

One Foggy Night

Dead Mech - Apex, prequel

by Jake Bible, ...

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The other teens gave the Boiler kid as much space as he needed, not that there was much space in the cramped cell. If he sat in the middle, they all ringed the cell. If he sat in one corner, they sat in the other. As long as they were out of arm's reach.

They'd seen what he was capable of and none of them wanted that. At least not until they were forced in the cage with him. Not until they didn't have a choice anymore.

"He never talks," one whispered.

"Do you really want him too?" another responded.

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"That's right mother fuckers! Full fucking house!" Jay Rind yelled, scooping the credits towards his seat. "Ha! Do any of you sad pieces of shit even know how to play poker?"

The six other players at the table glared at him, the noise of the crowd and the cage fight in the room outside drowning out their grunts and grumbling.

A topless waitress came through the door just as the crowd swelled into a roar.

"Sounds like someone didn't make it," Legit said, getting up. "I guess I'm up. Any of you fuckheads touches my credits and I'll gut ya."

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Legit pushed his way through the crowd to the fight cage, just as a couple of his men were dragging the corpse of the unfortunate loser away. He stepped onto the mat and slapped the bruised and bloodied winner on the shoulder, grabbing the microphone that was lowered from above.

"How'd ya like that?!" he yelled into the mic. "Gettin' your money's worth?!"

The crowd exploded into cheers and applause.

"Fuck yeah! Now, I have a special surprise for you all! Usually we keep fights even by age, but tonight I'm mixing it up a bit! You're gonna love it!"

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"This is fucking crazy, Stan," Bisby growled. "What the fuck are we doing here?"

Stanislaw sipped at his drink, not quite sure what it was, and shrugged. "We're trying to keep Jay from getting himself killed."

"Where the fuck is that asshole mechanic?" Bisby complained. "I haven't seen his sorry ass since we got here."

"Cards," Stanislaw answered, nodding towards the rear door Legit had just come out of. "He's probably getting set up right now and then they'll take him for the sucker he is."

"Great," Bisby sneered, sipping at his own drink and grimacing "This is fucking shit!"

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Masters slowly traced his finger along Harlow's shoulder, down around her shoulder blade, the line of her back, the small of her back, pushing the sheet away and onto the softness of her buttocks. He watched with delight as her smooth, naked skin broke out in goosebumps.

"Come on," he cooed. "Join up with me."

Harlow, facing away from him, her head resting on her arms, sighed. "I can't, Mitch. You know that."

"Bullshit," he said loudly, giving her ass a good slap. "You're just scared."

She rolled over quickly, fire in her eyes. "Take it back, boy, or else."

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“Ladies and gentlemen and everyone in between!” Legit called. “He has only fought one fight. But, man, what a fight! I have never seen anything like it in my life! Get ready for a spectacle of brutality! I give you: Dog, the Wild Boy of the Wasteland!”

The crowd erupted in to raucous cheers and shrieks; their fists pounding on tables, their feet slamming against the concrete floor.

The door to the holding pens opened and, his feet and hands shackled, in stepped the boy all the others were afraid of.

Slowly, deliberately, the boy shuffled to the fight cage.

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“Jeezus,” Bisby cried. “That kid can’t be more than thirteen.”

“If that,” Stanislaw agreed. “Maybe we should get Jay and take off. I don’t know if I want to be around for this.”

Legit’s voice once again boomed over the room’s loudspeakers as the boy shambled up the steps into the fight cage. “Now, since last night’s fight was over in less than thirty seconds. I have lined up not one, not two, but five opponents for Dog to fight!”

“Five at once?” Bisby asked, shocked.

“Nah, one after the other,” Stanislaw replied. “I’ve seen it done with older fighters.”

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Jay stared at his already dwindling stack of credits. “Wow, you guys are getting lucky all of a sudden.”

“Can I get you a drink, Mr. Rind?” the waitress asked, leaning close, using her assets to make the sale.

