

Find out what really happened
in this exclusive

**BONUS
SCENE**

#TeamReed

Chapter 1

If it wasn't for Archer, Lydia, and the Lakeside Five we would never have made it out of the crush of soldiers hemming us in. Slowly, his arrows, her knives and their bullets clear a path and Rebecca doesn't hesitate. She punches her way through, soldiers in blue dropping like flies around her. Aidan and I pummel after her, the rest of our people taking advantage of the path we've cleared.

"Dammit, Rebecca, you have to go now!" I hiss, as I bring my elbow up, feeling teeth shatter as I connect with the face of a NUSA soldier. Rebecca doesn't hear me, but if she doesn't leave now, all of this will be for nothing. Kenneth Williams will never

be this vulnerable again. I reach for her, determined to make her leave right now, but my hand snatches empty air as she twists abruptly. A steely flash in her silver-grey eyes and then she roars, a single name that sends a cold rage flooding through my veins.

“Mason!”

I see him a moment after she does, standing at the entrance to the main building – the building where Lydia, Archer and the Lakeside Five are taking cover. The sight of him brings the memory slamming back, Rebecca broken and bleeding, her hands bound so tightly they had long turned blue, the pool of blood and filth below her. The baby that she had been carrying, which didn't survive the torture that almost took her from me too.

My hands ball into fists at my sides and an animalistic sound crawls out of my chest and unleashes itself through my mouth. The gunfire has stopped, and in the deafening silence that follows, I see Jethro erupt from inside the building, going straight for his twin.

Jethro is fast, and brave as any man I've ever fought alongside, but he's no match for his brother. If Rebecca is our ultimate weapon, then Mason is Kenneth's. I want to run, to get to them before Mason can hurt anybody else, but we're hemmed in again, the NUSA guards swarming like locusts, cutting us off from a clear line of sight. Rebecca is fighting like I've never seen, her hands a blur as she takes down one adversary after another, but we're too late. I look up at the sound of her horrified gasp to

see Mason slam Jethro head first into the concrete. Jethro's neck twists violently, his back bending at an unnatural angle, and then he goes completely still.

My eyes cut to Rebecca's, and I see my own intent reflected in the grey. She's not leaving until this is done. Mason will die today, for what he's done. We surge forward as one, swiping soldiers aside like bowling pins and leaving a trail of bodies in our wake.

Rebecca gets to the door first and I pound up the stairs after her, but she's always been faster, her feet barely touching the ground as she pulls ahead. A scream of terror reaches me a second before I hear Rebecca's howl of rage, and I burst into the room in time to see her land a savage uppercut to Mason's jaw as

he kicks out at her with his steel-capped boots. I hear the whoosh of air driven from her lungs as she is hurled backward, and the fury I've managed to keep leashed, lest it overwhelm me, wrenches free. I throw my hand toward Masons throat, fully intending to rip it out, but he side-steps and drops to the floor, sweeping his leg out. The floor rises to meet me and I smash into it, feeling a few minor bones crack under the pressure.

“Reed!” Archer’s blurred face comes into view and I shake my head, trying to clear my vision. I see the silhouettes of Gabe and Crackerjack heading for the door, and through the ringing in my ears I hear Rebecca’s voice hissing in disgust,

“Jethro was your brother.”

I grip Archer’s hand.

“My brother was weak.”

I’m back on my feet.

“Your brother was ten times the man you can ever hope to be, you son of a bitch.”

My vision is clearing. I shove Archer toward the door, toward safety, as Rebecca moves. I know it’s a feint, but Mason doesn’t, and he raises his arms to deflect the blow, leaving him exposed. Rebecca’s true attack is poetry in motion, her slight, powerful body graceful as a dancer’s as she throws all her weight into a front kick which connects with Mason’s jaw in a bone-crunching crack. The timing is perfect, but even her remarkable strength isn’t enough. Mason stumbles, his arms wind-milling at his sides, and I dart forward but Rebecca is too quick for me. Without any thought to her own

safety, she runs at Mason, her body slamming into his, her slim arms snaking around his waist as she drives him backward and launches them both out of the open second-storey window.

It all happened so quickly that I catch Archer halfway down the stairs. I shove him aside, taking the last flight in a single bound and burst outside. The sight of Mason, holding Rebecca by the hair and slamming her face into the tarmac, sends ice across my skin. Rebecca's hands scrabble against his fingers and then drop to the ground to brace herself as he yanks back her head to do it again.

