chapter 9 -

DESENSITIZED METAMORPHOSIS

A couple weeks had passed after I had busted the bodybuilder's head open and while rummaging through my things I stumbled upon Luciano Salvatore's business card. The address was a down town night club about a half hour drive from home providing no traffic.

'*What the fuck*' I thought, let's give this brother a call and see what he's got to offer. I picked up the phone, rang the number and a woman answered, "*Mr. Salvatore's office, one moment please*" and on hold I went. At least there was some elevator music; fucking love elevator music.

I must have been left on hold for at least fifteen minutes. I contemplated hanging up or taking a trip down to fucking New Zealand to visit some friends while waiting several times but my curiosity got the best of me and I hung in there.

It's amazing to realize just how a fraction of a second's decision can literally alter the course of your entire life in an instant cause you decided to zig instead of zag or go left instead of right or not hang the fuck up when you've been put on hold for a goddamn eternity.

Finally, an Italian man with a voice that sounded like Disney's Goofy impersonating a Robert Deniro gangster character from a Scorsese film answered the phone with the confidence of a boss; "*Salvatore*".

"*Yeah, hi my name is Nomad Wym...*" before I can finish he interrupts me "*I've been waiting for your call Mr. Wyman. Glad you finally picked up the phone.*"

"*Lito says you have 'special' kind of work for me.*" I tell him with prudence.

“Right to the heart of the matter, good. The address on the card, can you be here Friday night, nine-sharp, in my office?”

“Yeah. Sure, absolutely. See you there brother.”

I hung up. It was Wednesday, June nineteenth, nineteen ninety-one. Thursday would be my last day as to who I used to be. When Friday night, nine o'clock rolled along, I found myself entering one of Montreal's hottest and most popular clubs but not for a night of drink or roughhousing.

There was a mile long line up and I bypassed it straight to the bouncers. I told the two mastodon barbarian twin looking motherfuckers securing the door who I was and the smaller of the two bulls signaled me to follow him inside.

The place was a quarter full at best but the atmosphere carried with it a strong sense of underlying dangerous bliss. The techno music hammered at my patience quickly drowning said bliss as I couldn't stand that genre, but I understood its effects while on X or even weed for that matter. Straight however, it was a nightmare on the fucking senses.

The Barbarian twins both had ponytails wearing black suits and an ear piece and each weighed an easy two-eighty, two-ninety pounds with physiques akin to the professional wrestlers of the day.

As I followed Barbarian number two through the halls of the club, I noticed several other beefy mother fuckers dispersed around strategic areas of the club from entrances to exits. The bar and the stair case leading up were also covered and at close inspection, a trained eye would notice

the distinct yet subtle bulges on the left side of all of their jackets. They were all armed. They all fucking sported pony tails too. What was up with that?

I was taken to an office with yet more dudes in black suits and pony tails, these guys were like the men in black of the early nineties with the Steven Seagal hairdo. Behind the desk sat Luciano Salvatore; a family man barely in his early forties who looked like he was soon to turn sixty-five.

He was very sharply dressed in a three thousand dollar charcoal grey striped Anderson & Sheppard suit with an eighteen thousand dollar Tag Heuer Carrera Calibre 360 watch on his left wrist. He was sharply combed with an aura of a nineteen twenties long forgotten gentleman's class. It was obvious he was the owner of the club, rich and fucking paranoid.

“Have a seat Nomad” he asked me with an almost commanding voice. *“And what kind of name is Nomad by the way? Were your parents hippies?”* His cronies all around him chuckled and laughed almost as if on cue.

“Were?” I ask. *“Why would you assume they were dead brother?”*

“Well, you almost killed a man in public in the middle of an afternoon; you struck me as someone with not much to lose. Someone pissed off. Alone perhaps.”

He got the angry part right, the loneliness wouldn't come till much later in my life.

“I did what I had to do, that piece of shit needed a lesson and I was there to instruct it. Impulsive perhaps but I'd do

it again the same way if it represented itself.”

“*Good!*” he exploded. He then erupted into laughter as he looked at his guys around the room, the majority of them nodding in approval. “*Because I know a lot of people who need ‘lessons’ and I would like you to instruct them for me Mr. Wyman. You will, of course, be paid in consequence. Are you interested Mr. Wyman?*”

The way he asked that now proverbial question, was ever so enticing. You have to understand, I hate the ordinary. I was miserable around mediocrity and the average. I never, ever wanted to be like anyone else except for my heroes of course, but besides the movie idols and martial arts icons, everything those deemed ‘normal’ by societal standards bored the living shit out of me and I was the exact opposite of.

It’s why I wanted to explore my fighter mind set. True fighters, no matter what kind and even if you combine them all together, are a rare breed. We don’t see life like anyone else, if we don’t have some kind of cause or battle to fight; we literally vibrate at one energetic decibel level above death. It’s the reason every single one of my life’s countless conflicts were directly originated by me.

Luciano’s offer was an offer out of the ordinary, out of the dreg of the mediocre nine to five daily bullshit, it was a promise of action and adventure I longed to create for myself and here it was being offered on a silver platter. How could I not jump on this opportunity ride out of the mundane?

“*Hell yeah, why not?*” I answered with a nervous laugh I managed to hide well enough as it blended into everyone

else in the room's laughter. That shit I gotta admit, was annoying as fuck the whole time I worked for Luciano. 'Cause I never played those games, I was always honest and spoke my mind which infuriated most because they didn't have the balls to speak theirs.

Needless to say, I made a few enemies within the organization. Luciano was very impressed by my honesty but like anyone else at first, he had to know if he could trust me.

The first jobs he gave me were simple enough. I was to drive a car with another coworker across the Canadian border into the USA. Back in the days, we didn't need a passport, just a driver license and you were welcome across the border no problem. People would cross over from the south shore of Montreal towards Plattsburgh NY to shop all the time.

We were given a car and told to drive it across the American border into Rouse's Point New York. Once at our destination, we were to meet our connection and simply make an exchange of vehicles; drop off the car and drive another one back.

As far as we knew and to the naked eye even with a thorough search, there was nothing suspicious in or about the car. It wasn't like we were driving Lamborghinis and Ferraris either, they were normal, everyday, blue collar worker cars; Chevys, Fords, Saturns, basic four door models. The entire time I did that particular job; we were never stopped and searched, not once. We were never even so much as suspected of anything and that was the brilliance of it because, we truly had no idea what, besides a car, we were crossing the border with.

We were to ask no questions and simply do the job and for every car exchange we made, we were paid a grand. A thousand dollars for three hours work back in nineteen ninety two? Unheard of in my books anyway.

But what the hell was I to do with all this money? How would I explain that to my folks or anyone else for that matter as by this point in time, I wasn't yet working for the movie industry or doing any kind of protective detail other than the odd jobs here and there for friends, and I knew full well whom it was I was working for. All of my free time then was spent training some kind of combative discipline or hitting the weights at the gym.

I couldn't have a paper trail dragging behind me or a bank account displaying that kind of cash either, so I just began dumping it in an old construction worker's lunch box we had that just sat collecting dust in the same spot for as long as I could then remember.

I hid the box in my bedroom and dipped into it whenever I'd go out with my real friends in my regular life and for shits and giggles, I'd more often than not pick up the tabs everywhere we went just to rid myself of some of the cash.

Christmases and birthdays were also a great way to get rid of cash, suddenly, acquaintances whose birthdays I never even knew were receiving lavish gifts from me for whatever social occasion would pop up, Valentines, Halloween, St. Patrick's Day; all great reasons to spread a little financial joy. Oddly enough, no one ever asked where I got the money from, they were just grateful for my kindness.

The rest of it I would purchase food and warm blankets,

pillows or clothes for the homeless with as it wasn't yet illegal in those days to be fucking humane. A habit that stayed with me my whole life as once you begin to understand the hardships these people are living, it's difficult to forget they are out there and that poverty and famine are indeed man made.

After a few months of car exchanges, not every single night of course, but we averaged three trips a week, and on what was to be my last night as a driver; we arrived at our destination to find three men holding up our connection at baseball bat and knife point.

My first thought was where the fuck did these guys come from? We were in butt fuck nowhere here and it was two in the morning. As we pulled up, they quickly gathered their troops in battle preparedness.

My coworker for a few of those trips was a brother named Erik. Not certain what he was doing involved in this line of work as he really didn't strike me the type but then, who the fuck am I to judge and everyone would say the same about me I'd surmise.

Erik and I stepped out of the car and politely asked them if there was some kind of problem we could potentially be of service with. If this could be defused with cash, I'd gladly offer some up so we could get back to business.

We weren't as lucky though. The one with the knife made his way aggressively towards us saying it's none of our business and to get back into our car and get the fuck out least we want to get what our connection, who's name I never got by the way, was about to get.

I wasn't certain of the nature of this assault, be it personal, business or just a simple robbery gone wrong, but by the time of night and location, my money was on 'personal'. I didn't know about Erik or where his head was at, but my fucking orders were to get the car here and pick the other one up and bring it back and that's exactly what I aimed to do.

I got the knife wielder's attention by simply saying "*Yeah, not gonna happen buddy*" which is exactly what I wanted. He quickly stormed towards me with such confidence, arrogance and rage; he completely telegraphed his oncoming stab by lunging at me with it from four feet away.

I sidestepped left, out of the way and trapped his right arm to my abdomen as the stab went by me. I quickly freed my left hand and ripped across his eyes gouging as deep as I could reach within his sockets.

Boy did he squirm; it loosened his trapped arm which I broke at the elbow using the continuing momentum from the sidestepping and used my hips as the fulcrum for the breaking point. With the continued extension of his arm, I bent it as forward as possible until snap, crackle and pop.