Jay had to force his eyes from her tits. Reaching down, he lifted a sack from the floor and set it on the table. “No thanks, darlin’. I have my own.” With that he pulled a large steel jar from the bag. “Make it myself. Anyone care for a snort?”

Everyone quickly nodded.

“Clean glasses all around, okay, darlin’?” Jay said.

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“Okay, okay!” Masters cried out, his nuts firmly in Harlow’s grasp. “I take it back! Jeezus, you know I was only kidding!”

Harlow let go, laying back on the bed, watching the patterns that the nighttime lights of the city/state outside made on the ceiling. “He’d hunt us down and kill us. You know the guy has serious anger problems.”

“Then why’d you marry him?” Masters asked, reaching over and tweaking a nipple. Harlow swatted him away.

“Why do we do anything, Mitch? I was young, new to the security detail, and I needed someone. It was a rush decision.”

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“To make things fair,” Legit started. “Our first opponent is a new volunteer-” The crowd laughed at the “volunteer” joke. “-fresh from the hardened streets of our own dear Foggy Bottom, I give you Tweaker!”

Legit left the cage as a scrawny, obviously drugged out young man stumbled onto the mat. Closing and locking the cage door behind him, Legit hadn’t taken two steps before the crowd erupted into a deafening roar. He turned to see the junkie dead on the mat, neck snapped and the kid standing over him, looking bored.

“Jeezus,” he mumbled. “I hope five are enough.”

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“Damn!” one of the players exclaimed. “This is some top quality shit!”

“You got that right!” another said, taking a large swig of Jay’s shine from his glass. “How’d you get a hold of the grains to make this?”

“Who said it was made of grains?” Jay grinned. “And if it is, I ain’t telling a bunch of degenerate gamblers such as yourselves where I get anything!”

The others laughed and all downed their shine, each holding out their glasses for refills. Jay was more than happy to oblige. “Drink up boys! I’m in no hurry to take your money!”

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Bisby and Stanislaw watched in fascination as the Wild Boy played with his second opponent.

“This is just cruel,” Bisby said.

“I know. That kid is too young for this,” Stanislaw replied. “I don’t know where Legit gets them, but someone should stop this.”

“I’m not talking about the kid,” Bisby snorted. “I mean the poor fucker in there with him. That kid is toying with him, letting him think he has a chance—HOLY FUCK! Did you see that?!?” Bisby leapt from his seat as the entire crowd did the same. “That’s fucking insane!”

Stanislaw’s jaw dropped in disbelief.

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The second opponent screamed in pain, clutching at the place where his right arm should have been. Dog just stood there, the man’s arm clutched in his hand, watching the blood coat the mat. The man turned to look at Dog, terror in his eyes. “Please...”

Dog knelt down and wiped at the blood, bringing his hand to his mouth, licking the sticky red liquid from his palm.

The crowd went wild.

“Please...” the man pleaded again.

Looking over at the man, Dog shook his head then violently thrust the end of the man’s own arm straight through his midsection.

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The roar of the crowd shook the small back room.

“I’m cashing out,” one of the players said. “Sounds like something good is happening out there. Thanks for the drink.”

“Anytime,” Jay laughed from behind a much larger stack of credits now. “I’ll be sure and bring more next time I’m in town. You just make sure and bring more credits.”

Everyone at the table laughed, drunken smiles on each of their faces.

“I think you’re getting us drunk and taking advantage,” one of the players grinned.

“Fucking A right!” Jay said.

Everyone laughed again and Jay watched the deal.

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“I hear the test is pretty hard,” Harlow said, leaning on her elbow, running her fingers through Masters’s thick chest hair. “Only five percent pass.”

“Good,” Masters said. “I’d hate to know I’d have to serve with a bunch of half-ass whiners! I’m Mitch Mother Fucking Masters! Get the fuck out of my way or go the fuck home!”

Harlow laughed, grabbing one of Masters’s nipples and giving it a good, hard twist. Masters cried out, but didn’t push her away.

“I’ll kick your ass any day, boy,” Harlow snarled playfully.

“Which is exactly why you should join with me!”