I don't give him the chance. I haul him off her and he comes away with a chunk of her hair clasped in his hand. He sneers at me, holding it up like a trophy and my blood sings in my

ears.

Rebecca is back on her feet behind him and I curl my lip as I send my fist thundering toward his face. The impact snaps his head almost over his shoulder and his body follows, spinning away from me and right into the path of Rebecca's foot and she sweeps her leg up in a ruthless kick. It connects with his other cheek and he staggers as the momentum brings him to face me once more.

I grin as I lift my leg and bring my heel down on his kneecap, the satisfying crunch of bone like music to my ears. Still, the bastard stands. I hear the dull thud of flesh as Rebecca lands two savage punches, one to each of his kidneys, and then I lift my arm high above my shoulder. The open-palmed slap spins Mason again, but he still comes back for me, trying

to take a step toward.

I watch, unconcerned, as Rebecca kicks out at his uninjured leg and brings him to his knees in the dirt.

Chest heaving, she plunges her fingers into his hair yanks his head back, so that her lips are at his ear.

“I made you a promise, Mason.” The voice of justice. She looks up at me, no hint of the gentle grey remaining. Her eyes are quicksilver, molten steel, and I nod, once. This man deserves no mercy. Rebecca’s hands slide almost lovingly down Mason’s head as she murmurs, “I always keep my promises.”

I don’t look away as she snaps his neck.

Our chests rise and fall in unison as we face each other over the body of the man who took everything from us. Slowly, the ice fades from her eyes

and I reach for her, my hand stretching across the distance between us, my arms aching to hold her. I'm oblivious of the carnage going on around us, of our friends, fighting for their lives only a few yards away.

“Rebecca...”

“Rebecca!” Aidan's voice rises above my own and I watch her face as she takes in his blood-stained clothing, the bruises marring his handsome face that his ability cannot heal fast enough. He's fighting half a dozen men, single-handedly. Rebecca's eyes burn with an intensity that sends a cold ache into my bones. My hand falls away as she takes a determined step toward him, but Aidan halts her in her tracks. “Go!” he yells.

I see it in her eyes, the need, the

urgency to go to him, to help him, and I step into her line of sight, composing my face into a mask of control.

“Go,” I tell her, my cheeks aching as I hold that expression in place. “Find Kenneth. Finish it.”

“There’re too many of them!” her eyes slice to the right again, as though they’re drawn to him. “You need us here.”

“We will deal with them.” I turn to backhand a soldier who had been trying to sneak up behind me. “Now go!”

Still, she falters. She looks at him again, and I see a flash of horror cross her face, one that terrifies me. She bites down involuntarily on her lip and I find that I don’t want to know what she saw.

“Rebecca,” I wave my hand in her

face as the blood beads on her lip, forcing her to look away from the horror she just imagined.

Slowly, the storm passes, her eyes clearing.

“You stay alive,” she says, daring me to disobey. “You keep them all alive. That’s an order.”

There’s no time to reply, because she’s already gone.

“Goodbye, Rebecca,” I murmur, sparing her one last glance before I rush at the soldiers surrounding Aidan.

Between the two of us, we manage to subdue them enough to give us breathing space.

“You’re up,” I tell him, the second I’m able to. Aidan looks hesitant. “You sure you can do this, Braveheart? Because I’d hate to think that after all these months of planning and going

behind her back, that you're going to chicken out now."

My words are the spur he needed. I expect him to leave without saying anything, so I'm astonished when he extends his hand. "Take care of them," he says, "you're the only one who can."

"I will," I reply, taking his hand and shaking it. "Now you go and take care of her."

Chapter 2

The fighting is bloody and brutal, neither side giving an inch, but slowly, slowly, we drive them back. Losing Rebecca and Aidan is a devastating blow to our forces, but Archer and Kwan step up to fill the void they've left behind in my battalion. They fight at my back,

taking down so many soldiers, they may as well possess the Power of Three.

We've moved away from the main building, forcing the NUSA troops to retreat down the drive.