As I dropped him to the ground and on his back, I stomped on his brain basket once, hard enough to put him out cold for quite a while with the help of the dirt road behind it, offering his melon rebound. In the interim, the other two who carried baseball bats were going at it with Erik and our connection.

Our connection wasn't faring too well; he was on the ground covering himself up in a ball trying to protect

his head and body from the baseball bat blows. Erik was desperately playing a game of evade and escape with his opponent and was at least still on his feet and moving, I made the tactical decision of going after our connection's opponent as his matters were more pressing.

"Yo!"

That had gotten his attention. He came running at me with that bat from a distance of twenty, maybe thirty feet like he was going for the homerun hit of his career like a pissed off Babe Ruth somehow figuring what? I wouldn't see him??

In came the swing, and in I went, straight into his center-mass with my arms up and extended forward literally jamming his right arm at the elbow intercepting his entire attack.

The force of my momentum crashing into his caused him to stumble backwards with me glued onto him. I trapped his left arm, which was still locked in full swing motion, behind his neck with my right - freeing my left arm to break his jaw and knock him flush out with a solid open handed palm strike under his chin.

The blow had sent his head snapping back so hard, it severely whiplashed. I spun him free from the lock and he just dropped like an outhouse toilet seat.

His friend at this point was still desperately trying to hit Erik with his bat and frustrated to no end because Erik had picked up two aluminum trash can lids and used them as Captain America shields.

That was hilarious, so much so, I laughed my ass off, which

got both their attention. It didn't take long for batboy to figure out he was the last one of his crew standing. He dropped his bat to the ground, put his hands up in the air and back peddled with body language that begged permission to exit without consequence.

I nodded in approval and Erik told him to pick up the rest of his trash and get the fuck out of there. We tended to our connection's wounds and luckily, he was alright, nothing but bruises really. Oh and a few broken ribs. What a fuckin whiner.

"Where the fuck did you learn how to fight like that?" Erik asked.

"Life." I categorically replied. It was just shorter than going into the three hour long bio.

When we brought the right car back, the three of us had agreed not to let anyone know what had happened and to keep that night's incident to ourselves. We didn't want to alarm Luciano nor did we want to come across as braggarts either. Erik agreed and back to the office we went.

Luciano had a look of a man deeply impressed upon our return. He just sat there and simply clapped his hands.

"Bravo guys; Nomad particularly." he laughed as he continued clapping.

"What?"

"You took care of business like a professional tonight. Well done lad, are you ready to move up the ranks?"

Turns out that son of a bitch hired those guys to kill me and Erik. He knew that if we made it back and with the merchandise, without mention of incident, he could not only trust us, but depend on us to get the job done well. This was nothing more than a test from the mind of a power tripping psycho.

My promotion was to be that of collector. I was to collect on overdue debts. If they didn't pay up the first time, I was to leave them with a warning. If they didn't pay the second time, I was to cause bodily harm. Not enough that they couldn't work and still pay the bills, but enough to motivate them to pay the next time they see my face.

If they didn't pay the third time, I was to do nothing but report back and the indebted would simply vanish or made an example of via some form of twisted public display. It all depended on the level of offense and Luciano's mood.

Of course, they didn't literally vanish. He'd get picked up and brought to the 'cave', a basement within a basement of one of the multi businesses owned by Luciano. The 'cave' as it was referred to, was a custom built wall to wall ceramic execution chamber to chop up and get rid of those who fucked with Luciano's businesses, personal or anything for that matter.

You just didn't fuck with Luciano, period; unless you wanted to end up separated in various acid filled steel barrels, dumped then buried in some industrial section only to be found decades later if at all; or worst...as someone's meal in local fast food joints.

I remember one particular night Aella and I were working security for a private party at one of the most high end

restaurants in town. If there were such a thing as a six star restaurant, this would be it.

It was an ‘industry’ party as they called it and somewhere between one and two in the morning, four of Luciano’s men entered the premises looking for a dude nicknamed ‘Bones’ due to the fact that he was Iggy Pop thin.

As it turned out, Bones was suspected of opening his big mouth bragging once too many times that his personal exaggerated exploits caught wind and made their way down ears they simply shouldn’t have. Bones’ liked to name drop and flash the cash in the clubs to impress the ladies and the up and coming in the ranks.

Problem was, he spoke too freely and too loudly and more often than not, the majority of Luciano’s clubs and restaurants were frequented by all kinds of law enforcement, most of course in Luciano’s pockets but if there was one thing I learned in that business was that no one was your friend no matter how close and personal things got, business always came first and anyone could flip at any time given the right circumstances or rewards, financial or other.

Three of Luciano’s boys, without breaking a stride, went over straight to Bones and politely grabbed him and with minimal effort, literally lifted him off his feet and carried him out to the back of the restaurant. The stunned look on Bones and the guests who knew better than to open their mouths faces; priceless as the evening continued for them anyway, like nothing had happened.

Alessio, or Alex as we all called him, the head of the four man pony tail crew Luciano sent, asked me and Aella

to join them. The three of us headed to the back of the restaurant, passing the kitchen to a staircase that led to the basement and storage areas.

The other three guys had Bones cowering on a large plastic sheet on the ground in the corner of a deep freezer in a small storage room. Bones was begging, trying to explain himself frantically while the other three hovering above him completely ignored him while carrying on a heated discussion that seemed to have started years prior.

Alex asked Aella and I to simply watch the staircase and door and not let anyone down or in, under any circumstance. We both agreed. Aella took the top of the staircase and I covered the entrance to where the deep freezer was.

Alex began giving Bones a speech on loyalty, integrity, honor and karma. Sounded oddly familiar, but Bones wasn't listening or hearing anything though, he was way too busy wailing over Alex's speech, pleading for his life at this point. Didn't seem to deter Alex one bit either, he just completed his speech and when he was done, Alex signaled the other three men with a most subtle nudge of his head gesturing towards Bones.

Upon his command, they grabbed a bunch of plastic bags and wrapped several layers around their shoes, duct taping it while covering their feet and pants up to their knees. Then, the stomping began. These guys ferociously stomped Bones to death as if it was some murdering pedophile that personally got off on a technicality after raping and killing one of their kids. I could hear the cracking of Bones' bones and skull.

He screamed blood curdling screams which turned into wet bloody grunts and eventually heaves until he went silent and was no longer moving at all but they just kept at him relentlessly.

They proceeded to stomp on his head so much, in the end it literally looked like red gelatin stew with skull pieces akin to a broken porcelain bowl containing chunky Jell-O where his head used to be.

These guys literally broke a sweat on poor ol' Bones. What a fucking way to go. They walked out of that freezer removing the bloody, chunky covered plastic bags over their footwear; laughing, joking like they just walked out of a championship hockey game won by their home team only to moments later jump right back into their heated discussion from earlier without skipping a beat.

Alex made a phone call and a half hour later the 'cleaners' were there. Three brothers, all of them dressed to the hilt like they were coming from some gala. They slipped on plastic overalls over their tuxes, put surgical gloves on and hairnets then grabbed what was left of Bones.

They also swept his remains but kept the gelatin and skull fragments in a large plastic container and wrapped his body with loads of extra large garbage bags then covered him in bed sheets.

It just looked like they were carrying out a wrapped piece of furniture up the staircase and to the back alley of the restaurant where they parked their soccer mom van, rear stick figure family stickers look and all.

They carefully placed Bones' remains in the back of the

van with two of the cleaners staying with him in the back. I heard Alex tell the driver we'd meet them at 'the cave'.

Once at the cave, they proceeded to chop up Bones into small enough pieces they could cut up into even smaller pieces, I'm talking hair and all here. They took all of those pieces including the Jell-O that was left of his head and mixed them with triple the amount of the cheapest grade fucking Z commercially processed, mass produced brown sludge 'meat' one could purchase from the back alleys of Brazil.

They then added a bunch of chemicals from artificial flavors, anti nausea medication and antibiotics to every kind of preservative in existence with names I can't even pronounce and they ground the entire thing over and over and over again in industrial sized meat grinders until the result was this deep pink paste.

This paste was then colored, flavored, shaped, packaged, frozen and sold as burger meat under a dummy corporation in Luciano's locally owned and operated fast food joints which were all fronts for both tax shelters and getting rid of his victims.

Aella and I were there to help clean and disinfect the room once they were done processing Bones and some other poor sucker that was laying there when we arrived.

I often wondered at first how no one inspected his places or how no one ever got sick or sued for food poisoning. As it turned out, if an 'inspector' couldn't be bought, he'd end up a burger and as far as the lawsuits went for people getting sick, Luciano simply had his book keeper handle it with a generous handout. Yeah, same book keeper who later

vanished after blowing their loot he was supposed to use to finance my movie.

There was this time with my friends in my regular life, where we were ending the night from partying, and in those days, we'd always end up finishing our nights at Burger King or Mc'Dicks. After about a fifteen minute walk in every possible direction, we just couldn't find either a Micky D's or a BK and one of my bro's mentioned seeing one of Luciano's local fast food joints on the way to the party not too far from where we were.

It's hilarious today but back then, my stomach instantly turned with dread and I shot out an aggressive '*NO!*' taking aback my buddies. One of them made a joke about how passionate I was not to want to eat there and I went on to explain with a lie that I knew a few people who had eaten there and woken with severe anal leakage. Thankfully, no one wanted anal leakage and I didn't feel like eating someone I used to work with. Now there's a solid win/win.

I wonder if any of this compares at all to some of the things Maeve may have gone through in the last two decades. Who am I kidding?

- Chapter 10 -

NOMAD OF ALL TRADES

I didn't fare too well as a collector for Luciano. I did it for six months until he caught on to what I was doing. Unlike the movies, the people I was collecting from were nothing more than average citizens severely down on their luck one way or another. They were all in some form of dire consequence; either jobless, in between jobs or working three or four full time jobs just to survive and put food on the table for their families.

