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**CHAPTER ONE:**

Not What He Was Expecting

 *Five weeks. It had been five long weeks since they had last seen a single goddamn plant bigger than five inches. For nearly two months, they had been struggling here, stuck in the desert. They were running low on food, water, and ammo. Gabriel knew the others wouldn't last long. Keith was barely staying upright, and Neil looked like a walking skeleton. No, they wouldn't last much longer, but they had to keep moving. They couldn't afford not to…*

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 *A small shape appeared on the horizon. A house! Finally, they could rest. Gabriel couldn't believe his eyes, as the house seemed to have everything they needed! Food, water, clean clothes, it was perfect! In fact, it almost seemed too perfect…*

 *"AMBUSH!" Gabriel looked to where Harriet had shouted, just in time to see enemy soldiers pouring out from over the dunes. One, two, five, eleven; there was no end. "Everybody, get back. I'll handle it" "No, I won't let you go in alone," Kieth said, "it's too dangerous!" "You know me," Gabriel replied, "I can't let anyone else die." Kieth left reluctantly, but first he said a final farewell to his long time friend, "Give 'em hell." "I'm planing on it," Gabriel promised.*

 *Now alone against an entire army, Gabriel stood firm. A majestic gray wolf, he stood tall, his piercing yellow eyes fixed on the oncoming horde. He knew he was probably not going to make it, but he would either defeat them all, or die trying. With his left hand, he pulled out his .45 revolver, and his trusty sword with his right. Then, he ran, charging the enemy with all his remaining might. He started slaying enemies, left and right, one by one. He quickly ran out of bullets, and then, he caught a glimpse of the chief, the leader, the one who had killed their friends; the reason they were here. The one who had to die. He ran forward with all his might, raising up his sword, ready to strike one final, heavy blow. As he struck, he shouted out triumphantly, "THIS IS FOR JOAN, YOU MOTHER-"*

 -*WHAM!* "And I suppose Mr. Smith here knows the answer, isn't that right, Gabriel?" Dammit, he'd fallen asleep in class again! "Um, what was the question again?" He asked groggily and clearly embarrassed. Mrs. Jones sighed, lifted her hand off of Gabriel's desk, and repeated the question, "Why did the ancients construct so many underground bunkers towards the end of the 'modern era'?" "They… wanted to stay warm for the winter?" No sooner had he spoken, the class burst out into laughter. "Now now, settle down everyone. In way, I suppose that is the correct answer." Mrs. Jones said. "Really?" Gabriel asked, in disbelief he had actually manged to answer correctly – for once. "Yes." Mrs. Jones replied, "Though, not any of the winters any of you may have seen. The winter they were preparing for, was a nuclear winter. You see, from the writings that have been passed down for generation, we know that the in the latter part of what was then called 'The Modern Era', tensions were high between nations."

 "You may remember hearing about this before. You see, all the major powers were in a standoff; a cold war. Now, hopefully, you all know your basic physics. They had nuclear bombs, weapons of mass destruction that harnessed the power of the atom to cause damage on a scale the size of cities. Every major power had one."

 "I'm sorry, Mrs. Jones," interrupted a young blonde human woman, "but what does this have to do with our police training?" "You see," Mrs. Jones said, patiently, "Rather than trying to talk things out diplomatically and making compromises, the leaders of the nations thought it would be better to try and wipe each other’s country off the map. All it ended up doing was causing the Great Winter. If we do not learn our history, we will be doomed to repeat it."

 "But surely it's no longer relevant," the mystery woman started again, "after all, that was millennia ago." "That may be, but that's exactly what they thought during their own time." Mrs. Jones explained, "As future protectors of society, it behooves you to learn it's history. And besides, who knows when it might come in handy in the field." Just then, the bell rang. "Alright, that's it for today. Remember to read pages 256 – 290 by next week."

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 As he headed to his locker, Gabriel couldn't help but think how foolish he'd made himself look. Not that he would normally care, he'd always been somewhat of a joker. Its just that recently, he had developed a crush (which he swears is only small one) on a fellow classmate: Christina Harriet. Like him, she was twenty year old gray wolf, was about 5'11", and unlike him, she had red fur. She was also gorgeous. Not that he looked bad, but he'd always thought he'd been average. His most distinguished feature was his black “hair”, he thought. Also unlike him, Christina loved history. Hopefully tomorrow he could actually force himself to stay awake through the entire class.

 It wasn't his fault the class was boring, but ever since he was little he'd wanted to help protect people. Like the mystery woman, he wondered why a history class was part of police training; he’d taken history in high school. He had been ecstatic when he got accepted into the academy. But back then, he thought it would involve a lot more… action.

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 The walk to his apartment building wasn’t a very long one, but ever since he moved in to the small place, he couldn't help but notice just how empty the streets always were. Granted, Old New York was nothing like New New York (he still thinks the name is really stupid); that's where all the big businesses and hotels were. But he couldn't help but think how today the streets seemed especially empty.

 He was about halfway home when he heard someone shout out to him: "Hey, wait up, I need to talk to you." It was that woman again; Jenna, he thought her name was. They hadn’t interacted much during their time in the academy, so he was surprised to see her here. "I'm sorry," he told her, "but I really don't have time to talk. I really have to get home. My rent's due today. Maybe some other time." Normally, he wouldn't lie, but he was still a little embarrassed, and besides, it was possible she was just going to make fun of him for falling asleep in class, and he didn't really feel like having to deal that right now.

 "Don't worry, this won't take long." She assured him. "No really-" he tried telling her again, but she interrupted him, clearly getting irritated with him, "For the gods’ sake, the rent's not even due until Monday, and it *REALLY* is important." He stopped. No one from the academy knew where he lived, much less when his rent was due. Something suspicious was clearly going on here. Who the hell *was* this woman, and what the hell did she really want from him?

 "Okay lady, I don't know who the hell you think you are, but I'm leaving. Alone. And don't try to follow me, because I *will* call the police if you do." He turned to start walking away, when suddenly, he felt a painful tug on his tail, a sharp blow on his head, and the next thing he knew, he was in a dark ally, hands and feet tied. The woman spoke to him. "I really wish you hadn’t made me do that, but I couldn't just let you leave, and we're kind of running out of time."

 She was standing over him now, arms crossed. She was breathing heavily; clearly moving him was no easy task for her. After a few seconds, she fixed her hair. "Yeah, I have him in the alley now." "I know, I'm not stupid you know. Why are you telling me this now, by the way?" Gabriel asked, more confused than before. "Wait, you're not talking to me are you? In fact, who *are* you talking to?" Gabriel continued, desperate to get answers, but Jenna ignored him. "Alright, we’ll be there shortly." She now looked down at him, and said with a smile, "Well, looks like you and I are gonna be going on a little ride."