I'm facing two brutish men in blue when I hear the tale-tell sign of a step behind me, but I can't do anything about it. Turning my back on these men is deadly. The thud of flesh against flesh assures me that my would-be-assassin has been taken care of, and, as soon as the brutes have been dispatched, I turn to find Morgan standing over the body of a soldier with hands the size of dinner plates.

"Good girl," I grin at her, forgetting for a minute that she's not supposed to be here. She wipes at the blood trickling from her mouth, her face a

mask of panic.

“Alex and Brooke!” she gasps, sending an icy hand down my spine. “They left the town, I can’t find them anywhere!”

“What do you mean they left?”

“I don’t know! Henry asked me to help with some of the other children and my back was turned for only a second. I searched the town but...” she trails off helplessly, fear rolling off her in waves.

“Where are the others?” I haven’t seen Kwan or Archer for a few minutes and I risk a quick look around.

“I have no idea.”

Morgan takes a step back and almost trips over a body.

“Careful!” I grab her elbow and she steadies, but we’ve both already looked back.

“Shit!” I curse, feeling the bite of loss as I stare down at Harrison Ross’s unblinking eyes.

“He was supposed to be in town with the others,” Morgan whimpers.

“He always was a stubborn old bastard.” I lean down and take only a second to close the General’s eyes before I’m up and grabbing her hand. “Come on, we need to find them!”

The nearest Humvee is parked at an alarming angle but the keys are still in the ignition.

“We can’t leave!” Morgan yells, clambering into the passenger seat.

“Alex and Brooke are out there somewhere, we have to find them!” The Humvee roars to life, spitting up grass and dirt as I slam it into reverse and gun the engine. Morgan braces her hands against the dash as the Humvee rocks violently before

finding purchase, and we roar down the drive.

“Reed.” It’s a whisper of breath and at first, I don’t take any heed.

“Morgan, we need to-” I stop dead as I catch a glimpse of the look of horror on her face.

“There!”

I whip around to find the source of her terror.

“No.” the word is a hiss between my lips as the blood drains from my face. Across the drive, at the far end of the open field we used to train, two small figures are visible against the sea of green, and beyond them, lurching across the sloping hill below, is another Humvee. It takes me a second to realise their paths will dissect. Another to ram the Humvee into gear, and then we are speeding across the Academy grounds on a

collision course that is the only way to stop what is about to happen.

“Morgan!” I hiss through clenched teeth as we bear down on the other Humvee. “You’re going to have to jump.”

“What about you?” she manages to reply above the grinding lurch.

“Don’t worry about me! You’re going to jump and then you’re going to get up and get those kids out of here!”

She nods, a movement I catch only in the corner of my eye, but it’s enough. The Academy fence looms ahead, and I aim for the centre, for softer steel between poles. Morgan opens her door and I spare her the briefest glance. “Look after them,” I tell her. She nods, the wind whipping her ponytail around her face, and I slow down just a fraction, giving her a

chance to land safely. Then she's gone, the door wrenching open in a whine of metal before slamming shut again as I tramp on the gas.

The Humvee obliterates the metal fence, punching through it in an explosion of sound and impact. The windscreen shatters, safety glass pricking my skin as it rains down on me. A stubborn section of fence clings to the hood before flipping overhead, and I force my attention back to the other car, which is so close to punching through the opposite side.

The driver sees me too late to change his course, and I hold the wheel steady, driving straight at him at a ninety-degree angle. His pale face is close enough to make out the open-mouthed terror planted upon it before I ram my shoulder against my own door and tumble out onto the

ground. Not far enough. I roll, once, before a bellow of pain is torn from my throat as the rear tire crushes my left foot, and then an explosion, so loud it reverberates inside my entire body, squeezing my insides into a ball, so tight the breath is expelled from my lungs and my insides feel as though they're trying to claw their way out.

Silence follows, so absolute I know my ear drums have ruptured. Through a haze of smoke and debris, I crawl in the direction I believe the fence to be, but I make it only a few yards before collapsing face down in the dirt.

Gentle hands on my waist, on my arms, turn me over and a face looms over mine. Blonde tendrils brush over my eyes, and I blink them away.

“Reed!” her voice is growing

louder, each call of my name becoming clearer.

“Where...” I cough, clutching my chest as the pain of a million injuries floods my senses. “Where are they?” my voice is hoarse, my lungs on fire.

“They’re safe. It’s over.”