They all in one way or another, found themselves at one of Luciano's loan sharking operations and indebted to him from anywhere between five to twenty-thousand dollars. Why they ended up there isn't for me to judge especially considering my lifestyle and where I was so it was easy to overlook that.

Luciano wouldn't lend them any more than twenty-thousand dollars tops, except for certain occasions he believed the person could make due based on their circumstances, and that was strictly to those that presently had jobs as he wanted to make certain his clients could pay him back. There's always much more risk and never any money to be made in 'offing' people. Not the jerking kind either, eh.

Most would pay something or other if not the entire thing by their due dates however, there were at least five percent of them who couldn't make due on time. I saw the look in these people's eyes. I saw the desperation, the hunger, the fear. Some of these people had families and young children.

Those that couldn't pay by the first due date made off with a friendly warning and a fifteen percent increase added to their loan. After that, I had to hurt 'em. I couldn't bring myself to hurt these people and it suddenly dawned on me

how I could be getting rid of more of the cash I was making by killing two birds with one stone.

Don't get me wrong, I loved taking care of the homeless with it as well and did so as often as I could but with my schedule and clandestine life, it wasn't always easy to find the time to do so, this would allow me to take care of my problems on work time and possibly prevent more future homelessness.

So instead of injuring these people I decided to pay their debts for them. It would have been tricky too because I was always accompanied by a co-worker, but as luck and fate would have it, my partner for collections just happened to be my old college brother, Kemp.

You know; on a side note and in retrospect, I should have just buried that money for my future self, or maybe children if I were to ever have any later on. Wonder how many of you were screaming it at the page?

Kemp was cool and fully understood my position as he was in a similar boat. So I would pull the client aside not to incriminate Kemp in case Luciano did get wind of shit, and I would tell the clients to keep their mouths shut and not to worry about their debts to Luciano, that it was all taken care of.

There wasn't anything I could do about their other debts of course, but regarding that which was owed to Luciano, I made certain that as far as they were concerned, they had paid me and to ask no fucking questions or we'd all be dead.

This one particular time, a father of three in his early to mid

forties looked through me and asked “*Why are you doing this?*”

“Excuse me?!”

I answered him trying to establish such an undercurrent of pure contempt and general ‘*How fucking dare you ask me such a question!*’ tone that I’d hoped it would shut him up and deter him. It didn’t deter him. Instead, he continued in more depth and with the tone of a concerned father.

“I’ve dealt with your kind for over a decade now. You are unlike anyone ever sent or that I’ve had to deal with in these circles; you’re different. You’re obviously not doing this for the money and you’re not in it because you enjoy hurting people; so why are you in this line of work? Are you someone’s reluctant son or nephew?”

The cold hard truth of it was I was just a pissed off at the world son of a bitch who found an out of ordinary outlet for his demons, nothing more. A place where I could unleash them without guilt, without remorse, without consequence of my knowing anyway or threat of jail or insane asylum, but I couldn’t tell him that for two solid reasons then; one, being the most important, was that I had no idea.

Back then, I was just caught up in it looking for a way out of the average life everyone around me was living and it was the closest thing to my Hollywood heroes I could be. The second reason was even if I had known that, that wasn’t an ‘in character’ thing to reply at the time, now was it?

“Brother, if you’ve been in this mess for ten years, you should worry more about yourself and your children than

about me.” was what came out of my mouth and I turned and left with a wink and smile before he could reply.

The collecting business was good for Luciano, in fact, too good. Since he hired me, everyone’s been paying their debts. Of course, I was paying their debts and then collecting a percentage on the debts I was paying for them only to pay more of their debts and collect off them. Vicious circle, sure, but it was serving its purpose creating a win/win situation for everyone; Luciano gets paid, those indebted are debt free and I get to minimize on all this cash by roughly eighty percent.

I wasn’t needy or greedy by any means and that father of three was right, I wasn’t in it for the money. My parents did alright. We lived in a modest home and I’ve never, ever lacked anything, even at our poorest moments. The way I see it, I’ve got a roof over my head, a comfy bed, all the meals I need a day, clothes on my back, good friends and family; I didn’t want or need anything more. Anything more becomes a burden and a ball and chain.

I couldn’t give a rat’s ass about luxuries or materials, for me life wasn’t about hoarding as much cash and shiny objects as I could while looking as sharp as I can, it was about the experience, the journey and the relationships. It was simply about living life on my terms. Besides, the junk you think you own actually owns you and I don’t need material possessions to define who I am.

Eventually, Luciano caught on and I was called into his office. The fact that it was Dougie who came to get me suggested I was never leaving that fucking office of my own accord.

He fucking always sent Dougie to get people who fucked up one way or another. If Dougie came to get ya, you ended up with broken bones, perhaps one of your loved ones disappeared and if you were part of the tiny percentage who severely fucked up, like if you had cost or stolen money from him or slept with one of his girls; you'd end up in the cave.

I thought fuck, he must have gotten wind of my paying off his client's debts, and I was fucking done for. I tried to stall and buy time to think, to find a way to escape somehow and I came up with a half assed excuse as to why I couldn't make it this particular moment and that I would meet them both in a few minutes but Dougie would have nothing of it.

“Luke asked me to come get ya Nome, I gotta get ya, right Nome?” he asked me, both knowing full well what happens if you don't do exactly what Luciano, or Luke as most did indeed call him, said.

“Yeah Dougie, sure thing, right behind ya.”

I motioned him to lead the way and followed him trying to figure how I was going to get the fuck out of this one. Dougie opened Luke's office door and let me in but unlike any other time, he closed the door behind me remaining outside of the office and I turned to find Luke, for the first and only time I'd ever been with him at that point; alone.

It was just he and I and I thought, fuck me through the heart; I'm done. I looked around to see if the place was covered in plastic or if he was holding a weapon of any kind, but there were no such things. Instead, we had what became a definitive turning point in our relationship.

If Luciano had trust issues with me before, they were instantly gone when he found out what I was doing regarding the paying off of his client's debts. He sat me down in front of him and began asking me all kinds of personal questions about my life.

I answered all of his questions without second thought, honestly and truthfully which in retrospect, wasn't too smart though he used it as leverage a couple of times, he never, ever went near my friends and family.

"So you're not doing this for money, girls, prestige or any kind of ambition of moving up the ranks? You're just in it..." he momentarily paused *"for the action?"* he asked with peak curiosity and confusion.

"Well when you put it that way brother..."

"Please..." He motioned with his hand, *"tell me more"*, he said as he leaned in with peaking interest.

"Okay, it's not about the 'action' per say. I'm just not the nine to five, white picket fence and all that crap kind of guy. I've trained in martial arts since I was six years old, my dad enrolled me in the first Karate school he saw the day after he took me to watch Bruce Lee's Game of Death at the drive inn theater and I was instantly hooked on the combat arts and been training ever since. I just don't see myself working an office job and I love travelling."

This got him even more interested.

"So you like to fight?" he asked with eagerness.

"I like to hurt those that deserve it."

“Yes, I got that. But do you like to fight competitively?”

As it turned out; I had an entirely different meaning and perspective of the word ‘competitively’ than he did.

“Sure.” I replied confidently. *“Why? What do you have in mind?”*

What he had in mind was underground no holds barred fighting, literally with the only rules being no eye gouges, no throat shots, no firearms and no blades or shivs of any kind. All else was permitted. Some would choose to fight with weapons such as bats, sticks or blunt force trauma weapons of any kind while others would opt at pure hand to hand.

These weren’t trained fighters by any means either, these were truck drivers, bouncers, correctional officers, glorified tough man contest winners and general red necks trying to make a buck using their larger than average sizes as the main advantage. The majority of these fucking mastodons were two fifty plus. Some had enormous amounts of muscle under their enormous amounts of fat, others, not so much muscle.

They were also there largely because they needed the extra money and didn’t know how else to make it in as fast a time. If you won even one of your fights and had bet a substantial amount on yourself, depending on the odds for or against you, you could easily walk out of there with over twenty grand.

However, if you wouldn’t bet on yourself and won your fights, then you would only get two percent of everyone’s collective winnings which was still substantial. You could

still walk out of there with over twenty grand, especially if you'd win every fight of the night.

Regardless, I said yes as usual without knowing what I was in for but the one good thing that came with this five hour long talk with Luke, along with a 'not such a great thing' as most things usually come together in a yin and yang fashion, was that Luke now trusted me more than he did his nineteen year old son or anyone else in the outfit for that matter. This did several things for me including giving me the kind of leeway unlike any ever had working for him prior or since I would imagine.

What he garnered from our five hour talk were several key points, for one, I was trustworthy beyond a doubt and I was not in this for the money so he never needed to worry about my stealing or skimming from him and from that day on, unless I made my cash via what I personally bet on myself in the fights which I never did, he would pay me half of what he would pay anyone else on staff regardless of the job. That suited me just fine too as it was less of a burden now regarding hiding cash.

Next, he deduced I was a good person with strong morals because I paid stranger's debts for them out of my own pocket instead of injuring them when he firmly believed I enjoyed hurting people and to this day I am positive he still thinks so. He wouldn't be wrong; it just depends on the person.

He also determined I had a family, still lived at home at the time though that was about to change soon enough, and was living a double life I didn't want found out. Luke used every one of those points against me which later on would cause me all kinds of troubles within the organization but at

the same time, he grew to love me like a son giving anyone who had a problem with me in the organization, a very hard time to act upon them, though a few sooner and later did regardless.

