

Hellspawn – the final chapter part 3

The soldiers gripped their guns extra tight as the lift slowly ascended to the surface, the longest its ever taken to make its surface trip. Their eyes were fixated on the floor where the lift almost meets the wall, their brows sweating with the dreaded thought of the lift breaking down and freefalling to the bottom. If the fall didn't get them, the monsters down there surely would. "What happened to you?" The silence was broken by William, asking Patrick who lay slumped against the wall with both hands pressed into his stomach wound as Joseph supported his body.

"Don left me to die... both of us," Patrick coughed up blood, most of it splattered on his t-shirt as he was too weak to raise a hand. One of the soldiers immediately knelt in front of him and started tending to his wound with makeshift rags and instruments.

"Both?" William asked, his mouth slowly agape.

"Elaine... she... he left her to die, so he could get away." Everyone in the lift began muttering amongst themselves and looking at each other in surprised confusion. Patrick smirked and laughed a little. The lift came to a sudden stop at the surface camp, they were immediately welcomed with the barrel ends of ten different guns and lots of shouting. They were quickly ushered out of the lift and searched.

"What happened to him?" One of the surface guards asked, gesturing his gun at Patrick, it took him a few seconds to recognise him. "Patrick?" Patrick looked up from the lift floor with great effort, his wound had been cleaned and patched with first aid bandages and duct tape. A chorus of gasps and whispers echoed around the sealed chamber as he was carried out of the lift.

"Patrick..." Don started.

"You told me he was dead." William stood between them, questioning a surprised Don. For the first time in his life he stuttered with his words, if he managed to find any.

"He... I..." With all the attention on him Patrick managed to creep his way to William and grab his pistol from his waistband before lunging at Don and punching him in the face. "Patrick..." Don managed to get out before another fist came wailing into his face.

"You killed her!" Patrick shouted at him before punching him again. "What did Elaine ever do to you?! What did she ever do to hurt you!?" He grabbed Don's collar as an anchor and punched him again.

"You always justified your answers with excuses for survival, but this..." He raised his fist at Don once again. "This is just evil... you would sacrifice her to get me killed? Because... I annoy you?" He raised the gun with his left arm and pressed it into Don's forehead.

"You do this... you kill the human race." Don answered with confidence, not a single hint of fear could be heard in his voice.

"What?"

"Only I know what's in this vial." He held up a vial of HSPCXI "The scientists who conjured up this... *cure* are all dead."

"What is that?" Patrick asked, aggression and rage boiled inside him but if there was a chance to stop all of this... he wouldn't throw it away.

"He made a weapon," William began. "It works." William really didn't want to escalate the situation by telling Patrick how he managed to develop that weapon. As much as he wanted Don dead, he wasn't about to stoop to his level. Nobody around them had tried to stop Patrick, he guessed his sentiments were the same as everyone else's.

"Why would you not tell everyone how to make this?" Patrick asked taking the vial for himself.

"And leave you no reason to keep me alive? I deserve to live... I'm going to be the saviour of humans." Don stood tall and confident, as if being awarded a medal by his president. Williams grasp on his gun tightened.

"He killed Julie." He said, his own words shocked him.

"What!?" Patrick's face turned from pale white to blood red, he pushed Don up against the wall and demanded to know what happened.

"He used her to develop this weapon... and then they killed her when she tried to escape." William answered before Don could say anything, his posture had become that of a nervous dog now.

"You used her!? You killed her!?" Patrick stood up straight and jabbed his gun further into Don's forehead, ready to fire. His face grew redder with every passing second as everyone around him stood with anticipation. He lowered his gun and slumped to the floor pressing his wound, "I'll let you live, but know this. Once the world knows of this weapon, once we start fighting back and taking back our homes.... the world will know my wife, Julie, is the real saviour in this story. Not you." Two medics rushed over to help Patrick and replace his dressing, the medical supplies up here were much more sophisticated. Don looked defeated, for the first time since arriving here Patrick had never seen Don's face so perplexed. It was short-lived before the top of his skull exploded into bits of sinew, bone and brain as his body flung back from the sheer force of the bullet that had scattered his brains all over the wall. Patrick looked over to the source of the shot, Don's revolver now with a smoking barrel. Its carrier, Harold, the old man he had rescued along with his wife Elaine when they first arrived here.

"Elaine..." tears fell down Harold's face and it broke into a construed mess of snot and tears. "Elaine's dead... this bastard killed my Elaine!"

"Harold..." Patrick began, but Harold only pointed his gun towards him.

"She's dead! It's your fault! He killed her because of you!"

"Yes... she was there with me when he closed the gate on us." Harold's face only screwed up into more anger, Patrick realised what he must have looked like when he was the one pointing the gun. "She was also there when I woke up in the hospital bed, she was there when she saved my life from one of the monsters, she was there when I passed out after she stitched me up, saving my life again, she was there when we found Don cowering in his office behind his desk, she was there when..." Harold lowered his gun and dropped it to the floor before closing in on Patrick for a hug, he wrapped his arms around him and sobbed and told him he was sorry.

"Jesus..." Joseph said, breaking the awkward silence, "What do we do now?" He asked staring at the grisly corpse of Don.

"He's passed out." William remarked after a few seconds of silence, Joseph looked to him and noticed him nodding at Patrick's now unconscious body. A couple of people rushed to him and started tending to him and his wound, his face was a sweaty pale mess. It was remarkable that he had somehow made it this far.

"That doesn't matter, we need to get going."

"Get going where?" William asked, Joseph looked to Patrick and asked, "Is he awake?" to which one of the medics tending to him shook their head.

"To the north, we need to get to the port." William scrunched his face and looked at Patrick then back to Joseph.

"What's going on?"

"What do you mean?" Joseph replied.

