

Clotting 1.5

It couldn't be this easy. No way.

I was hurting, don't get me wrong, but something just felt *off*. Like when I suspected Eskimo of using my special red toothbrush.

Wait a minute...*Eskimo!*

I had completely forgotten about her. I was supposed to pick her up after she was done there. Was she even okay? Shit man, I was really letting her down...

Just get out of here and you can focus on how dumb you are later.

That was the usual plan. Fountain of Valor was right in front of me. I wonder what he was feeling at that moment. My guess is valor.

I parted the bloob so Fountain of Valor could open the dusty wood and glass door. *I'm the goddamn Moses, parting the Red Sea.*

A turn of the handle and a push on the door by my impromptu blued padded friend, and we were out. We trotted down the grey cement steps, into the surprisingly sunny but still moist evening. The grass was damp, and the sun was burning bright in the sky.

He turned to me. "Thank you, criminal. I will let you go free today, for you have shown **GREAT VALOR!**" His voice boomed and echoed between the shoddy buildings and alleyways. "You were the reason we could escape that wretched place, and with your conviction, you were the soothing waves that washed over our feeble and desperate chances of survival. Because of you, the **FOUNTAIN OF VALOR** will continue to be a mighty torrent through the deserts of **INJUSTICE!** But I must be off, for I cannot allow criminal scum like this to continue their rampant contamination of **SOCIETY AND VALOR!**"

Was this guy even supposed to be roaming the streets alone?

I bobbed my head a little. "Okay, sounds good, I guess." I cleared my throat a bit, which did much less to lessen the awkwardness than I thought it would. "I gotta say, thanks man, you were a real help, but I gotta go. I have a friend who needs me."

He nodded his head, and turned to run off, probably to find a phone to contact the police or something. Before he could do so, however, someone leaped out of the alley to the side of the building we had just come out of, yelling something incoherent. A nearby puddle manifested itself into a...crown?

Yeah, the vague shape of a crown of water, about the size of a mini-trampoline, with white electricity dancing and crackling along its points. A particularly fancy and evil voice sounded from the shadows by the alley. "You fools will obey and remain where you are! For I am Electrocrown! Scourge of the West!" He was accompanied by twenty or so unpowered henchmen and what appeared to be a cape, a girl wearing a blue bodysuit that clung to her figure.

A gasp escaped Fountain of Valor's lips. "**ELECTROCROWN!** You foul fiend! Today is the day that I shall put you and your dastardly deeds down for the sake of good! And for **VALOR!**"

I was really beginning to question what was in the Kenosha Reservoir.

Electrocrown laughed heartily. "With my new accomplice Liquefy, there's no way we would lose to the likes of-"

I cut him off. "*SHUT UP!* I've had to deal with *him* for the last hour or so." I gestured at Fountain of Valor. "So just stop monologuing, and get on with it. I gotta get somewhere, so let's make it quick."

He paused for a second then stepped out of the shadows. He wore blue and gold robes, and had a silver crown, with an ornate looking blue mask over the top half of his face. He opened his mouth to speak again, apparently shocked by my...exclamation.

No, he wasn't shocked. Electrocrown's face contorted into an expression that I could only pin between excruciating pain and a devastating realization, and he collapsed to the ground, with a multitude of sickening cracks on impact. His entire upper back was burnt into a crisp, exposing melted muscle, sinew, and charred bone. Ribbons of raw flesh curled up from the edges of the wound. He lay there, steaming.

Nobody moved, all in shock. With no warning, a bladelike wave of what could only be described as plasma blasted out from seemingly nowhere, incinerating and bisecting a half dozen of the minions that were confronting us, including the cape one, and continued to Fountain of Valor, who had good enough reactions to push at the plasma, exerting his power on it and pushing it into the Scissorfiends building, where it tore into the brick. His hands and upper arms were reduced to little more than bone, and he clutched them, screaming, a primal sound.

There was a stillness. Then the smell of death and heat hit us. The screaming and the running began. Immediately, I pulled all of the blood I could into a shield around me, blocking my sight but hopefully granting me security against whatever had just slaughtered all of those people. I jerked to one side, then to the next. I tore my mask off, as if it could help me breath.

Don't know what to do....he just died, right there. That couldn't have just happened. No, it didn't happen

Even above the tire shaped shield's "ceiling" I could see it. Smoke, ash. I could hear the screaming.

What's happening? He just died...oh god. No, it didn't just happen. This can't happen. People are dying, don't know what- can't...think...what the hell is happening?

I saw an intense green bolt of crackling energy fly overhead. I screamed and fell to the floor, clutching my head. Tears welled in my eyes as the smoke began to fill the space of my shield. I vomited into the little space I had, a metallic taste. My throat had become ragged from the ash without me even realizing it. I had been hyperventilating. I tried to slow my breathing down, but it was no use. My vomit soaked hand ran through my hair as I tried to think, slicking off. The scent was overbearing, causing me to dry heave, with only a bit of blood coming up after a bit. I added it to the shield, as if it could help protect me.

My vision was blurred from tears and ash, the vomit, burning, and screaming overtaking my other senses. I panicked, trying to take in air but only getting throatful of the ash that was only becoming thicker and thicker in the air.

Kenosha is being massacred. It's being massacred. Get me out get me out get me out get me-

I could feel my grasp on the shield slowly lessen.

Stop it. Get away from me. This is happening and I'm next. I'm going to die right now.

I coughed and hacked until I felt like I was gonna pass out from lack of oxygen. The shield continued to drip down, and eventually, I was exposed. The entirety of the surrounding area was hell. Kenosha had become a place of melted stone, burnt bodies, and the screams of the hopeless.

In my blurry vision, I spotted three figures, standing amongst the utter destruction merely a few meters from me. The centermost one, who was the tallest, raised an arm, calmly pointing in my direction.

The one on the right said something I couldn't make out to the centermost again, and their apparent leader nodded. The one who hadn't taken any action yet pulled out what appeared to be a box, and put their hand to it.

It seemed to *unfold* in a way that somehow could be described as somewhere between a dog and an insect. Multiple joints per each of its long, spindly, metallic legs. What appeared to be wires feeling, prodding the surroundings. I tried to get to a proper standing position and run away, but was nearly unconscious at this point, and could only stumble a few feet backwards.

The machine, almost as tall as a person, and much, much wider at its base, jerked towards me with spider-like movements. Where it's "feet" connected with the pavement, a disturbing clicking was barely audible.

The thing was *fast*. Before I could even recover from stumbling, it propped it's legs up on my chest, and pushed, forcing me to the ground with a painful impact to the back of my head. I sensed blood leak from the wound, but only slightly.

Why aren't my powers working?

The insect made clicking and whirring noises as the wires ran over me.

Then it stabbed the dozens of wires into me

I tried and failed to scream as each of the wires, each about as thick as a few pencils clumped together, burrowed through the tissue of my body with a violent slurping and surrounded each of my organs, like a swarm of mechanical worms. A few more whirs, and dozens of what felt like needles stabbed out from each of the wires. I tried to writhe in pain but the wires held strong, and the pain was made that much more agonizing. I stopped struggling.

My breathing was just barely recovered enough for me to expend it all on the most raw and animalistic scream I've ever heard come from my mouth, even since the day of my trigger.

Everything I'd known had just been burned to the ground, as far as I knew. The burning taste of vomit and the foul feeling of ash singing my face were nearly an afterthought compared to the pain I was in.

Please let me go unconscious, or die. Anything, anything but this.

I remained conscious.