Like this punk who ambushed me walking on my way home one night. He was coming from a distance the opposite way I was heading but on the same sidewalk. As he got nearer, he seemed to also be getting closer to walking directly in front of my path as opposed to staying on his right and leaving me clear access to pursue mine. By the time we were to pass each other, without warning or saying a single word, he swung a savage left hook at my head.

I reflexively slipped out of the way making him miss completely and lose his balance tipping forward with the momentum of his swing n' miss, where I greeted him with a solid elevated left knee to his sternum. As he doubled over, I swung behind him with my left arm around his neck, buckled his right leg at the knee with my right foot and proceeded to put him in a sleeper hold and choke him out until he was unconscious.

I gently put him down, quickly scanned my environment to check if anyone else was interested in participating and when the coast was clear, I then made my way home.

No clue who he was then and there nor what he wanted or why he simply tried to take me out like that with no warning. A week later however, I saw him walking out of Luke's office with two other friends.

The fucker saw me too and like the dog he was, he bowed his head, put his tail between his legs and walked away

looking at the floor trying his best to pretend he didn't see me. Turns out, he was looking to make a name for himself and he's lucky I was feeling righteous that day 'cause I could have ratted him out and had him killed.

Those random attacks became rather common, especially after having won every single one of my fights for Luke, whom, before risking betting large sums of cash on me, thought it'd be best to have me tested again, just to be certain. After all, he heard about my abilities but he'd never personally witnessed them.

He figured if I could beat two opponents at the same time, multiple times; a single one regardless of skill or brutality would pale in comparison. Sound reasoning I suppose. He gathered a bunch of men in an empty warehouse he owned in the industrial part of town and had six fighters there for me to fight in three fights, with a five minute break in between each fight providing of course I made it passed the first one.

Sure, why not? Not like someone put a gun to their heads to do this. Needless to say, my being roughly a hundred and fifty five pounds and standing at five feet and if lucky, seven inches tall, it wasn't hard to find anyone bigger than me.

Though I was and maintained great physical conditioning and combat training my entire life, a hundred and fifty pound difference is literally another human being. Whoever said size didn't matter was a great con man. Size matters. Big time. Especially if the sizeable party knows how to use and maneuver said size and the rules set put the vital targets like eyes and throat, off limits.

The first two guys I fought weighed in together a minimum of a near half ton. They were powerful, but they weren't fast, nor did they work well together at all. They managed to land a few blows that more than hurt and broke a couple of my left ribs. Second time around too, the feeling is familiar and not as crippling this time around so I learned to maneuver and breathe around the injury for the remainder of the fights while protecting my left side.

It was soon after these fights that I began taking steroids. I figured I needed the edge if I were to be in this game; and fuck, if it was good enough for Sly, Arnie and Van Damme, it was good enough for me. I did a few cycles here and there for a couple of years and jacked up to an eventual one hundred-and-ninety pounds, nothing serious, but I kind of looked like I was bloated and inflated and nothing the way Stallone looked in the second Rambo.

The next two guys were more challenging. Still a good two hundred pounds easy over me combined, the pair chose to fight me tag team. I later discovered, much to their dismay; that it was because they believed me to be weak from the broken ribs and wanted to give me a chance. They never got the chance to tag once.

That doesn't mean the second guy was easy by any means, it took close to three minutes and a cracked jaw to put a stop to him. He had landed a good knee to my chin in a failed clinch attempt on my part, so I used the momentum to latch onto his returning leg that was making its way back from the knee strike.

I grabbed that sucker and swung it downward and to the right with as much torque as my one hundred and fifty-five pound frame could muster, landing my left shoulder with

my entire bodyweight on his twisted leg, directly on his knee as we both hit the floor. He didn't get back up.

During my second break, Luke walked over and sat next to me asking me how I was feeling; he was simply and absolutely thrilled over my victories. He went on and on about how much money 'we' were going to make, and yada fuckin yada until his voice vanished in a fading echo and the pain in my ribs nearly crippled me as I shifted positions trying to make myself more comfortable.

It's amazing how adrenaline and a survival state of mind will literally physiologically and biologically protect you. As soon as I would fight, the pain would immediately subside taking its place on the backburner, simmering, while it allowed my body to take care of business.

The minute it was over though, the simmering stopped and just to make up for allowing us to take care of shit when necessary, it tripled in its intensity during rest time. Though I heard nothing, Luciano's mouth seemed to keep going as I began taking deep breaths, heavily visualizing what and how my silver screen heroes would handle this.

My thoughts went from Seagal meditating in 'Hard to Kill' then jumped from Rocky bruised and battered facing Apollo Creed, to one of my cousins making fun of me pretending to be Rambo when we used to play commandos at two o'clock in the morning after high school in local wooded areas.

Yeah, so, before my teenage memories could humiliate me any further, it was already time for me to go back and fight my last fight for Lucky Luke. About time too 'cause a minute or two longer and I would have calcified on that

bench.

The last two guys had over a hundred or so pounds on me combined. They were both in great shape though and judging by the shadow boxing one of them was doing as the other simply glared at me; they looked pretty fast, athletic and well trained. Good. The chance of them being bound to their combative discipline by virtue of ego alone was to become a tactical advantage for me.

They were kick-boxers. Keep in mind; this was the early nineties and pre-UFC days. The lesson I learned in the back storage of that convenience store a while back, the one that nearly took my knee out? I was about to impart it with a couple of kick-boxers.

I began kick-boxing with them at first to establish their comfort zone. I managed to maintain them both in my field of vision and with fast and precise footwork, exchanged blows with them on a more or less neutral level.

Ok, I got hit quite a bit. So much so actually, that they became overconfident and I chose my moment to feint towards the one on my left who was the slower of the two, causing him to defensively sidestep away from the centerline which created the opening I needed to shoot in for the second opponent.

I faked low with a tackle which I anticipated he'd attempt to defend with an instinctive semi sprawl. On my way in, I switched gears and drove upward with my left shoulder slamming into his right armpit, left arm fully extended outward and slightly upward crossing his chest and swung behind him, grabbing him in a reverse bear hug. I quickly dropped my center of gravity into a deep, low squat

then exploded up, dipping him backwards into a Suplex. Knocked him out cold. He never saw it coming.

I leapt back up in a kip up to face the other opponent who looked really unmotivated to continue. Thankfully as well, 'cause that kip up ignited my entire left rib cage on fire. There were tears rolling down my eyes that thankfully mixed with the sweat concealing them along with it, as I bit my tongue from the agony my ego wouldn't allow me to show. Everyone in the room clapped and cheered. Luke told me to go to the medic and that as soon as I was healed up; I'd have my first real fight.

- Chapter 11 -

ROCK BOTTOM

It took nearly twelve weeks for me to heal well enough to be able to step into whatever arena of the night would be. Usually they were held in the same places, in the industrial side of town in one of Luke's factories after hours, but every once in a while, they would hold one outdoors, thankfully only in the summer months.

These outdoor ones would happen in construction sites, under highways in abandoned sections of very low income neighborhoods. This would make any potential body leftover explainable by the usual amount of street violence occurring in those areas. What was to be my last fight, happened in exactly one of those locations at the tail and east end of the city of Montreal.

It was then I met Aella for the very first time, she was working security for what were to become my last fights. She was mainly working in protective detail but also did occasional and various odd jobs as well when there wasn't enough security work available.

During a slow security period, we worked two of those occasional odd jobs I was referring to, where we had to act quickly and swiftly and we happened to have executed 'em flawlessly. Flawlessly meaning no one was killed and the job was done as instructed considering the incident.

One of those particular incidents occurred in Mexico City during a hand-to-hand, a term used to describe a 'direct delivery and payment'. It just so happened that the brother, Carlos, on the other side of the transaction, had a problem with women being a part of what he considered to be a man's equation.

He started in on Aella from the minute we arrived on the

scene and if there was one thing that got under Aella's skin, it was a male who didn't take her seriously on the job or anywhere for that matter to be honest. She wasn't by any means a feminist but it was never wise to undermine her simply due to her gender, especially on the job.

She could handle a sexual verbal assault no problem. Of course, once we had gotten together and these situations would come up, we would have to spar and have the roughest of sex during, but she could handle it. Touch her however, and you would be left with a permanent scar or two along with a healthy dose of public humiliation.

Everything was going as well as it could considering, the transaction was done and we were literally on our way out the proverbial door when Carlos decided to slap and grab Aella's right ass cheek. 'Big mistake' would be the understatement of the century.

As Aella began swiftly swinging around with the start of a vertical, downward elbow that eventually ended up splitting the top of Carlos' skull, breaking the bridge of his nose and finally, finding its stiletto pointy end right on Carlos' fat belly as he doubled over from the multiple impacts of Aella's pile driving elbow; I immediately recognized the early body language of her retaliation and drew my gun at Carlos' henchmen who were in the process of utter disbelief. Our timing, perfect; the whole thing took less than three seconds between ass grope, elbow drop and my gun fully drawn.

His men only clued into what was going on as Carlos' body hit the ground. They didn't have the time or opportunity to draw, let alone shoot. Aella gave me a '*you know he fucking deserved that*' look, to which I acknowledged with a '*sure,*

absolutely, and more sister' look, which I politely tried to explain to his men with the most macho I could muster.

They weren't buying it, and I wasn't about to off four of the cartel's finest either, so I tried to explain it in a very matter of fact way for them. I let them know that it would be much wiser for all of us if we just let the incident go. A war between our people would only end in bloodshed and it would be bad business for everyone. That they understood perfectly, and peacefully we went our separate ways.

Due to his insolence and risking a potential all out war between two powerful organizations, Carlos ended up in the hands of the infamous 'El Pozolero', also known as 'the soup or stew maker', the nickname for a brother in the cartel with a strong knowledge of chemistry and expertise on how to dissolve and dispose of bodies.