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Every spectator in the fight room was on their feet, fists pumping the air, throats hoarse from screaming.

Stanislaw and Bisby watched in stunned silence as the third opponent was carried from the cage, one half by one of Legit’s men, the other half carried by another.

“Did I not say you were all in for a treat?!?” Legit yelled into the mic. “Now, how about you all get yourselves some more drinks while we tidy up the mat a bit.” Legit gestured at the gore covered canvas as three half naked women sopped up the blood with large towels.

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“You really think I should join?” Harlow called from the bathroom.

Masters, fighting to keep his eyes open, post coital drowsiness creeping into his body, smiled to himself. He had her. “If anyone should it should be you,” he replied. “You’re the best security officer Foggy Bottom has ever seen. You handle all of the tough jobs with fucking ease! Imagine what you could do with 50 tons of rockin’ hard metal around you!”

“I don’t need metal to prove myself,” she said, her tone body silhouetted by the bathroom light.

“No, you don’t,” Masters agreed, all drowsiness quickly gone.

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Jay did a double take as the man seated across from him laid down four eights. “Hey... wait one second...” He reached past the dealer to the discard pile, but the dealer slammed his hand to the table, pinning it in place.

“What do you think you’re doing?” the man with the eights asked, his left hand reaching below the table.

“I threw away an eight!” Jay yelled. “You’re fucking cheating!”

The man with the eights pulled out a snub nose revolver and set it on the table. “You sure about that, mechie? This here .38 says different.”

Jay didn’t move.

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Dog paced the fight cage, eager to continue with the fights, his muscles twitching for more violence, his throat parched, waiting for more blood, waiting to taste the life of his enemies as he watched that same life leave their eyes.

He always watched the eyes, always wanting to see the moment the body goes from being a man to just being meat.

Dog’s stomach growled. He was hungry for more than just death.

Turning to the crowd, he rushed the cage, shaking the bars violently, rage on his face and fury in his voice.

The crowd ate it up.

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Mitch closed his eyes as Harlow slowly rocked on top of him, grinding down with just the right pressure to take him to the edge, but keep him from going over. He caressed the tightness of her stomach then moving to the firmness of her breasts.

“WHAT THE FUCK?!?” a man yelled from the doorway.

Harlow rolled off Masters immediately, grabbing the bed sheet and twisting it about her body, leaving Masters exposed and naked on the bed.

“Shit, Rodriguez! We thought you had the night shift!” Masters said, trying to cover himself, looking around the room for a weapon.

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Bisby was busy watching Legit’s men bring in not one, but two opponents for Dog to fight. “Damn, this is just crazy!” He looked over at Stanislaw and frowned. “What’s up with you?”

Stanislaw’s eyes were fixed on the rear door. “Four hunks of muscle just went in there. I have a feeling Jay has overstayed his welcome.”

Stanislaw got to his feet and started pushing his way towards the door. Bisby groaned, but got up, downed his drink and followed after.

“I am so gonna kick Jay’s ass for making me miss this next fight!” he shouted after Stanislaw.

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His arms pinned behind him, blood pouring into his already swelling eyes from several gashes across his forehead and brows, Jay began to laugh. “Legit gets in here and you are all going to pay,” he said, spitting blood and bits of teeth at whoever was nearest.

“Legit knows,” Eights said. “He doesn’t like cheaters. Said to have a little fun with you before tossing your corpse into the incinerator.”

“Cheat?” Jay snorted, hocking up a glob of snot and blood. “That what you told him?”

He was answered by a hit to the gut and another across his jaw.

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The two men walked casually into the fight cage, each easily twice the size of Dog.

“You’re dead, you little cannibal freak!” one of the men shouted as the door behind them was shut and latched. “We make your death drag out and Legit promised we both go free!”

“With credits in our pockets!” the other man said. “Any last words?”

The boy’s voice was lost in the crowd.

“What was that?” the first man asked with amusement.

“I’m going to eat your fucking eyeballs and wear your faces when I’m done with you!” Dog screamed lunging at them both.