"Why did you check if he's still unconscious?" That question caught Joseph off guard, he didn't want to tell them about Patrick's little relationship with the Hellspawn.

"I... he knows where we need to go." William scrunched his face once again before talking.

"So how do we know where we're going?"

"We don't." is all Joseph could say, everyone around them started muttering amongst themselves.

Knowing where to go was their second priority, their first was getting out of here. Once they opened those doors who knows what will be on the other side. There may be nothing, or there may be a horde of infected people out there, or even some Hellspawn. "First things first, we need to think about how

we're going to deal with whatever's out there." Joseph exclaimed to the crowd whilst pointing at the big steel doors at the top of the ramp. The crowd around him mumbled and grunted, they slumped against boxes and none spoke about their thoughts, but Joseph knew they were all thinking the same. He looked to his brother and gestured for him to do something. William cleared his throat,

"Everyone, listen. He's right. We've all made it this far; we're literally stuck between a rock and a hard place right now. We can't stay here; we have limited food and water. If we stay here, we will not survive. We need to make a move now, before we get too comfy and while we still have supplies." Everyone looked at each other, they looked slightly motivated but not enough to justify an effective escape out of the bunker. "Here's the plan." William shouted once more despite the silent protests. "We take what vehicles we can from here, we fit as many people as we can onto them, and we drive out to the other vehicles. We load all the gas we can find and spread out to the other vehicles, the big trucks will drive back here and load up everyone else that stays behind." More and more people were getting up, preparing their weapons and giving each other words of encouragement. "Half the weapons stay here and defend; the other half go out with the vehicles and protect the drivers. Now we don't have much ammo left, so use it wisely."

"What about the gate?" someone from the small crowd asked. More uneasy shuffling came from the crowd, William had to keep the crowd motivated, one bad word could ruin everything.

"Once we're all safe in the vehicles." He immediately began, "we make a move for the gate, everyone with a loaded gun will protect those opening the gates. Let's go." He turned from the crowd and made his way to the nearest truck, not giving the crowd a chance to question him. People started immediately barking orders and everyone started moving for the trucks and cars, once they were full the rest of the crowd started walking up to the surface. William hoped they would be waiting at the door before they got the rest of the trucks back to them. He made it to the door himself in under a minute and hopped out of his truck, his hand was ready on the lever. "Everyone ready?" Everyone with him half nodded their heads, he took that as a yes. Any more waiting would only increase the fear and doubt. He pulled the lever. Loud sirens blared their warning signals to clear the way. *Great.* William thought, he got his gun ready. The emergency lights strobed red around the room, lighting up the beads of sweat on their faces. "As soon as that door opens, clear a path... as soon as there's space, you drive through, you don't stop for anything until you find a car, a truck, a jeep... we don't leave anyone behind." Nobody replied, but everyone understood.

The doors finally opened enough to see through a small gap in the middle, an infected immediately bolted through the opening and got shot in the head by several different angles. "Save your ammo!" William shouted as the infected was replaced by another five. This time only five people shot, some met their target with the first shot, some needed more. For a few silent seconds no more infected came through the growing gap until it was clear there was no more coming. "Strange..." William said before one of the men on his right was gutted through his neck and slumped to the floor.

"Hello."

"Demon! Shoot it!" William shouted, everyone started firing their guns on fully automatic as the single hellspawn tore its way through the soldiers. Their screams and gargles could surely be heard from the bottom of the ramp. Only a few of the bullets seemed to hit, but the demon didn't seem to feel them.

"It's not working!" someone from his left shouted, a couple of soldiers started to run down the ramp.

"Just keep shooting it! Aim for the head!" William shouted. He heard piercing screeches and looked to his left, several infected were sprinting through the now large gap the steel doors had made. "...shit."

"No! Stop! My face is so pretty and perfect! You're going to ruin it!"

He looked back at the hellspawn who's head was now getting pelted with bullets, most of them passed right through it but a few of them hit their target, a few of them was all it needed for its head to slowly shred into small pieces and its body to flop to the floor. Half their team had been wiped out by a single hellspawn in mere seconds but watching the death of one of the demons was enough motivation for

them to keep focused and concentrate their fire now on the small horde of infected piling through the entrance. One of the soldiers walked up to the hellspawn body and sprayed an entire magazine of ammo into its head until it was an unrecognisable puddle on the floor. She looked to William, "I had to be sure..." he nodded his head and turned his focus back to the infected. They were easily dealt with, with no further casualties to the team. Shortly after, trucks and cars drove past him as a few of the soldiers stayed behind to deal with any more infected.

William looked back; the rest of the crowd was only halfway up the ramp. Parents were carrying crying children, old people were trying their best to keep up with the rest and Joseph was at the front, motivating people to keep moving. After a couple of minutes, the vehicles returned with a few more now part of the convoy, he smiled. His plan had worked; for now. The crowd had almost caught up and most of the infected humans had been killed, it wouldn't be a bad idea to stay here and try again if not for the hellspawn now being a threat once again.

"William." Joseph said with a nod of his head once he caught up to him.

"Hey, good job." William responded with a pat on Joseph's shoulder. He only frowned and asked, "For what? You're the one up here leading the charge, making sure the plan goes smoothly."

"Yeah," William said checking his gun, "but some of these people listen to you more than me, they trust you more." William didn't bother to wait for a response but instead ran towards a truck and quickly climbed in, Joseph thought his brother perhaps felt guilty for not trying harder to get these people to safety before disaster struck.

"Come on!" Someone shouted at him, he quickly realised he was the last one standing and most of the other vehicles had left already. He turned to the voice and realised it was from the RV, Patrick's notorious almost tourist attraction mode of transportation. He had told him they had only arrived in it by chance, it was the only working vehicle they had, and it had enough space for everyone to rest comfortably. Why change what isn't broken?