Luke was so impressed by the way Aella and I worked together; he paired us up for the rest of the time while my ribs were healing. It didn't matter that we worked more than well together, Luke had his mind made up and set on me fighting and that was to be that. For the time being anyway.

The time had come where I had fully healed and within an hour of my announcing it to Luke, he had set up a 'fight night' for the coming weekend and invited his usual rich, sociopathic friends for a night of drinking, gambling, violence and other festivities.

On any given night, depending on the amount of fighters, there would be an average of three to ten matches; elimination style. The winners would keep fighting until there was one final champion. The losers mainly ended

up in the hospital, some of them no one knows for certain really as they were just left there or on the extremely rare occasion, the cave.

People in attendance would bet on their favored fighters or the one's they simply believed would win. One could bet on any single individual fight or as many as they wished too, including the last one which would usually draw in the most money.

My first fight was against a large and seasoned bouncer, this guy was a brawler; pure raw and unfocused raging energy. He was fast too, ironically so because he couldn't perform unless he was drunk due to the job as some bouncers choose to drink while on the job and end up always dealing with the night's violence in an intoxicated state. This happens so frequently that they end up not being able to do their job unless drunk.

He had guzzled a good half liter of a Johnny Walker Gold Label reserve bottle in one swift and fucking expensive gulp just half an hour before stepping into the battle field. I could smell it on him as he stood waiting for the bell to ring.

I could also smell the scents of various expensive cigars blending in the air along with the heavy perfumes and colognes of the gamblers in the room, truly; a peak environment for athletes and fighters. And high priced hookers as well.

As I glanced around the smoky room, I found myself all of a sudden filled with contempt for these rich fuckers strictly here to be entertained by other people's miseries. Except for me; the other fighters were all here strictly for

the money. The majority were not trained fighters by any means, just street fighters, all of them survivors down on their luck trying to make an extra buck to help make ends meet somehow.

The last fighter I fought on my very last fight for example, was here because he was a single father, no insurance, who lost his wife to cancer and needed money to buy his daughter a birthday present for the first time in her life were he to win. She was turning five and in order to make up for her first five years, he was looking to purchase two airline tickets to visit her grandparents in Slovakia.

I, of course, had no idea until much later when I read his file in Luke's office. It's not like you agree to the rules, shake hands, then have a deep and emotional conversation with your opponent on the whys either of you are there doing this prior to trying to knock each other out in front of a blood thirsty crowd, ya know?

What differentiated me greatly from all of these guys without exception, besides the fact that I wasn't doing this for the cash, was that they were doing this strictly part time. Outside of fighting for the mob, they had nothing to do with the mob. They had regular jobs and lives outside of these events, whatever those may have been, whereas I was a full timer. When I wasn't fighting, I was off working protective detail or closing a deal somewhere.

They were strictly there for the fights. If they won and moved on to fight again, great, they would do so until they would lose or ultimately win the final championships at the end of the year but if they lost, they were out and were rarely to ever try their hand at it again. There were new fighters there almost monthly, as rarely did any single

fighter ever consistently win their matches, I was the first.

That doesn't mean some of these pricks weren't first class assholes either though, in fact, most were, and one could argue or excuse the fact it was due to their upbringing or lack thereof and troubled pasts, but that would be taking away accountability now, wouldn't it? So fuck them, but for the rare decent ones that were here due to lack of better judgment and shitty financial situations, I honestly did feel for 'em.

As my mind wandered off as it often does, not certain if you picked up on that yet by the way, the bell had rung and my drunk, raging opponent didn't skip a beat to charge at me with his rhino, rocket fueled rugby tackle.

I only snapped out of my hypnotic trance once his two hundred and thirty pound frame crashed into mine and I found myself literally being squeezed to death two feet off the ground in a bear hug that had both my arms immobilized.

My first thought was *'what the fuck man!?!'* as I honestly never heard the bell ring and was incredibly peeved at being so rudely and roughly interrupted during my train of thoughts. I tried to voice this but every single time I exhaled, he squeezed harder and I was getting fucking hammered just smelling his damn breath.

I head-butted him so hard, directly on the bridge of his nose, a favored target of mine at the time you must have noticed, that I saw stars for a moment. His nose shattered under the sound of a thundering crunch, at least to my and his ears, not certain about anyone else in the room though, and he immediately let go of me back peddling, both hands

holding his bloodied up face.

His nose literally exploded, his eyes were blurred from the tearing that resulted and his throat was filling with blood and saliva as he staggered backwards, a feeling I was to experience myself at a later time.

The crowd went silent for a fraction of a second then exploded into savage cheers I couldn't clearly make out. I went after my opponent and threw a perfectly executed front kick to the side of his knee, buckling him down, followed by the swing of a rear leg Thai kick, landing my shin across his face the way an axe would swing into a tree. The momentum and impact of the blow knocked him out cold, breaking several of the bones in his face along with it and splattering several of the spectators with blood.

The crowd cheered some more while a quarter of them booed me. It seems several have lost quite a bit of money as I was labeled an 'underdog' due to my size. It's not like Luke offered any insight on my abilities, he however, made over twenty-five grand that single fight.

My opponent was simply 'moved out of the way' for the next fights. They just took him, unconscious and bleeding, and put him off to the side seated on a wall in an upright position so he didn't drown in his own blood.

It wasn't often fighters came alone and the opposite was highly recommended as it was understood that you were responsible for yourself once here, but every single fight night I had been at, there had been at least two guys that would show up alone. My opponent however, came to during my second fight and simply got in his car and left driving himself to a hospital I would hope and imagine.

I fought a total of three fights that night and won everyone including the championship. They were tough; I got my fair share of bruises and a busted jaw which is much less than I can say for my opponents.

At this time, I was just unleashing and training. What better training can you get really, especially in those days, we had no Ultimate Fighting Championships yet; this was the UFC. I would try different things and work on my weaker attributes in hopes of honing them, baptism under fire as it were. Though it exponentially increased my fighting skills, it also made me cocky, arrogant and vulnerable.

After my third fight, a stunning red head in her late thirties with emerald eyes wearing a low cut, seventeen thousand dollar Dior dress that hugged her hour glass figure as if it were painted on her, walked up to me, slowly and sensually licked the blood off my lips and slipped me her telephone number whispering "*I can fix you*" just before walking away hand in hand with her fat, clueless husband.

Hell yeah, I could use some fixing. I just had no idea how deviant this lady was. I was to meet her in a hotel room on the outskirts of town in the middle of the afternoon on a Wednesday and what an experience that turned out to be. The whole thing was quite clandestine as she apparently feared her husband something fierce.

She left me instructions to enter the hotel room at a specific time. I headed her words and entered the freshly smoked weed scented room to find her and a thirty-something brunette friend, just as attractive if not more so, sitting on the bed across from each other wearing nothing but silver, silk bath robes.

I was instructed to strip down to my boxers and sit on the chair that was purposefully propped at the foot of the bed. Next to it was a side table with an eight-ball of coke in a baggie sitting on it along with ten standard sized lines set up and ready to go. The ash tray next to it contained a half smoked joint; and the ladies looked eager to get to it.

I was to simply 'observe'. The ladies removed their robes, got on their knees facing each other on the bed, looking deep into each other's eyes for what looked to be more of the start of a fight than a sexual encounter at this point.

I wasn't half off, it was a deviance of a ritual referred to as tribadism or 'tribbing', a wrestling match where the object was, to be the first to make the other one cum, the winner would get half an hour with me alone as the other one would sit and watch, and I was not allowed to bust a nut until I was instructed too. It was to be a best out of three orgasm contest and at the end; it would be them against me. Needless to say they won. Several times in a row.

This was the first but not last time I had ever tried cocaine. I didn't particularly enjoy it really as I'm already quite the hyper active type and I never understood back then, how people lost their lives to it. For me, it just felt like I had drunk eight espressos in a row and espresso was cheaper and tasted much better. I used it a few more times mainly during gigs where I had to be up for over thirty six hours and still remain sharp so no one, including me, fucking died.

As Viagra didn't hit the market until ninety-eight and coke did have one side effect over drinking twelve espressos and that is to shrivel one's dick to the size and shape of a frozen Hershey's Kiss as it has an analgesic effect. They made me

do a couple of lines to insure the fact I wouldn't ejaculate the moment I entered that hotel room and saw them there together facing each other on the king size bed. Eh. Too late.

Normally, most wouldn't even be able to get an erection on cocaine, but a brother my 'age' in the sexual fantasy I was about to embark on needed at least eight, foot long lines not to explode every four seconds. Ah, the perks of the business.

The ladies went at it with passionate ferocity; I had to keep doing lines every five minutes in order not to bust when their bodies smacked together naked in erotic combat. The sound of their flesh coming together like that was enough. It was like they knew me personally when they combined my two favorite things in life, sex and fighting, just for me.

This was fucking torture though. Almost twenty minutes into the most intense female wrestling match I've ever witnessed and the red head who invited me to this shindig had her brunette friend squirming underneath her and moaning in ecstasy using her middle finger and a full bodied grapevine pin.

She gave her friend the most satisfying glare as she victoriously got off of her, grabbed a bottle of baby oil and ordered her to douse her entire, perfectly shaped naked body with it and massage it in from her neck to her crimson red painted toes. Her friend kindly complied and when done, the brunette and I exchanged places and my boxers were removed only to have me thrown on the bed and told not to move.

She got on top of me pinning me to the bed with a full body

pin, and proceeded to oil my entire body up using hers while her friend masturbated sensually on the chair as she watched.

Once she had us both fully oiled, she then sat on top of me, balls... no, not mine, hers neither, thankfully; but with the balls of her feet on the bed, she initiated penetration but just at the very tip of it and hovered there for a few seconds. I was losing my fucking mind.