I sit up, or rather, I let her help me sit up. The smoke has cleared, the wreckage of the two Humvees clearly visible.

“No fire,” I manage. I glance toward the setting sun. “When... how long?”

“It happened yesterday,” she says, “The Legion fought into the night.” Her eyes find the wreckage and her neck bobs as she swallows. “I thought you were dead. Everyone thinks you’re dead. I only came by here to...” she trails off. “If I’d have known I would’ve come back for you.”

“It’s okay,” I say. “I thought I was

dead too. Alex and Brooke...”

“They’re fine, they’re safe. I took them straight back to town and then came back to help the others.” I notice now, the scars of battle adorning her body. There are cuts and bruises on her face, and her left arm is bandaged.

“You got them out?” The ache in my chest is easing.

“I got them out.”

I exhale a deep breath. “Thank you.” My head jerks up as another thought occurs to me. “Rebecca?”

Morgan smiles. “She’s alive. Kenneth Williams is dead.”

“Where is she?”

Morgan frowns.

“Morgan,” I growl.

“She’s in Cook County.”

“She’s in *jail*?”

“Yeah, I don’t think they actually

knew what to do with her after she put a bullet in the President's head."

I don't have the energy to question how Rebecca got her hands on a gun. I cast around, the reality of our victory washing over me, when I catch sight of my foot.

"It's bad," Morgan admits, following the line of my gaze. "I'm going to get Henry."

"No!"

She falters.

"Not yet," I say. "Just give me a minute to think."

"You don't need to think," she says gently. "It's over. What you need, is medical attention."

I barely hear her. A dangerous thought is creeping in, flitting at the very edge of my reason. Morgan sits quietly, hands in her lap, as I weigh up my options and try to figure out the

answer to a question I scarcely believe I'd have to ask when the threat of imminent death hung over all of us: *where do we go from here?*

Chapter 3

“Hey Cathy!” Even from my bedroom upstairs I hear Morgan’s entrance. A few murmured voices I can’t place and then Morgan’s footsteps on the stairs.

She pokes her head around the door. “He’s here.”

I nod and follow her back down the stairs, limping slightly on my injured foot.

“Reed.” Adam shakes my hand. “It’s good to see you, alive and well, although, from what I’ve been told, that’s not something others will get

to see.”

I don't bother to explain my motives, because there would be no point. I'm doing this for Rebecca and he knows it.

“I'm still not exactly sure why you're letting me in on the secret, though?” Adam continues.

“Because I want to keep working for the Legion, outside of the borders of NUSA.”

“You're going to stay out here in the Rebeldom?”

I nod. “There are a lot of people who need saving. I may as well put my Gifts to good use.”

“You don't need my permission to do that.”

“No, but I'll need someone to report to.”

“And why would you possibly report to me?”

I allow myself a small smile. "Because whether you're ready to admit it or not, Adam, you are going to become the President of the New United States."

He blinks, his milky eyes unreadable. After a small silence, he relents. "You're not going out there alone, I assume?"

"No. I'm taking Morgan with me." She'd asked and I couldn't deny her request. Besides, a part of me enjoys Morgan's company. She's reckless and stroppy, but she's also loyal and brave. "And the bowman," I add, watching Adam's face carefully for any sign of discontent. Archer was a part of Adam's ordinary long before he joined the Legion. Adam doesn't bat an eyelid.

"Are you sure you want to do this, Reed? Leave your life behind?"

“I’m sure.”

“Then you have my word no one will ever know.”

“Thank you.” The deep purr of a powerful engine sounds from outside and I pick up my pack. I look to Morgan, who is leaning up against the wall, her arms crossed, her eyes missing nothing. “You ready Trouble?”

“I’ll see you back in Chicago,” Adam tells me, shaking my hand.

I kiss Cathy’s cheek, ignoring the disapproval radiating off her.

“All clear,” Morgan speaks from the door. I follow her down the steps and Kwan climbs over to the passenger seat as I take my place at the wheel.

“When will you leave?” he asks.

“As soon as we’ve dropped you off,” I tell him. “We’ll need supplies, so once we’ve stocked up, we’ll go.”

He nods. He's made his arguments, accepted my decision and opted to stay with Rebecca, at least until he knows she'll be okay.