Joseph ran to the RV and jumped in, the passenger seats and beds were already taken so he sat himself down on one of the table seats. Not being able to see what's directly ahead made him somewhat less anxious. He looked around as the RV rumbled its way at the back of the convoy towards the outside gate, their last obstacle before they could run freely into the wild unknown. A few families were with him here, mothers clutching their children tightly and fathers wrapping their arms around them trying to console them. A couple of children were crying but the others had been taught to be brave, that nothing could touch them now that they're outside. A few people were looking at him, he couldn't put on any face but confident. As if he had bulletproof skin. Nothing to worry about.

"Where do we go now?" One of the children sat on a bed asked him, he looked over and bent down to the child's level.

"We're going north, where it's safe from all the bad monsters." The child clung harder to its mother.

"We're not safe now?" the child's eyes grew larger, more innocent, what do you say to a child at a time like this?

"As long as you stay in here, where your mother and father can see you. You'll always be safe." Joseph put on his best smile which wasn't much right now, the child nodded. The RV came to a sudden stop, they had only been driving for a few seconds which told him they were already at the gate. He got up and walked to the front, the convoy was about 15 vehicles long, which meant if anything attacked them now then they would be the last to die. A blessing and a curse.

"Go Go Go!" William shouted to the men and women around him, they all rushed to the gate and helped to heave up the enormous steel plank across the two gate doors. Within seconds it had wrenched from the gate brackets and fell to the floor with a massive thump, just as William heard screaming from a few vehicles down. He looked over and could see great skeletal wings protruding from the roof of one of the cars. "Emma..." he said to no-one.

"Shoot her!" he could hear from the distance. More screams were heard as she stuck her claws inside her next victim and flung her away, like a doll a little girl no longer cares for. William scrunched his face, why had they not just shot her down by now? The gunfire had ceased, and the air was silent. He suddenly felt a sharp pain in his lower back and a voice whispered over his shoulder.

"Hello." Emma's voice. It was almost like she was asking him a question. Within seconds William was surrounded by ten armed soldiers, he was surprised there was still people left standing that could fight. *"You shoot me, I kill him."* He could feel a warm trickle down his leg, looking over his other shoulder he could see that she had a claw in his back.

"What do you want?" William asked as stern as possible, his voice gave away his waning consciousness. Emma smiled.

"I want to please my master. Did you really think he would let you escape? Did you really think he would give humans a fighting chance? No matter how small?"

"What does that have to do with me?" William asked, he could feel himself fading into unconsciousness. *"You're the leader now, what better way than to take away their small light of hope than to kill you? Right here... right now, in front of them?"*

"They'll just shoot you..." Emma twisted her claw. William screamed out in pain, he hated feeling useless.

"Yes, then the master will be pleased."

"Emma!" Joseph's voice came from the front, "What the hell are you doing!?"

"What?"

"What?" William said to no-one. Why was he scolding her like a child?

"What would Julie think?" Emma's face scrunched up at Joseph's words, she seemed confused.

"Julie... I... where is she?" William was confused now, why was Emma letting Joseph get to her?

"I don't know, but if she could see you now... what would she think of you?" William could feel the tension from the claw in his back loosen.

"The master demands that I..."

"I will tell Julie what happened here."

"You would tell her of this? You can't..." Why on earth would Emma care about what Julie thought? Was Julie her mother? A hundred confused questions went through Williams head, but none as powerful as the voice telling him to stay awake. He noticed Joseph staring at him with strained eyes, he was asking him to trust him.

Joseph hoped William got the message, that he wasn't just going crazy and he was actually going somewhere with this bizarre conversation. He looked around, everyone was looking at him and Emma with confusion and questions. He knew Julie and Emma had some sort of connection, some sort of unexplainable *thing* linking them both together. He looked at the floor where William was standing, a small puddle of blood had formed there; he wondered how he was still standing.

"Oh, I Will," Joseph carried on. "I'll tell her about *everything* that happened here. She won't be happy with you, you're in deep trouble."

"Please don't!... fathers' children will be here soon, please don't tell them anything!" Joseph furrowed his brow,

"Let my brother go, and nobody says anything." Joseph nodded to William, who seemed to have passed out.

"Why would I do that?"

"Because..." He looked at his brother once more, the puddle on the floor becoming ever bigger with every passing second. "Listen to me Emma! You let him go at once or I will be forced to..." Emma side stepped and shouted back to him.

"Only Julie speaks to me like that! Don't you ever..." The backside of her head exploded in black ooze and rotted brain as Joseph pulled the trigger on his pistol, both hands cupped on the grip to keep a steady aim. They had to get out of here now, the Hellspawn would be on them in seconds.

The pine trees towered above the ground, almost as if they were touching the sky, its orange glow hinting at an early sunset. The trees lingered above the road below, casting their shadows from one side to the next. A red truck speeding by came to an abrupt screeching halt. Inside, the face of a screeching demon conflicted with emotions and confusion. Julie clawed and scraped her way up the fleshy pulsating walls, they crushed her limbs as they absorbed them. Her willpower pushing them back against the mind of the demon corrupting her own, freeing herself and continuing her ascent. The feeling of anguish over Samantha washed over her like a parasite on an abandoned new-born kitten, she couldn't wash it off and had every need to push it out of her, to let loose. She set herself free from the closing walls and smashed the side of her fist against the bony structure besides her, her host counterpart smashing its fist into the truck door and crushing it from the inside. It flew off one of its hinges and hung on by the other, just barely.

Get back! She's not real! You killed her already! She died years ago!

"No! This is not your fight! It's mine!" Julie screamed as she stomped her foot on the fleshy ground. The trucks wheels lifted off the ground with great force as her foot slammed into the pavement below, leaving behind a small crater in the tarmac.