She took the entire remaining three minutes left of her half hour with me to achieve one, single and full penetration, slipping me in a centimeter at a time every fifteen to twenty seconds, then just hovering there in the most subtle of side to side swaying motions, shifting her weight ever so slightly from one ball of her foot to the other without ever taking her eyes off mine. I don't think she blinked once the entire time we were there actually, not even when she came.

I literally bit my tongue till I bled, it's a fucking wonder I still have that muscle in my mouth, and blood began leaking out of the side of it, which didn't achieve shit but putting more holes in my Swiss cheese tongue because I couldn't feel anything due to the amount of coke I'd inhaled thus far, but that feeling somehow didn't extend itself to the part needing it most insuring I don't bust a nut. This seemed to excite the red head even more as she decided to up the ante by asking her friend to join in for the remaining forty seconds.

So I ran the most grotesque of scenarios in my head like French kissing my grandmothers in a foursome with a goat, in order not to ejaculate there and then. Maybe I shouldn't have thrown the goat in there. Not to mention, at this

fucking point, commit fucking murder 'cause I'd have shot her through the roof sitting on me and penetrating me like that.

Four hours and countless orgasms on everyone's part later, six-thousand and seven hundred of them being mine, and the ladies made their way and I decided to take the rest of the morning off, lying in bed, contemplating the fascinating adventure that had become my life until check out time. I also needed my penis to cool off some 'cause that fucker was chafed something fierce.

A couple of weeks had passed and I was to fight again. Another factory, another town, a similar crowd, six fighters present this time around, including me. My first fight went pretty well and lasted less than a minute; I finished my opponent off with a sleeper hold accompanied by simultaneous, repeated palm strikes to the face. Nothing like distracting a fucker by breaking his nose with repeated strikes while choking him out I say. Try it, you'll see.

The crowd wasn't used to my kind of fighting, until then; fights were always finished via some form of blunt force trauma and never with some form of grappling. When the fights would hit the ground, it pretty much looked like what a schoolyard brawl looks like; two guys rolling around, trying to get the upper hand all the while throwing as many punches as they can with the occasional headlocks and half assed guillotines thrown in the mix.

I finished two of my fights that night with a sleeper hold and nose smashing palm strikes, until the last guy I faced began picking up on that and did everything within his power not to hit the ground with me. The last fight lasted nearly eleven minutes because he fought an entirely

defensive fight, back peddling, defensive striking and lots of wasting time outside of range including a three minute pause for weapons.

Mid way through the fight, he called for sticks and we were momentarily paused to each be given a stick approximately the length of one's arm. It wasn't often weapons were called upon as most preferred hand to hand at these events but it would happen every now and then.

Every once in a while however, if one of the fighters opted for one, both had to have one, and the other fighter had no choice or say in the matter, least he forfeited his win and lost whatever he bet on himself for that fight.

Every single day I have been alive on this earth, I have encountered or heard about a human being somewhere doing something monumentally idiotic. Every. Single. Day. Choosing to hand your obviously proficient martial artist opponent, who's been cleaning house with his bare hands since he began fighting in these tournaments, a stick; was in my book, fucktarded. What was he thinking? Was he even thinking?

I gleefully accepted and gave Luke the signal to raise his bet as he still had the opportunity to do so. I grabbed my stick worst than a complete amateur would handle one and with a look of utter, sarcastic confusion as to what to do with this piece of wood that was handed to me.

My opponent, as it turned out, had watched a few too many martial arts movies, heh, look who's talkin', because he began twirling the shit out of his stick like it was a parade baton. He twirled it up, down, around him, over him, threw it in the air in front of him, caught it behind him, it was a

fucking spectacle.

A spectacle I interrupted rather rudely when I whipped mine three feet away from him, landing it right on the top corner of his eye, cutting it open pretty badly. Total fluke too, cause all I was hoping to do was use it as a distraction, thinking he would block or jam or maybe even move out of the way from it and I would capitalize; but nope, as luck would have it, it cut him open and caused him to double over, grabbing his face, pissing blood out of his cupped hands around the corner of his eye.

Not to waste this opportunity, I ran as fast as I could and jumped over him as he was doubled over while grabbing his hair on my way over him to his other side, and using both our bodyweights and momentums, I planted him face first into the ground upon our landing.

Ok, so not a very martial artsy use of the stick, but therein lays the difference; he opted for the martial artsy version; I went for the efficient version. The crowd was stunned, no one; not them, not Luke and certainly not my opponent expected that ending for a second. Hell, even I was stunned.

Luke was beside himself ecstatic. He was making a mint off of me and couldn't wait for the next fight night which he set as soon as I would be fully recovered from the last. My final fight was to be an eye opener for me and a huge disappointment for Luke.

My last fights happened outdoors, in the summer of nineteen-ninety-three. The location was a construction site parking lot underneath a closed off highway in pretty much what one would refer to as the slums. The local cops were paid off to steer clear, there was no one for at least a three

kilometer radius and it was three-thirty in the morning.

The ring was a gravel floor; it never mattered or came into play before that particular night however. The usual bands of rich sycophants were in attendance and this particular evening, was a special one.

Including yours truly, there were only four fighters that night, each, a champion of his outfit. Luke, as you may have already guessed, wasn't the only man of his caliber; there were others like him. These fights were quite popular with every outfit and happened in every city and mob run towns, and actually happened to specifically entertain and make the mob bosses extra cash. Because they needed it.

At the end of every fight year, they would gather their winners and make them fight each other to see which mob boss had the best fighter in his stable. The one thing I had, over every one of those guys, was that I was the champ from day one, for a full year, undefeated, and they knew it too so some fought dirty and because these were the final championship bouts, a little cheating was excused.

Only two of us were left. We faced each other toe to toe waiting for the bell to ring, glaring into each other's eyes. Okay, maybe he was glaring; I was biting my fingernail because I had a hangnail that's been bothering me since the end of my last fight. Seriously, I may be obsessive compulsive when it comes to this shit. I just have to finish biting it off.

I was so preoccupied with it, that as the bell rang, I thought I'd finish biting my hangnail off by the last ring tone of the bell, then deal with the fight while my opponent decided to throw a perfectly executed right that landed flush on the

bridge of my nose, go figure, by the end of the same ring tone.

Well fuck me, what the hell was that? I heard a very similar crunch to that of the one I head butted one of my past opponents with, only it was much, much crystal clearer. I dropped to my knees and couldn't see a fucking thing as my eyes swelled with involuntary tears and my throat was engorged with blood.

It felt like a grapefruit exploded in my frontal lobe, my head was spinning. Everything went black for a fraction of a second. As I began spitting out blood and clearing my throat, I gazed up to see the blurry shape of my opponent with his arms up in a V shape, screaming victory at the crowd who was cheering him so loud, you'd think you were at one of the early sold out WrestleMania's when the first notes of the Ultimate Warrior's entrance song would hit prior to making his appearance.

He underestimated me. Hell I underestimated me. I lost myself at that moment. All I remember is jumping on him from my kneeling position as he made his way towards me to finish me off, the next moment; I am being pulled off of him by six security guards, Aella included. I momentarily fought them off until I caught glimpse of my opponent.

He was laying there convulsing in jolts that had his body lifting off the ground several centimeters, his face completely disfigured and covered in gravel and blood. I was told I had leapt on him, savagely taking him down to the ground with a guttural scream that made the people in attendance's hairs stand. I proceeded to bash his head in and then grind his face up and down on the gravel floor with all of my weight on his head. That's when they

removed me off of him.

They sat me down and were trying to talk to me but all I could hear were echoed voices blending together in a cacophonous soup of foreign languages drifting into the distance. I puked on one of my coworkers kneeling in front of me and couldn't stop for what felt like an eternity of vomiting. He wasn't too thrilled about it either obviously.

One of the bosses from the other outfits walked over to me and tossed me a bundle of cash saying "*Good work kid, you should come n' work for me instead.*" And walked away lighting what was the unmistakable scent of my favorite cigar, the Churchill Romeo and Juliet.

There was ten grand in that bundle. It was a direct offer to go and work for the brother or to be considered a gift if my boss was to refuse letting me go which Luke of course, indeed refused. No way he was letting me go to someone else.

As it turned out, my opponent slipped on a brass knuckle on his right fist prior to the bell ringing. He had simply slipped it out of his track pants and put it on. He landed that brass knuckle flush in the center of my face breaking my nose and cracking both my cheek bones in pure desperation because of both his personal situation, and the knowledge that he didn't stand a chance against me. He was doing this part time for the cash; I was doing things like this every other day.

Luke made his money and received the accolades of his peers which were more than enough for him to call it a night, those who bet on me got much richer, and those that didn't, didn't get much poorer as the crowds began to

dissipate and the smoke cleared.

My opponent however, still wasn't moving. People were walking over him at this point and when I asked what was to become of him, I was laughed at and disregarded with a subtle brush off. There were literally a handful of people left milling around at their cars, and no one gave a single fuck about my opponent.

Asshole or not, I'm not a monster, I couldn't just leave him there. I called Jonah up, a coworker of mine who I bailed out a few times when the heat was on him, he owed me one, and I asked him to come and pick us up to bring us to a hospital.

"What the fuck are you going to tell them Nome? You know we can't do that, he showed up alone, it's his fucking problem man, do yourself a favor and just leave."

I couldn't blame him either, anyone caught wind of what we did and it there would be a price to pay.

"I'm just going to tell them we don't know each other, that we were both at a party outside having a smoke when we were jumped by several guys. It ain't like it's unbelievable considering the neighborhood brother, please. You can drop us off a block away; I'll carry him from there. You owe me puto."