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Rodriguez pointed his service pistol at Harlow. “You cheating whore!” he yelled, his hand shaking with rage, trigger finger twitching.

“Rodriguez, calm down,” Harlow said quietly. “Put that away.”

“You call him Rodriguez? Jeezus, that’s sad,” Masters sneered.

The muzzle of the pistol was instantly trained on Masters and pointing just lower than his belly.

“I’m going to blow your fucking dick off, Masters,” Rodriguez snarled. “Once I’m done teaching this bitch a lesson!” Rodriguez motioned with his gun for Harlow to turn around. “Assume the position, bitch!”

Tears in her eyes, Harlow turned and bent over, grabbing her ankles.

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Stanislaw kicked in the door, snapping his steel baton open as he walked into the back room. “That’s my Chief Mechanic you have there.”

Everyone froze.

“Hey, Stan,” Jay said between swollen lips. “These guys told Legit I was cheating.”

Stanislaw watched everyone carefully. “Did you, Jay?”

Jay laughed then winced at the pain it created in his ribs. “Nah, I ain’t good enough to cheat.”

“That’s true,” Stanislaw agreed. “How about you guys let go of him and we’ll all just leave and forget about this?”

Bisby rushed into the room. “You’re all dead!” he yelled, fists already swinging.

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Legit watched the two men start to flank Dog, each circling from a different side.

The one on the left was easily three hundred pounds, hopped up on every roid Legit could pump in his system. The other, while not as bulked out, was nearly seven feet tall. He didn’t want the kid killed outright, but if the Boiler could pull off a win tonight then Legit would have his star; the kind that would bring him enough credits he wouldn’t have to worry about security raids or city/state shakedowns ever again.

Legit was ready to move it on up.

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Dog ignored his opponents' taunts, focusing only on how their bodies moved.

The tall one was going to be a piece of cake. Dog wasn't sure how long ago it had happened, but he could tell the man had a bad right leg, probably the knee.

The heavy one was going to be a little harder. With all the chems in his system he probably wouldn't feel pain right away. Dog always counted on the subduing effects pain could have. He'd have to find the killing blow right away.

Dog began to bounce a little then cracked his neck slowly.

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The pistol shoved against the back of Harlow's head, Rodriguez began to loosen his belt with his free hand.

"Seriously?" Masters growled. "You're going to rape your own wife? Right here? In front of me?"

"It ain't rape, it's justice," Rodriguez snarled and Masters suddenly realized the guy was jacked up on something. He knew they would be here and he prepped himself for it.

"We can talk this out, Rodriguez," Masters said, his security training kicking in as he started judging distances between pieces of furniture, between himself and Rodriguez, and between Harlow and the muzzle of the gun.

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Bisby dodged under the first swing and quickly threw two jabs into his attacker's exposed midsection. Hearing the sudden exhale of air, he knew he'd nailed the guy's diaphragm, making breathing a near impossibility. He lunged in and up, smashing the top of his head into the bottom of the man's jaw; the sound of bone breaking and teeth shattering reverberated off the walls, even with the noise of the others and the chaos out in the fight room.

Bisby stood up straight and kicked out, sending the man flying then sidestepped a kick from one of Legit's other thugs.

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Stanislaw *was* the steel baton. He flipped it about, striking, blocking, sweeping legs, shattering bone. He had two men on him, both good size brawlers which is what Legit hired them for. He should have hired more brains since they went for every feint Stanislaw sent at them.

After a while it almost became boring and Stanislaw let loose with a couple career ending strikes, making sure neither man would father children or be running from deaders anytime soon.

He looked over at Bisby and laughed as the man, elbows flying, had the biggest shit eating grin on his face.

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The crowd grew restless as the two men circled Dog, looking for his weaknesses.

"Come on!" some started to shout. "Kill them!"

The tall man frowned, realizing no one expected them to survive. They were cheering on the kid. He now wished he could have watched the earlier fights.

Dog stopped and the men looked at each other, wondering what the kid was up to.

When the Boiler got on his knees, one leg crossed over the other behind him, the two men had to keep from laughing. They each took a side and nodded to each other then attacked.