"Don't push me!"

"Push you? You take over my body, my mind, my thoughts... and now you try to take my mistakes as if your own? And you dare say don't push you!?" Julie wailed her arms about, smashing the windows and tearing open the seats. She climbed out of the truck, pulling the roof off as if it were papier mache.

"Samantha!" She screamed as she brought both her fists down on the engine, the trucks rear end flipped and came crashing down. She screamed out once again before great wings spread out from her back crossing the width of the road, she opened her blood red eyes and leaped off the ground.

"William!" Joseph shouted throwing his gun to the ground as he ran over to his brother, he lay on the ground as blood seeped out the gash in his back. He held his brothers' body in his arms, "Come on William, we gotta go... they're going to be here any second now." He put William's arm over his shoulders, "Someone get the other arm." He ordered everyone around him.

"Joseph..." Someone told him.

"Come on, let's get him in a truck, we need to go." With nobody helping him he stood up and began dragging William's feet to the nearest vehicle. "Someone help me!"

"Joseph..."

"Grab his feet at least! A doctor should go with him, keep his wound stable." Joseph had both his hands under William's shoulders, dragging him backwards to the car.

"Joseph!" Someone shouted.

"What!? Help me god damnit!"

"He's dead..." Joseph looked down at William, his body limped in his hands, showing no signs of life.

"No, he's just unconscious, we need to stop the bleeding."

"Joseph please! Look at him! Don't make this any worse..."

"Get the doctor here right now! Stop the bleeding! We can still save him."

"Joseph no, he..."

“Now!” Joseph shouted; he wasn’t even sure who he was talking to. A moment later the surgeon, thankfully still alive, was running up and sat in the car with William who had been laid on his front to allow easy access to the wound. “We have to go!” Joseph shouted again, “Get that bloody gate open and let’s get out of here!” A few people ran over to the gate and began pulling it open, it slowly opened but it wasn’t long before there was a big enough gap to fit the RV through. Joseph jumped into the passenger seat of the same car his brother was in, the surgeon was already starting work on the wound. “Incoming!” a voice screamed from the distance, Joseph looked out the window and saw a swarm of infected humans barrelling over the horizon on every side, they would be on them in seconds. “Get this damn convoy moving!” he shouted out the window. Slowly but surely the convoy was filtering through the gate of the compound and moving through the forest, before the RV could make it through a small group of infected had intercepted the vehicle in front, blocking the RV. “Stop!” Joseph shouted, he looked back at the surgeon who was frantically trying to keep the blood from gushing out of his brother’s wound, the blood made it look like a murder scene. He had no time to help, sticking half his body out of the car he brought his pistol out and started carefully putting shots into the infected surrounding the vehicle behind him. He managed to put a couple of them down before a hail of bullets came out of all four windows, destroying the heads of most of the infected humans. “Go!” Joseph shouted once more, not before long the RV had cleared the gate only narrowly missing the swarm of infected which were now climbing over each other to get over the compound fence.

The tension of the next few minutes could have been cut through by a butter knife. The surgeon working on William was frantically asking for Joseph’s help every few seconds as the convoy sped through the forest attempting to outmanoeuvre any infected humans and hellspawn. A couple of vehicles were overrun but there was no time to make rescue attempts, leaving people behind was the last thing Joseph wanted to do as their numbers dwindled into an alarming low population. Hearing the screams of the wrecked car survivors was just another muffled noise to him now, he felt guilty for being desensitised to it.

“He’s still not breathing!” The surgeon shouted at Joseph. Joseph turned around in his seat to face her then looked down at his brother, he had become pale white.

“Keep doing CPR!” He shouted, but the surgeon looked disdain.

“You’ll have to help me, keep pressure on his wound and don’t let go!” She began CPR again, only this time with both hands as Joseph kept his on the wound. The patch she had used to bandage it had already become soaked in blood. While keeping one hand pressured on the wound, he used the other to rebandage it.

“Can we save him?” Joseph asked, staring with wide eyes at the surgeon, she kept pumping on his chest and muttering ‘1, 2, 3, 4’ to herself. “Can you save him?! And be honest with me.” She kept pumping as she stared into his eyes, after a few seconds of thought she said

“Yes.” Her face told another story, he hoped she believed that even if there was an ounce of hope that he can survive this then that meant there’s a chance she could save him. “Keep pressure!” She shouted at him as he realised more blood pouring out from under the bandage, it had already soaked in blood again. A loud crash against the passenger door made him jump as he saw an infected human tumble alongside the car and crash to the ground, the RV tumbled over the body. Another long minute of CPR compression passed, with each second that ticked past the hope of William waking up dwindled. Joseph thought back to the moment he sat in cupboard; his head tucked into his knees as he heard the screams of his family being murdered. The cupboard door flung open before he was dragged by his leg, an ever-burning pain melted his skin and left a mark big enough to remind him every day.

Hello. The thing had said to him. *Where are you? Like to hide, do we?* He couldn't speak, he tried to tell this thing whatever it wanted in the slight chance it would spare him. No words came out. *Don't want to talk to me? But I brought you a gift...* It gestured into the living room, his mum and little sister stood crying side by side as another one of the things towered above and behind them. The curtains across the patio door caught fire and it quickly spread to the roof.

"M... mum? Elisa?" Joseph sputtered out, his face had become coated in tears and his nose dribbled snot down to his lips.

"Joseph..." The thing behind her impaled its arm through her neck, her body limped down and thudded to the floor as the limb retracted. Elisa started screaming and the thing that had just killed his mother started to grin. Before he could comprehend what was happening his dog ran past the hellspawn next to Joseph and starting growling and barking at it, it moved to kill the dog and Joseph ran, seizing the opportunity to escape. The last he heard from his house as he ran through his back garden was the yelps of his dog.