Jonah paused for a moment. I could hear a female voice with him asking who the fuck it was that was calling at five thirty in the morning.

"Shut yo fucken mouth when I'm on the phone! Yeah, Nome, sorry 'bout that; sure. I'll be there in thirty."

Jonah arrived in twenty. Not sure who tied his shoes in the morning but he was reliable and loyal. He drove us as requested, one block away from the hospital and dropped us off.

“Hope you know what you’re doing man. Best of luck.”

And off Jonah went. I picked up my opponent in a fireman’s carry and walked him over to the hospital. Once there, I gave them the ‘being jumped at a party’ story and they bought it.

Since neither of us had any ID on us, there was no way of telling who this brother was until I got back to Luke’s office and read his file. Every boss had the files on every fighter in case of liability issues and of course, blackmail. The files contained such details about the individual’s life, it was astounding.

That’s when I learned that my opponent’s name was Geoffrey Arman, a widower with a daughter who’s birthday was coming up. I felt much better about taking that ten thousand dollar wad of cash and placing it in his pant pocket that night at the hospital. It turned out he needed reconstruction surgery for his face and was in a coma they were pretty certain he was going to thankfully recover from.

I spent several hours sitting by his bedside wondering what the fuck I had become. This wasn’t who my parents raised. I began silently crying next to him, questioning my entire existence. Before leaving is when I took the ten grand rolled into a wad and stuffed in into his pants pocket.

I told the nurse to make sure he got the money as I was holding it for him and I gave her a blood stained hundred

dollar bill to make certain of the fact, which she kindly refused restoring a fraction of whatever faith I may have had in humanity I lost ten thousand times over since then.

So when I read Geoff's file, it made me feel a tiny bit better about myself. As it turned out, all of his personal info was in that file. He eventually came out of his coma and received his reconstruction surgery. I never looked into him again or since. It always fascinated me just how much info and Intel these guys could gather on someone.

Time and the years went on and I was burning out, the candle I had lit at both ends earlier on in my teens, had little left to it by mid two-thousand and Aella was just about to knock the floor from under me.

- Chapter 12 -

KNIFE SECRETS

I still remember the day I took a permanent leave of absence in the fall of two-thousand and five. It was four months after Aella had left me and I couldn't function at work properly any longer. It was too difficult for me to be, and work in an environment we dominated together collectively for over a decade plus the violence was also weighing on me. I needed to step away.

My head space just wasn't in it anymore and the life was beginning to take its toll on me as I was no longer in my mid twenties but passed my mid thirties at this point. I had been here thirty six, explosive years thus far and after living through all the violence I had, doing the things I had done, I was in dire need of change, along with some peace and quiet, just for a while at least, so I can get my shit together and things back into perspective.

As I said, I knew I'd get over Aella, it was just a matter of time and allowing myself to heal no matter how much I wanted my life to end when she left me. Always the fighter, I persevered and got myself re-acquainted with a young woman I had met through my father.

Saskia Liraz was one of my father's childhood friend's daughters. Four years less on earth than I, she was a very pretty woman with certain traits that reminded me a bit of Meg.

Saskia was a veterinarian who began taking kick-boxing lessons with me in two thousand and four to get herself back into shape. She had to stop training with me for personal reasons a year later however, and I hadn't really seen nor heard from her since.

I had never previously given her a second look or thought

really. Other than her being an acquaintance and someone I was training twice a week to make my dad happy as I was consumed by Aella at the time, she never had significant meaning in my life prior to our dating or after our separation for that matter. During the time though, she was a lifesaver.

So when fate had me run into her after not seeing her for a year at my parent's place leaving with her father as I was arriving, the genuine happiness and super tight, three minute hug we gave each other that made everyone slightly but pleasantly uncomfortable came to me as a bit of a surprise.

We told each other how great it was to have seen each other again and that we should get together sometime and shoot the proverbial shit. We went our separate ways and less than a year later, we were married.

What rebound?

Saskia wasn't the first woman I'd been with since Aella left, I had slept with over a dozen while less than casually dating since she left. Band aid after emotional band aid, I couldn't connect with anyone after Aella and the women I was sleeping with, I was meeting in my old work circles so, it didn't help that they were sleeping with the image and reputation and not who I may have been.

As physically gratifying and gorgeous as they were, when it was over, they left a void I didn't know how to fill any longer. I stopped dating and literally became a recluse. Except for the odd jobs I'd take working for my friend's legit private investigation company to pay the rent and eat, I never left the tiny apartment I had rented for myself

on the south-shore of Montreal. I went down the self destructive path knowing full well I'd be snapping out of it at some point making me over indulge in it even more.

Once the drug binge began, it opened up the flood gates of guilt and out came every shitty thing I'd ever done, facilitating organized crime, cheating on my wife, fucking over one of my close friends, injuring and crippling people in fights I had started; the festering corruption that I buried inside of me so deep, with the bullshit cover of being this indestructible 'action hero' was coming undone, fast.

For several weeks straight, I would spend my days training like a maniac and my nights consuming a ridiculous amount of alcohol and drugs, even after the rare workdays where I'd show up looking like I hadn't slept or shaved in weeks while never leaving my apartment. I ordered out for food and paid my bills with the internet, I found every excuse on earth not to leave my place.

Every night for weeks I would pop six, thirty milligram codeine pills with a full glass of vodka, consume two grams of shrooms, then sit in front of a violent movie while smoking weed until I passed out.

It got to the point of waking up on my living room floor in pools of my own vomit in the wee early hours of the morning thinking of James O'Barr's quote from his dark, graphic novel, 'The Crow', 'what laws of physics could possibly be holding my atoms together?' I'd pick myself up, clean the floor, take a piss, smoke more weed and go to bed.

I'd wake up every single morning; no hangover whatsoever, fresh like it was any other night, only to repeat the process

for several weeks over until that day I ran into Saskia at my folks place.

We dated for several months, figured we knew each other from before for a couple of years, we were in love, or so we thought and believed, so we got married and moved to the country side together, over an hour drive from the city.

We rescued three dogs, purchased an old ass duplex together, well, I purchased a duplex for us as she was broke as fuck. Figured the place already had tenants in it, might as well give being a landlord a shot and work from home in the country.

I figured, if I am going to get remarried, best this time around I lay my cards out on the table and let Saskia know absolutely everything about me. No secrets, no lies, no bullshit; no more double life.

I was still after all open to working the occasional security gig for Luke in two thousand and seven and that would last until present day, but they were really far and few between at this point and the last I'd heard from him was just after Aella had quit.

He'd seen the shape I was in and hadn't called since but one never knows. When I exited his office, his last words were "*Keep your cell phone on at all times, Nome.*" And out the door I went.

Luke proved to be very understanding to me at the times I needed it most. After my last fight with Geoffrey, I had gone to see him and told him I could and would no longer fight for him 'competitively', to transfer me to another 'department'. Though obviously disappointed, he

immediately and without hassle or question, transferred me to primarily being the head of his security detail and permanently pairing me with Aella as a partner from that point on.

He also let me leave without hassle or question after Aella had also quit. He knew what she meant to me, he knew how well we worked together; sure, he wasn't pleased on losing two of his top people, but he also knew that it was either that or force us to stay on the payroll and risk us putting his entire organization in jeopardy by proxy. He could obviously see that neither of us were in any state to continue doing any kind of work, especially at the capacity demanded and he of course knew we would never talk. The funny thing is, it wasn't the life in the end that burned me out in the end, it was the relationship.

Saskia was quite understanding, impressively so considering. I could only hope Maeve will be just as much but for the right reasons. You see, Saskia, like countless before her, had fallen in love with the image of who I was and never me, she just played me beautifully and it worked like a charm only because she was honestly fooling herself in the process and I desperately needed someone to save me. This was by no means intentional on her part.

Just like the fantasy life I had formed around Meg back in the early nineties; Saskia had formed one with me. I was her knight in not so shining armor she always fantasized about. She was attracted to every titles bestowed upon me, bouncer, fighter, instructor, actor, stunt man; except Nomad.

She fell in love with the personalities that floated in and out of the vessel. She didn't even know or care to know who I was and truth be told, I personally had no idea myself and

was in a state of rediscovery which I believe I have come close to figuring out by now, but yet to have.

She also lied to me about one very important thing. I was ready to settle down and leave the life completely and have a family. I wanted a child so bad, one of the reasons being, call it ego or species survival, but I am the last male of my family. When I die, my entire family bloodline would die with me and the Wyman name would be to disappear forever. I really, really wanted a boy.

Not that I wouldn't love a daughter just as much if not more, but coming from the world I'm living in and have been for over half my life now, she would only suffer under my care as she would never leave my sight until I was dead.

It would make it very difficult for her to have any kind of relationship with a man and I would sincerely hope and wish that she would turn out to be a lesbian because men are for the most part, a generally despicable breed. The amount of rape that exists in the world today is testament to that.

Saskia assured me she wanted a child and couldn't wait to have one but the minute we were married, everything changed and her true personality came through. There was nothing particularly wrong with her per say, not at all, just not who she portrayed herself to be, the complete opposite actually.

She lead me to believe she was an athlete and loved to train, that she loved animals, that she wanted children when the reality was she hated training and began gaining unhealthy weight eating a mainly processed food diet I got sucked into as well, as the shit is fucking addictive.

I'm not blaming her for my end of it as it was strictly my responsibility, she never put a gun to my head to eat it but considering the fact that I love junk food and try to stay as far away from it as possible made her not the best individual to live and share meals with.

As far as animals went, she loved *her* pets. That be about it, unless she got along with the animal, she fucking hated them if they didn't fit her fantasy life. One of our dogs in particular was temperamental and didn't listen all the time, nothing personal but Saskia took it personally; she treated the dog like crap when she thought I wasn't looking and this wasn't the first animal I would see her treat as such.