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“I know what you’re thinking,” Rodriguez sneered. “You think you can make it over here and stop me before I pump two rounds into the fucking whore’s head, right?”

Masters didn’t respond, just watched Harlow’s face as Rodriguez started to force himself in her. He couldn’t believe this was happening. Here was the most amazing woman he had ever met. She was the most bad ass creature alive as far as he was concerned, yet she wasn’t fighting as her husband started to rape her.

Then he saw the look on Rodriguez’s face.

“Let go!” the rapist screamed. “Stop squeezing!”

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Legit watched the boy just kneel there like he didn’t have a care in the world.

“Kid’s going to get his ass kicked!” someone shouted from Legit’s right and he watched credits begin to change hands.

He snapped his fingers and a waitress was instantly at his side. “Yes, Mr. Legit, sir?”

“What are the odds?”

“Shooting up against the Boiler,” the waitress said, fear in her eyes, hoping she was telling him what he wanted to hear. She sighed in relief when he smiled at her.

“Good,” Legit grinned, watching, waiting for Hell to break loose. “That’s very good.”

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Jay slammed the metal jar against the dealer’s face, pulverizing his nose, sending bits of cartilage and blood flying everywhere.

“You’re a disgrace to your profession!” he shouted, slamming the jar home one more time for good measure.

The blow came fast and Jay was on his knees before he knew what had happened. He shook his head slowly and looked up to see Eights standing over him.

“Forget about me?” Eights sneered, shoving his pistol to Jay’s forehead.

“Forget about *me*, ASSHOLE?!?” Bisby yelled, kicking the gun away, grabbing Eights by the head and slamming it into his knee.

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Rodriguez, starting to loose feeling in his penis, raised the gun up, ready to strike Harlow in the back of her head. Masters took his opening and leapt at Rodriguez, slamming the man back into the dresser. Rodriguez screamed as he was ripped out of Harlow and before Masters could land one punch, Harlow had shoved him aside and was wailing on her husband.

“Never again, Michael! Never again, you fucking waste of shit!” she screamed, a knife suddenly in her hand.

Where did she get a knife from? Masters thought, stunned. *Note to self: never piss this woman off.*

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Even those that were watching every little move would swear later that one second Dog was kneeling on the mat and the next he was spinning up, arms and legs flying.

Then it was over.

But, no one actually could say how it all happened.

No one could say they actually saw the Boiler rip off the tall man's jaw and jam it into his throat.

No one could say they saw Dog twist the heavy man's head around so violently that it actually flopped down onto his shoulder blades, becoming pinned between body and mat when he toppled over.

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Stanislaw put a restraining hand on Bisby's shoulder. "We're not the criminals."

Bisby, about to slam his fist into Eights's face for the tenth or eleventh time, looked up at his mentor. "No, but they are." He rammed his fist twice more into Eights's nose until the man's eyes rolled up into his head. Bisby tossed the cheat to the floor, giving his ribs a swift kick.

Stanislaw shook his head and helped Jay to his feet. "You about ready to go?"

Jay blinked several times and stood on shaky legs. "Did we win?"

"Of course we did," Stanislaw smiled.

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"Whoa, whoa," Masters said as he glanced down and saw the trickle of blood coming from the base of Rodriguez's shaft. "Let's calm things down a bit."

Harlow, her eyes ablaze, still keeping Rodriguez firmly immobilized, whipped her head towards Masters. "Three years, Mitch! Know why I love you? Not because you are Mitch Mother Fucking Masters, but because you are sweet and kind and know how to take care of me. You love me for me, not because I'm some trophy to be treated however you want!"

"You love me?" Masters croaked. "Really?"

"Yes, I love you!" Harlow cried.

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The crowd was silent. Not a sound could be heard from anyone. Only the thumping bass of the fight room's sound system kept the place from true silence.

Then in one giant wave the people exploded. Whoops and calls, cheers and roars, shook the rafters and Legit wondered if the whole place might come down.

Those that lost everything they had on their wagers threw glasses and bottles at the fight cage.