Joseph stared into his brother's lifeless eyes, after abandoning his little sister, he vowed to never abandon anyone ever again.

"Save him!" Joseph yelled at the surgeon, she ignored him.

"I need sutures." She told him. He immediately turned to the driver,

"Is there a first aid box in here?" He asked the driver.

"Yes, under the passenger seat." Joseph shot him a scolded look for not telling them sooner but quickly reached under his seat and pulled out a green first aid box. Ever since scavengers kept returning with grievous wounds that needed immediate surgical attention all first boxes now included at least 1 needle and some sutures, so he was sure he would find some. Opening it he let out a sigh of relief and handed them to the surgeon,

"Not yet, I need to get him breathing fir-." She was interrupted by William gasping for air before passing out again. She checked his pulse, "He's breathing!" As the convoy cleared the threat the surgeon had managed to sew up William's wound laid him down as best she could. "He'll live, for now. I need a surgical theatre, more tools." She looked at Joseph as if he had everything she asked for. He turned back to his seat and slumped down, the best place for William right now would be on that boat to the Arctic. That was two weeks away, even if they knew where the hell they were going. He looked back and saw the RV rumbling along behind them, a bit banged up, but it was running just fine. He hoped Patrick would wake up soon.

What are you doing?

Master, she... pushed me out.

Do you need further encouragement?

No master. This Samantha, she...

Do not mock me!

I'm sorry master, I will try harder.

There is no try, do or you will be punished. Where are the humans going?

Master, I... I don't know.

You don't know?

She's locked that memory away, I can't get to it... her mind is... it's too powerful, like...

Do not give me excuses! Find them.

Yes master.

Her wings swam through the air like soft velvet, the new experience felt like the first high of a new drug, like a teenager finally getting their first kiss. Flying just above the tree canopy her bony sinew covered wings glided her so close to the tree canopy she could caress it with her toes. It was an exhilarating feeling. The moment Samantha was murdered she felt an agonizing headache she would only wish on her worst enemies, the more she thought of her the harder the pain throbbed. She flew in the direction of Mt. Jupiter, a distance that would take two weeks by car but only a week by flight. The demon inside of her screamed to be let out, it banged on the walls of her mind with a hammer and chisel, each knock threatening to crack it open and ooze her out, back into the depths of her own turmoil. She ignored it, bringing the memory of Samantha to the front. In her final moments she could see through the eyes of Samantha, the one that called herself Emma. She only saw one figure, a smoking barrel that had taken her away. She saw Patrick's new favourite project, his face of no concern for the one he had just taken from her, and for that he would die.

Joseph opened his eyes; the scenery had changed from trees and muddy cliffs to buildings and lampposts. They had been driving for almost a week now, the fatigue in his body starting to wear him down. Every time they stopped for a break, they would catch glimpses of shadowy figures in the distance, they were being constantly pursued and there was nothing they could do but keep going. Only one car had broken down since they drove away from Mt. Jupiter, its occupants quickly running out and spreading to the nearby vehicles. Joseph expected the RV would be full to the brim, without it they would have had to leave many behind. Their convoy only consisted of 5 vehicles now, 1 truck with supplies, 3 cars and the RV, it was a dismal sight, but as long as there was a chance to survive then he would take it. "He's going to need surgery." Alison, the surgeon told Joseph. He looked back at her, "Today." She exclaimed.

"We... we can't stop... they'll kill us..." All Alison could do was stare at him and then back at William, he had woken up a few times now to remind Joseph he was still fighting but his face was not getting any less pale.

"Can we give him anything? Anything at all to stall?"

"Yes, but... there's nothing here. All I have is basic medical supplies and even those are almost used up."

"If we found a hospital, would you be able to find what you're looking for?" Joseph looked around as he asked, he knew the question was a futile attempt at hope. All around them were the wrecks of cars and destroyed buildings, lampposts leaning into the road, crumbled walls and blood stains marking the walls where the rain had not touched. He had good reason to doubt it would not be in a hospital, even if they could find one.

"Yes," She hesitated; all her focus was on William as she checked his pulse. She tried to look calm and confident, but it achieved the opposite. "There should be, we can only try." Joseph nodded back.

"I want to get into the RV, you should come with me too." He gestured to Alison, "We should see if Patrick needs any medicine." She nodded back to him. He ordered the convoy to stop and hurried into the RV with Alison, it was housing 10 people already so 3 of them moved into the car with William and the driver. He told them to look after him and let him know if there's any changes with his health.

Julie swooped in to the surface camp of Mt. Jupiter; the flight over here had not been as pleasant as she hoped. The warm feeling of flight had been drowned away by the cold bitter winter air and the ever-gnawing sensation of the demon inside her head. The rests atop the tree canopies were accompanied by the taunts and evil remarks.

Mt. Jupiter was swarming with infected; they left a sizable margin of space between them and her as she walked through inspecting the grounds. After a few seconds of cautious searching she came upon the body of Emma, her corpse hardly as rotten as the other humans that met their ends here, her body untouched by the infected. The demon inside of her must have stayed for longer for whatever reason and only just left a day or two ago. Julie ran up to her and immediately fell to her knees, she spread her wings up high and let out a howling screech sure to kill any normal human with a couple of hundred meters. Blood seeped from the earholes of the infected but still they shambled around, looking for their next meal.