The minute I would mention children, her body language and facial expression would quickly shift to that of a woman at a party wearing a white dress and going commando who was told her anus was about to start leaking in thirty seconds and needed to take immediate cover. There. That's a better analogy than the goat jizz one I think. I redeemed myself.

So anyway, needless to say these differences weren't like me wanting a leather couch and her wanting a vinyl one, these fucking issues were pretty huge in my books. I quickly fell out of love with her realizing she was never in love with me and got my second divorce in two thousand and eight. Several months later, I began dating Dawn.

The first of two times I heard from Salvatore's was New Year's Eve in two thousand and seven. He called me the day of, at home in the country where I was playing the role of a landlord. I guess he kept those files on us up to date because when he called me, he basically indirectly threatened me to come and work as the head of his security

for their private new year's party simply by kindly dictating my present situation in casual conversation..

“Nomad, how’s it going kid? Been a while, I heard you bought a duplex in Contrecoeur with your new wife, Saskia Liraz. Eloped in Vegas did you?” Time didn’t seem to affect his Goofy impersonation of a Robert Deniro gangster character from a Scorsese film voice, nor his ability to acquire so much personal information.

He knew the rate I had on my loan and with what bank, he told me about our three dogs, knew our street address, my wife’s work address, her parents, as mine by then had retired to Ecuador; and my tenants as well.

After politely enumerating every detail of my life, he then asked me if I would work new years for him. How could I refuse? I was paid a third of what he normally pays for such a night and made me head of security for the night. This naturally pissed off his present head of security which was instructed to take orders from me that entire night.

His ego didn’t take quite kindly to that and twelve minutes into two thousand and eight, he had the opportunity to let me know it. A fight broke out between two brothers of different groups over what else but a woman and too much bourbon. We managed to stop the fight with little damage and separated the two men from each other.

They were playing it cool too until one of the two parties, the one on my left standing approximately eight feet from me with the other head of security just four feet from me in between the both of us, reached for and pulled a knife out of the back of his belt and began making his way towards me.

Must have had something to do with the half a golf ball sized lump on the top right of his noggin, which I gave him with a horizontal elbow pop when he tried to reverse head butt me as we were breaking them apart. Like I said, minimal damage.

Without Aella there to maintain my emotional balance, I just reacted as I saw fit in the moment without care or concern. I made what could have been a fatal mistake once again, by assuming that my partner had me covered, as he was right between me and the knifer, and saw him coming as I did, a mile away.

He did no such thing and let the fucker right by and on purpose. After all, if I got killed by someone else on the job, it wouldn't be his fault and he wouldn't ever have to play second fiddle to what he deemed was a punk-ass. My reflexes thankfully kicked in fast enough to sidestep, bypass the knife lunge and subdue the individual with a classic Senshido, Dimitri 'Shred' and a shin across the neck.

Once the others made sure he was disarmed, and held back, I quickly got up, walked straight over to the fucker who let him by, and uncharacteristically gave him a solid right cross, breaking his nose and jaw and knocking him flat out cold for the rest of the night and a three day stay in the hospital.

Being that he was one of the top guys, I thought to myself 'fuck, I'm done this time, if Luke doesn't do me in, as soon as he's gone, there's going to be a price on my head not to mention the silent one that's already being put in motion. Luke however simply brushed it off and assured me nothing would happen and I was safe but I wasn't so certain.

I was seriously considering leaving the country for a little while. Another point in contention between Saskia and I at the time. I was looking to take off to India with her then, spend a few years there and change our entire pace of life. It seemed her present life living next to her work, family and friends was more important than not having mine end. I saw it differently and that was the last straw on the proverbial camel's back.

There may have been a silent price on my head but it wasn't like I slept with anyone's woman, cost them any serious money or offed anyone either. They wouldn't bother wasting the time, money or effort, coming after me were I to leave the country, besides, Luke always had my back and things would hopefully eventually boil over and be forgotten.

'Outta sight, outta mind' deal but if I remained in sight, it would trigger the minds, and it'd be a matter of time before I'd have to break someone else's face again and I had it up to my ears with violence at this point. I wanted to be done with it. Enough was enough; it was time to find peace.

After leaving Saskia and hooking up with Dawn, the plan was to take off to India with her but as mentioned earlier, that didn't work out too well and by then, Maeve and I had been communicating on Facebook for a while now.

It was during that time I was also contacted by 'El Gato' to work for him. I know it doesn't sound much of the peaceful plan, but believe me, working for El Gato was a piece of gateaux, muthafacko.

Finally, it looked like I was getting a break.

- Chapter 13 -

LIGHT & LAUGHTER

I'm but a few kilometers from our meeting point now according to my GPS. Maeve texted me saying she'd meet me outside a sushi restaurant where we're to grab a meal at.

I've been keeping her up to date on my daily travels via text message and can't wait to see her. Judging by her pictures, she hadn't changed much at all, just a more mature version of what was her lovely fifteen year old self with the same glorious smile. The sound of her laughter was enough to fall in love with.

I've decided I'm going to tell her everything over dinner. I owe her that and if by any chance, we're to hit it off, it's critical our foundation is one based in truth and honesty, I would never, ever lie to her.

That would be a welcomed change. She also needed to know who I was and what she was getting into with me if things were to work out. I can only hope she will be as understanding as Saskia was.

As I approach my destination, I realize I am fifteen minutes early and I get to park my car and wait in anxious anticipation. What if we don't hit it off? What if it's really weird and she thinks I'm a thug or misogynistic asshole? What if she sees my penis and laughs, wondering how the hell that tiny thing could've hurt her, let alone anyone back in eighty-six?

Yeah, lucky for me I didn't become an office worker or anything of the sort, I would have never gotten laid passed Maeve in eighty-six unless I remained with virgins my entire life and that would have ruined shit for the Muslims.

Kelowna is a gorgeous spot I could hang and lay low in for

a while before I leave the country for who knows where yet, I haven't decided, but it would be much better to do it with her.

Perfect, there are several parking spots available right in front of the restaurant and a bench I could sit and soak the sun up while waiting for her to arrive on this gorgeous July the twenty ninth, two thousand and nine. I marked the date, just in case.

Several minutes pass and a silver Honda Civic like the one she described she owned pulls up and parks literally, right in front of me. License plate matches.

The driver side door opens and out steps Maeve, long flowing brown hair, gorgeous, expressive big brown eyes and that incredible smile that could melt an iceberg. She just smiles, looks at me and says *'Hi!'* and my heart skipped three beats.

"You look great sister." I waited for her to come around so we can hug or something, but she kind of just stood there staring at me for a while from the driver side of her car, door half opened with her in between. As it turned out, she revealed it was because she was so nervous seeing me again, her knees had literally buckled and she waited to gain solidity in 'em again, she thought it was hilarious.

She finally walked over and we hugged so hard and long, her scent brought back a flood of instant memories of our summer of eighty six together. It felt so good to be seventeen again, to be un-jaded, happy and still somewhat innocent for a fraction of a moment in my mind.

We had sushi and spoke for several hours closing the

restaurant. I told her everything and she was more understanding that I could have ever hoped for. She recognized that this was my past and that I was ready to move on and that we did not have to be who we once were if we so chose not to.

It was refreshing to be with a woman who saw me and not the image, not the reputation for she only cared about who I was today, to her and to the world. She was capable of seeing the good in me beyond the violence, beyond the darkness and corruption of my soul and that felt nice and novel.

Once we got to her place, I politely asked her where I was to sleep as I didn't want to assume we were sleeping together on my first night there.

"My bed" she replied as a matter of fact.

"Awesome, and where will you be sleeping M'Lady?"

"My bed." She replied as a matter of fact.

"Awesome." I said. *"If I may"* I asked her as I pulled her in close to me, *"I just have to know."* I told her; and we both closed our eyes and locked lips for a tender eternity. Instant time warp again, I finally felt like I was home in her arms. It was pure, familiar and honest.

The kiss ending, we looked each other deep in the eyes, laughed and couldn't believe how both amazing the kiss was, and that we were actually in each other's arms again. It was so familiarly comfortable yet so distantly foreign at the same time, it was truly surreal. Had Dawn's prophecy perhaps come true? It was too early to tell.

I cannot wait to explore this relationship and see where it takes us as I realized during that kiss, that I had never fallen out of love with Maeve; to quote the song ‘Gentle on my mind’ by Elvis Presley, she was always *‘in the back roads of my memory; ever smiling, ever gentle on my mind’* throughout my whole life.

Not to sound all touchy feely and shit, but the more I live and learn, the more I realize that there’s an ever so tiny minority of us, split between those that are truly and purely evil and rotten to the core, and the others complete, benevolent saints; while the rest of humanity are both and neither.

We’re just in between, fluctuating shades of gray, making our way as best we know how at any present moment we are living in, depending on the circumstances of any given instant. There are way too many factors to determine anyone’s benevolence or malevolence as even Gandhi beat his wife.

Tell me, are you perfect? No. Unless you’re Toby Bower, that narcissistic kick-boxing dude I volunteered for back where I met Meg in ninety-one, which you’re not, unless you are in which case, *‘s’up genius?’* No one is.

Among the countless lessons I learned along my journeys, one of the most important ones I picked up on is accountability. I began to take ownership of my life, my mistakes, my successes, my failures and my predicaments. I cannot recommend that enough; own your fucking life.

I am loved and I am hated, there’s no in between once you’ve gotten to know me, despite the fact that I’m no monster or devil any more than I am a saint or angel,

though I've been referred to as both and everything in between - and the cold hard truth of it is; they were all right, it just depends on whom you ask.