Dog, ignoring the crowd, reached down and picked up a jagged piece of glass and knelt next to the tall man and started to cut along the hairline.

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The two mech pilots and Chief Mechanic slipped from the back room into the chaos that was the fight room.

Jay wobbled a bit, but held out his hand. "What the Hell happened out here?"

"Ahhh, man," Bisby whined. "I knew I was going to miss something good."

"Come on," Stanislaw said. "We should get out of here as fast as possible."

They hadn't made it more than a few steps towards the front door when Legit's men blocked them.

"Legit wants to talk to you," one of the giants said. "Wait here."

"Sure," Stanislaw smiled nervously. "Not a problem."

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Legit watched Dog grow frustrated as the glass wasn't sharp enough and began to mangle the tall man's skin. He pushed past people and stepped to the cage door.

"Hey! Boiler!" Legit yelled, hoping the kid could hear him.

Dog looked up, madness in his eyes, but they softened as he saw what Legit was holding through the bars of the door.

A pearl handled straight razor.

The kid leapt to his feet and snatched the razor from Legit's fingers.

"I want that back when you're done," Legit said.

Dog looked from the razor to Legit and back then nodded.

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Harlow's and Masters's eyes stayed locked for an eternity.

"You really love me?" Masters said, a huge grin spreading across his face. "Like, really love me?"

"From the second I met you," Harlow said, her knife cutting a little deeper into Rodriguez's flesh. "I never stop thinking about you."

Rodriguez looked from one lover to the other, unsure if he should be enraged or terrified. "Let me go—!" he started to say, but was cut off immediately by the increased pressure of the blade.

"So, what now?" Harlow asked. "Do I cut him and let him bleed out?"

Masters shrugged.

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Legit walked up to Stanislaw. "My men say you did a number on my guys."

"Yep," Stanislaw said calmly. "Seems there was some kinda miscommunication. Some folks were cheating and decided to pin Jay with it. I'm sure you knew nothing about it."

Legit didn't respond, focusing on Jay instead. "I know you. You always lose your shirt."

"Well, I wouldn't say that," Jay stammered.

Legit smiled and nodded to Stanislaw. "Yeah, he's no cheat. You folks take care. Come back and see us."

"Doubt it," Bisby growled.

The crowd swelled into a bloodthirsty frenzy and Legit turned away dismissively.

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The door slammed shut and the two lovers found themselves in the hallway, naked.

“Probably should have grabbed some clothes,” Harlow grinned.

Masters shrugged again. “I don’t see why. You’re wearing my favorite outfit.”

Tears welled in Harlow’s eyes, but Masters stopped them by grabbing her and kissing her with such passion that she forgot herself, her former life and anything else that wasn’t that very moment in time.

After an eternity their lips and bodies separated.

“So, we’re going to be mech pilots?” Harlow smiled, breathless.

“That’s the plan,” Masters said, pulling her to him again. “No hurry though.”

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“Fuck!” Jay yelled as he sat down in the SUV’s backseat. “I left my shine!”

“You’ll make more,” Stanislaw groaned. “Let it go.”

Stanislaw drove the SUV up and around the bottom levels of the parking garage until they were out on the streets of Foggy Bottom.

“Well, I had a fucking blast!” Bisby shouted, rolling down his window and letting the night air rush against his flushed face. “But, next time I want to see the main fight!”

“Yeah, what were they starting to yell when we left?” Jay asked. “Ray gun or something?”

“Doesn’t concern us,” Stanislaw sighed.

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Dog, the blood covered razor gripped in his hand, slapped the sheet of skin to his face.

“Razor! Razor! Razor! Razor!” the crowd chanted, even those that would be scrambling to pay their debts before the night was through.

Dog, now Razor, gazed out from behind a dead man’s face, fresh blood that wasn’t his dripping into his eyes. He looked down at the corpses at his feet, the skinned skull of one staring back at him with dead eyes. Dog knelt down and plucked the orbs from their sockets, popped them in his mouth and chewed with hungry relish.