"Joseph... where... where are you!?" She screamed into the unknown. She reached into her memories, prying for anything that would show her the way. From the moment they arrived, when Joseph was just a shy little boy, to the moment he was a confident and dashing young man. Patrick seemed to have that effect on people, he brought out the best in them, Julie smiled and thought about Patrick. How he always kept her safe, how he would literally go to the ends of the earth to protect her. He needed her now more than ever. Julie smacked herself, no. Joseph must die, he must pay for what he did to Samantha. She thought about him again, how he tried to protect her when Don ordered her execution. *NO! He must die.* She pried into her memories once again, the several times he visited her in her quarantine. Each time would be a delight to see him, even if it was the demon speaking for her. The loneliness and anguish she felt in such a small place for such a long time got to her mind more than she could admit, the other tenants weren't exactly the most hospitable guests to talk with. An infected human not quite tinkered over the edge yet by the master's command, and Emma, the crazy girl that had eaten her own friends. He would give her updates on Patrick, his latest efforts to get her out of here, the local gossip, just anything to keep her sane. He cared for her, he, *wait*. A memory of him visiting, she told him their story, about the corporal that betrayed them, how he told them of a safe place... *The port...* Only she and Patrick knew it was the port of Churchill in Manitoba, he probably told someone and that's where they were headed. It's the only logical way. She grabbed the head of an infected human and pressured it until it collapsed in her hands, "found you." She grinned before taking flight once more.

They had been driving through the city for about 30 minutes now, from one side to the other in the hopes of finding a hospital. Joseph had longed since radioed into the other vehicles to keep going north and that they would catch up to them, anyone who wanted to go in a different vehicle were given the opportunity to do so. This brought them down to 4. Jenny driving the RV, Patrick, Joseph and Alison. Alison was looking over Patrick and told Joseph he was holding up much better then she thought he would be, but she insisted he could do with some painkillers as he would sometimes wake up and murmur in pain before passing out again.

"Right, ok." Joseph nodded.

"There's signs for a hospital! Although it's a bit of a detour." Jenny told him.

"Do it." He told her without any thought, every second they waited was a ticking death clock for William. After a few seconds the RV turned right and 10 minutes after Jenny was warning them, they were pulling into the hospital grounds.

"You ready?" Joseph asked Alison, she nodded back to him. "What are we looking for?" She told him some obscure name he wasn't even sure he remembered. He looked back at Patrick who was still knocked out cold then opened the door and ran for the hospital. They opened the front doors to be met with the decaying eyes of two infected humans, they immediately screamed and ran at them.

"No noise." He told Alison, their screams were loud, but their gunshots would be louder. Taking out his crowbar he smashed one of them in the head, it flopped to the ground but got right back up again. A massive gash marked itself through its face, but no blood came out. *How long had they been here?*

Joseph thought as he scowled at it. It made another lunge for him, but he stuck the sharp edge of the crowbar through its nasal cavity, killing it instantly. He turned to Alison who was stood next to him looking impatient,

"you done now?" She asked as he saw the infected she had fought, slumped over the reception desk.

"We don't have time to waste." She told him as she ran off deeper into the hospital.

"Wait!" Joseph shouted after her, luckily for him she had been following the signs for the pharmacy. He arrived as she was already stuffing her bag with medicines, she picked up a particular cartridge of medicine and put it in her coat pocket.

"Let's go." She told him before running back past him.

"God damnit." Joseph said before pausing in hesitation, he turned around and picked up a box putting it in his own pocket before running back to the entrance. He saw Alison stood just outside the doors,

"What are you doing? We need to..." He saw past her, a few Hellspawn surrounded the RV. They remained still as they observed a wide white figure stroll towards the open RV door, the ground beneath it charring without flame. It had medium silvery hair that only just brushed its shoulders. Its wore a white dress, this one covered in black chars and grey stains, its white shine long past. The creatures face consisted of nothing but grey bone and black eye holes surrounded by crying streaks of blood. On its back a couple of crumpled white feathery wings lay dormant, like the dress they too had black chars, tears and holes accompanying the chars disallowing flight.

"No..." They were only gone for a few seconds. *What was this thing?*

"Joseph? Come in, come in Joseph, over." His radio crackled and a weak voice came out the speaker, Joseph raised the radio to his mouth,

"This is Joseph, what's going on? Over." There was a short pause, he wasn't sure if they could hear him, he raised the radio to his mouth once again, but he was cut off by the voice again.

"This is Charlotte in the car with William, I'm sorry Joseph, but... he's gone." Before he had a chance to comprehend what the voice had just told him the monster let out a deafening screech, unlike the infected, this one cut into your mind and bore into it like a drill on overdrive. Joseph and Alison kneeled in agony with their hands on their eyes and ears, unable to open them as the screech wormed its way into their heads. For the next few seconds it ate at his brain and blood leaked from his ears, his body collapsed and he fell to the floor, withering in pain as the sound finally stopped leaving behind hazy sight and distorted hearing. He touched his ear to comfort the pain, but it felt like touching a huge boil.

He managed to open his eyes marginally, water leaked through them but he saw through the blurred vision, the creature was pulling Patrick out of the RV by his collar. It let go of him and lifted him up above the RV door, muttering something to him in a demonic tongue. As his hearing slowly returned to him, he could hear the blaring of the RV horn. "Jenny!" None of the hellspawn paid him any attention, he looked at them. They were nothing but shrivelled corpses now, black wisps slowly pulling away from the bodies. *Mine...* the monster told him through his mind, Alison creased her face. *What's going on?* Joseph asked himself.

Information... stay... away... it told him.

Speak! It shouted before slamming Patrick into the door, it fell out of one of its hinges and hung limply into the road.

Julie landed atop the hospital, she looked down at the scene below. Joseph laid withered on the ground; slow streaks of blood seeped from his ears. His face looked a distorted mess full of blood, tears and sweat. Next to him was a woman she had never seen before, *perhaps a new lady friend?* It didn't matter. *WAKE HIM!* An unfamiliar voice resonated in her head, it succumbed all the other voices and brought her to her knees. It was a voice like no other, it felt as if god himself was speaking to her. It was almost like a

command, although not intended for her. Her body ached to move and do as the voice said, but she resisted.

