

Los Angeles, California
September 18th
12:37 PM PST

“It’s time.”

Through the scope of his rifle, Jonathan Bacchus witnessed the accident unfold in the streets below. The car driven by Azra Juzic pulled into the intersection half a block from his vantage point when the traffic lights went haywire, likely due to the efforts of one Tyler Norrie. This backed things up just enough that another driver, in a red car, rammed into the driver’s side of Azra’s vehicle, scattering shards of glass, metal, and plastic to the winds. The force of the blow spun their car around, no doubt rattling the occupants in the process.

He pushed up the sleeves on his black turtleneck before leaning back into firing position, too focused and used to the California sun to allow it to dissuade him from his choice of uniform. The VLI carefully planned out the details, and it was time to execute.

As he watched, Destiny Daniels got out of the banged up red car, pulling a pistol from a holster at her side while approaching Azra’s vehicle with the practiced patience he’d expect from an operator with her level of experience. For the moment Azra appeared to be out of commission, hunched over the wheel with only their plum colored hair visible, although how long that would last would be anyone’s guess. In the back seat of the wrecked sedan was Poppy, who appeared positively *giddy* at the current goings on. There wasn’t any time to process that particular data point, as Destiny circled around the vehicle, a predator ready to strike.

Destiny was dressed in a manner that would be easier to blend into a crowd with: jeans, hiking boots, a tank top, and an unbuttoned short-sleeved blouse over the top of it, which she found useful in concealing the holster. She had a satchel at her side as well, no doubt filled with other assorted goodies to assist her in her goals. Something for Johnny to make note of, in case it became relevant later. The impulse was definitely there to take a shot, to destroy the bag and whatever nasty surprises that might be contained within. Save some potential trouble down the line.

Still, Johnny remained patient, not wanting to give any indication as to his presence until it made sense for him to do so; the goal was to let the others fight it out, and intercept at the end. The accident was a convenient stroke of luck, one that he knew he would need to make sure he capitalized upon if he was to be successful today. Destiny’s hand reached for

the door handle, and rather than acknowledge the presence of the woman outside of the vehicle, Poppy instead stared eerily upwards towards the man.

He locked eyes with the girl for a moment, and as he did, the buzzing of his pager from Grace went unchecked. The voice in his head was telling him that it was likely a warning that went completely ignored, as the rest of the world seemingly fell away from Bacchus. All he could think of in that moment was a single word: *fire!*

With a squeeze of his finger, a high-powered shot escaped from the barrel of his gun, sending the round screaming downwards until it struck the roof of Azra's car near the door. This sent Destiny jumping backwards to seek out cover, mouthing obscenities to herself that Johnny couldn't hear.

"What are you doing? You were supposed to wait!"

Johnny could hear the chorus of voices of his allies speaking in unison in his head as he came to his senses, his own curses joining Destiny's. The shot he had fired scattered the crowd that had gathered to gawk at the accident, but also potentially gave away his location. He didn't know for certain what had come over him in that moment, his own best-laid plans going up like kindling on what felt like impulse.

No, no... not impulse. The kid. Poppy. He had been warned, but it had been one of those things you couldn't truly grasp the consequences of until it was too late. Now, he had to live with it. The fact that no bullets had come his way in the heartbeats that had passed seemed like a good sign that Destiny hadn't been able to pin-point where he had taken his shot from. He still had that going for him.

The pager at his waist buzzed with urgency, at last catching his attention and he glanced down at the message, which contained a single word.

"Helicopter."

It wasn't until he read the message that he realized his hearing had also been dulled, such was the tunnel vision that had overtaken him. The wind began to whip around him as his gaze turned upward, the vehicle lowering as it hovered above the building. A woman leaned out of the chopper, automatic rifle in hand. She was dressed in black fatigues and a combat vest, with long, curly blonde hair pulled back out of her face with a bandanna. She gave a wink down towards Bacchus, then opened fire.

Adrenaline had kicked in long before that moment, but now it carried the man as he made his hasty retreat. With no time to formulate a better plan of action, Johnny snatched up one of the grappling hooks he had brought to take out utility lines, catching it on the edge of the roof as he flung himself over. He clutched the rope for dear life, silently thankful that he had insisted on wearing a good pair of gloves as he slid down. The hook, which had never been intended for such a maneuver, snapped in short order under the strain of his weight upon it.

Before it gave way, however, Bacchus managed to swing his momentum enough to send himself crashing into an open dumpster. He let out an audible groan from the impact as it knocked the wind from him, but he had successfully managed to escape serious injury.

For now.