

Part 3

*Philip Kindred.*

That was the first thing he noticed when he awoke. The name scrawled in hurried script on the band around his left wrist. It had gone unnoticed during the insanity back in the cryo facility, but now the name tore him from sleep.

It had to be his name, didn't it? Now as he sat against the lobby wall, he realized that beyond the vague recollections of distant chaos and riots and war, nothing remained about himself. Who he was, what he had been, was a gaping hole. But now...a name.

It was something.

He...no he had a name now...Philip rose to the ever present silence and an eastern horizon crowned with gold. Clear skies, the newly formed puddles the only signs of the night's downpour. The brisk air cleared his head. Needed to keep moving. Maybe the city was safe, maybe it was a death trap, but Philip just wanted to leave. Staying here was like walking through a towering concrete mausoleum. He exited the lobby, cautious past the glass, nails, and assorted debris. Paused for a moment, turned back and slipped a particularly large glass shard in the pocket of his gown. Better than nothing.

Philip continued south. Soon the city was but a haze in the distance and the landscape had shifted to thick forest. He stumbled upon an overgrown hiking trail, and followed that to the edge of a sprawling lake. The water glinted in the noon sun like a sea of diamonds.

A few of clean water satisfied his dry throat and aching stomach for the moment. Philip cleaned off his blistered filthy feet in the water. Crimson skeins blossomed across the surface. He took in a deep breath of autumn air and sat on the sand and matted grass. He'd rest for a while, let his feet recover before moving on then...

Then the sound of a snapping branch ripped Philip from the depths of unconscious. The sky was lit by the dim western glow; he's been out for hours

Another branch snapped. Leaves rustled.

Someone, something was out there.

Philip carefully rose from the sand and dropped to a crouch. Drew the glass shard from the pocket and held it right. He moved swiftly, staying low and quiet, took refuge in the nearest bush. Thorns clawed at his skin, drawing blood, but he held the pain down. Waited. Watched.

To this left, movement.

A figure pushing through the wild undergrowth. A man, in cargo pants and boots and best, face concealed by a hood. A rifle held in gloved hands.

The man hadn't noticed him yet.

Philip watched the man move through the forest. Was he alone? The scout for a larger group?

He didn't know, couldn't know, but knew this was an opportunity not to let slip from his grasp.

Supplies, warm clothing, a weapon. It was stupid and risky and reckless but as he shivered in the cool dusk, Philip knew that action was necessary.

To survive...he had to act.