"I can't!" Joseph screamed out. *What!?* She looked at him once more, he was looking up at the RV. A mysterious entity stood in front of it, an almost holy like figure but now more corruption than light. *Why are they here?* The demon inside her asked, angry and confused. It was quickly cut off by a far more demonic force. Her head bled from all the thoughts, the voices, the intrusions, it was too much for her simple human brain to take. She had to remove this corruption, she had to neutralise it, fighting it only kept it at bay but every day it grew stronger and would soon corrupt her entire mind. Even the memories she kept hidden away at the back would soon be under their control, their evil gaze, then humanity would be doomed. She looked to the fallen beast, she would tame it, and it would rid her of this disease. It held up a human, a limp bag of flesh... *Patrick?! No!* She pushed back all the thoughts and intrusions and spread her wings. Like a greyhound chasing a rabbit she darted straight for the beast, *Let him go!* It looked up and waved its hand, she bounced off an invisible shield of light, and crashed to the floor before tumbling a few metres between the beast and Joseph.

Somehow, she felt no pain, a few cuts and bruises marked her body, but they only bothered her like an itch.

"Julie?" Joseph asked, she lay crumpled on the floor as whatever that thing was had simply waved its hand at her and smashed her to the floor. She looked up at him and spoke,

"You... killed... Samantha!" She threw herself at Joseph and clawed at his leg, he let out an agonising scream and fell to the floor. Alison immediately ran over to him and looked at his leg.

"You need first aid..."

"No... he doesn't." Julie told him raising her hand, pointed claws protruded from under her fingernails. She would ask where they came from, but nothing was normal anymore.

"I'm trying to help Patrick!" Joseph screamed out, blood covered his leg now and his face became paler by the second. "Please..." He managed, "I've already lost my family..."

"Patrick!" She gashed her cheek open with a claw; how could she forget about him so easily? "Let him go." She glared at the beast.

No. She screamed at the answer and immediately charged at it, ready to claw its eyes out and rip its head off. She swung her claws at it but they only bounced off with yellow sparks and white light as the beast moved its hand with effortless movement. Julie jumped vertically and slammed herself down on the beast and began clawing at its neck before it could counterattack. It reached around its shoulder and grabbed her by the neck, turning its body so it could face her.

Wrong. It told her before ripping her left wing in half with a glowing white skeletal hand. The light was peppered with black lines threatening to break through its horizon. Julie felt hopeless to move as the thing held her up with its hand as it used the other to attack once again, it thrust the hand through her stomach, ripping through to the other side. She coughed up blood, she started laughing.

Why? It asked her, *Death, laughter? Why?*

"because," she laughed as she coughed up more blood, "I'm not alone." Its eyeless sockets frowned before a hail of bullets fractured through its wings, shattering the lifeless bones within them. It screeched out in pain and turned to Joseph and Alison, it raised its hand but not before it felt two sets of claws rip into its body and tear from its stomach up to its neck. "There's no god to save you now." Julie whispered in its ear before she split its head open in two from the inside. A glow of white light thrust out from its body and exploded, sending pieces of the beast flying before they dissipated into white flecks.

"Thank you, Joseph," Julie said before wiping blood from her cheek, "Now I get to kill you."

"What?" Joseph asked, "Why? What did I ever do to you?"

"What did you do!?" Julie screamed at him, rhetorically. "You took Samantha from me!"

"I... who?" Joseph asked with great caution.

"WHO!?" She charged at him and lifted him by his throat.

"Drop him!" Alison pointed her pistol at Julie, pressing it into her head. Julie played ignorant.

"I don't even know you, drop that stupid toy or ill shred that pretty little face of yours and make him eat it." Alison was taken aback a little, but she stood firmer and pressed the gun harder.

"I said, drop him!" Julie sighed and raised her wing.

"Julie!" Julie's face dropped in shock and she relaxed her entire body, dropping Joseph to the floor. She immediately turned to see Patrick, half stood up and holding on to the RV door. It ripped off its hinge and sent Patrick falling back to the floor.

"Patrick!" She cried out, almost sounding like her normal self. She ran over to him and slid her wings behind her back. She held him up and cradled him in her arms. Patrick looked up at her,

"What happened to you?" He laughed, all Julie could do was look down at him and smile. "I leave for 1 second and..." he coughed, trying to speak.

"Oh shut up." She told him, "I doubt you would have done much better in that hole." He smiled,

"You're right, I'd probably be dead by now." He laughed once more before passing out.

"Julie..." Joseph had crept up behind her, surprising her.

"Joseph! Don't scare me like that I could have killed..." Joseph backed away a little, "I... I'm so sorry! That wasn't... that wasn't me..." She started crying before looking back down to Patrick again. "My mind... it's not me anymore."

"I understand... I think." Julie laughed,

"I don't expect you to, I don't think anyone does."

"I'm sorry about your friend..." Joseph said, "she had my brother, William, and... oh god, William... he... he's dead." Joseph sank to his knees before crying profusely, "My family... they're all gone."

"I... I'm sorry, did Samantha..." Julie asked.

"Yes..." Joseph had no idea who Samantha was, but he knew she meant Emma. He started feeling a sudden burning sensation in his leg where Julie had cut his leg open followed by an excruciating pain. He started to think about his mum, his dad, his little sister, their screams... and now his brother, he had failed them all.

"I got you Joseph!" The last thing he felt was Alison grabbing him as he fell to the floor before passing out.

"Bloody hell." Julie remarked looking around.

"Hi," Alison stuck her hand out with a smile, "I'm Alison, please don't kill me." She said with a cautious smile.

"Oh god, I'm so sorry. I've never really been good at first impressions." Alison let out a small laugh,

"That's ok," She said unconvincingly, "just help me with Joseph? I need to fix his leg really quick or he's going to bleed to death."

"Oh," Julie said breaking her concentration, "of course, sure."

Patrick woke with a start, his surrounding felt very unfamiliar. He was used to concrete walls and dim lighting. Sitting up he felt a painful tinge in his stomach, he touched it and felt cloth. Looking down he saw a bandage, suddenly remembering what happened to him. He noticed a breathing body next to him; its leg was also wrapped in bandage. He looked at who it belonged to, "Joseph?" There was no response.

"Patrick?" Alison, the surgeon that had operated on his wound had come up to him.

"Alison? What's going on? Where am I?" He asked looking around, he soon realised he was back in the RV and a cold draft filled it. He looked to where the door should be and noticed a door shaped hole covered instead by cardboard and paper. "What the hell?" Alison looked back where he was looking,

"A lot's happened since we left Mt. Jupiter." Patrick creased his face,
"We made it?" he asked.
"Yes." Alison's face dropped, "not all of us though."
"How many?" he was afraid of the answer.
"About 80% of the population died in the escape." She answered quickly.
"What?!"
"Including William."
"Oh god." Patrick pressed his thumb and finger to the top of his nose and looked at Joseph, "I'm so sorry buddy." He knew what Joseph had been through since everything happened and to lose his brother now must have hit him hard. "What happened to him?" he asked Alison.
"He'll be fine... one of the infected cut his leg open."
"One of the infected?" Patrick thought that was unusual for them.
"Yes, Julie."
"Julie!? She's alive!?"
"Yes, don't you remember?"
"Remember what?"
"She saved your life." Alison looked back at the driver's seat and Julie turned her head so Patrick could see her.
"Nice to see you're finally awake lazy head!"
"Julie!" Patrick cried out before trying to get out of bed but the pain from the wound stopped him.
"But... you did this to Joseph?"
"Yes..." Julie replied with her focus back on the road. "It wasn't me; it was... the other me."
"The other you? The demon?"
"No... corrupt me. Look, it's too hard to explain I just... you brought me back."
"Me? How?" She looked back at him once more,
"You called my name."
Patrick slumped back into the bed, there was too much to think about and he needed more rest.

"What!?" Patrick woke up once more, he could hear Alison's voice. "If this is true, then you've just doomed us all!"
"What's going on here? How long was I out?" Patrick asked, Alison was driving while Julie sat in the passenger seat.
"Patrick!" She immediately unbuckled her seat belt and ran straight into his arms. "You should be laying in bed." He smiled and laughed,
"Should I?" Julie only smiled back and hugged him tighter. "What were you arguing about?" Julie looked guilty,
"I told her." She bowed her head.
"Told her what?"
"About us... and what we have in our heads."

Rise and shine sunshine!

"No!" Patrick screamed out.
"I... I'm sorry, I..." Julie tried to say but Patrick interrupted her,
"No, not you... Morteus, I forgot."

How could you forget about dear old me? I'm your best friend! Your pal! Best buds... Patrick could see his grin, his narrow red eyes, the heat from his flames.

"Oh... I... I don't hear him anymore, at least I don't think I do..." Julie said.

"What do you mean? How could you not know?"

"Patrick... a lot has happened to me since this *thing* on my face took over... I have so many voices in my head now it's all just a blur."

Oh, don't worry about, I'm right here darling. I just... had a vacation.

Julie grimaced. "Never mind, Azrael's still here."

"Oh, for the love of god!" Alison cried out before slamming on the brakes.

"What are you doing!?" Julie shouted at her.

"You two are talking about god damned demons in your head as if you're trying to remember yesterdays bloody breakfast when the more important topic at hand, is how you just *being here* has doomed the entire fricken human race!" She put the RV back into gear and started driving again. "Luckily for you I haven't gone *completely crazy* like most people in this god damn thing!"

"I..." Patrick started.

"Shutup!" Alison started again, "Your lovely wife here just told me where we need to go, so I, of course radio in and tell the rest of my people only for her to snatch the radio out of my hand and tell me you two have bloody demons in your heads listening to every single god damn word and thought that comes out of your god damn bloody heads!" Alison let out a scream and wailed her arms in the air and banged her hands down on the steering wheel before sneering and huffing.

Morteus and Azrael began recoiling in laughter, Julie and Patrick looked at each other with dread.

You've really gone and screwed it up this time, haven't you? Thankyou for being so... strong for us Patrick and thank you for being so... resilient for us Julie. You two have truly shone through.

*You know what the best part is? You both tried **so hard** to keep this secret from us. Julie even hid it away deep in the back of her mind only to spill the beans right when it matters... we'll be seeing you soon, I'm sure.*

"We have to catch up to the others! We have to warn them!" Patrick called out to Alison.

"Or I could just use this radio..." She told him before raising it to her head. "Come in anyone, come in, this is Alison, is there anyone there? Over." She let it hang for a few seconds. "Hello? Is there anyone there? Over."

"What's going on?" Julie asked.

"Nothing, the radio's do this someti..." Alison looked outside, "What, the... hell?"

"What?" Patrick and Julie walked up to the front and looked outside. They were driving through the forest once more, both sides full of lush evergreen trees. In the distance an orange glow emanated aggressively, growing bigger and bigger as it came close and closer.

"Is that..." Julie asked. They looked on in horror as a roaring fire quickly enveloped itself amongst all the trees, jumping from tree to tree in an almost instant. In only a few seconds both sides of the forest was completely engulfed in flame, embers spat out into the air and fumes covered their vision. "The whole world it's... it's on fire." Julie told Patrick, terror in her eyes.

Surprise!