I think a lot during that drive back to the States. About the people we lost – the General, David, Lydia, sweet Elizabeth, who unbeknownst to me had also come back to the Academy to help Morgan search for Alex and Brooke. So many good people, gone, taken too quickly in the name of war. The only way to honour their memories is to make this world a better place – to achieve what we set out to do. I know nothing, nor do I care, about politics. The best thing I can do to help is to go into the Rebellom and find survivors. To save those who are in need, one soul at a time.

It takes forever to gather what we

need. Morgan and Archer handle all of it, letting me remain out of sight, and I spend a few nights sprawled out in the back of the Humvee. When we're finally ready there's only one thing left to do.

"It's a great turn-out," Archer says, as we watch the procession through the trees. "I didn't realise so many people liked you, McCoy."

He's trying to lighten the mood, but I don't smile. Morgan takes my hand, giving it a small squeeze before letting it go, but I keep my eyes fixed on the scene before us.

"You didn't have to spin such a colourful story," I say, still not looking at her. "You could have just lied without adding all the heroics."

She's unapologetic. "I told them you died saving the children. Which is the truth, well, as close to it as you

get.”

I hold my breath as Rebecca begins to speak. She's dressed in a simple black dress, a white rose clutched in her hand, and it trembles near her hip. I can't hear what she's saying, but the desolation on her face is visible even from here. My throat bobs as she leans into Aidan, but I swallow down the pain. Rebecca loves me, but he's the one she would choose. I saw it that day on the battlefield, but I knew it long before then. I knew it from the day I asked her and her eyes spoke the truth while her lips refused me.

“Let's go,” I say. Morgan and Archer fall into step.

“When are we meeting Kwan?” Morgan asks. We'd arranged to see him before we left.

“Soon. We just need to pick up the

radios from Adam first.”

“So, this is really it?” Morgan’s green eyes, a few shades lighter than my own, narrow. “Are you sure...”

“Yes, I’m sure.”

“Me too,” Archer says.

“What about you, Morgan? Are you sure this is what you want to do? There’s no going back once we leave.”

She shivers, as if a goose just walked across her grave.

‘I’m sure,’ she says. “There’s too much death here, too many memories. I’d want to leave anyway, even if it wasn’t with you guys.” She grins, shaking off the vestige of sadness. “You just happen to have got lucky.”

Adam secrets us into his new base of operations. The radios are high-tech, they were used by NUSA to stay in comms with Eric Dane when he

was trying to hunt down the Resistance, and are far more effective than anything we've ever used before.

"As soon as things have settled, I'll allocate you a technician," he says. "And a navigator."

"Send anyone you find straight here. If you need me to send a rendezvous team, I'm happy to do it." He knows that I want to stay as far away from Chicago as possible.

"We will."

"Then God Speed." Adam shakes my hand again and we make our way back to the Humvee.

Chapter 4

It's Archer who spots Rebecca near the edge of the woods. She's with Aidan and the children, and the sight

of Brooke is like a punch to the gut. We give them a wide berth, and walk slowly through the trees, the dappled sunlight lighting our path.

We find Kwan exactly where he said he'd be, in a small glade under a canopy of trees.

He gets to his feet as we approach. "What took you so long?"

"The Bowman here is slower than Henry, I hope he doesn't hold me back," I say. "How was my funeral?"

"Awful. She's broken."

"I know - I was watching." My mouth feels dry as I pose the next question. "Who's lying in my grave?"

"The NUSA soldier who really did die in that explosion. Nobody will ever know - he was burned so badly."

Kwan gives me a long look, one that tells me he's going to make one last ditch effort to change my mind,

and I mentally prepare myself.

“I still think this is cruel,” he says.

“You gave me your word,” I remind him.

“I will never reveal your secret, Reed, but I wonder if you will not regret the choice that you are making. You love her. To leave her will destroy you.”

“To stay would destroy us both,” I reply. I can't help myself as I turn to where the blue of Rebecca's t-shirt is just visible through the trees. Morgan and Archer have gone still, barely breathing.

“I don't understand why, after everything, you would leave without a fight.”

I smile at that. “You forget that I fell in love with Rebecca long before this war made her what she is today. I fooled myself for a while that she

loved me back, but I was only ever intimate with the woman who had already been hurt beyond repair by the cause that she believed in. The girl that I fell in love with – the real Rebecca beneath it all – she never loved me. Her heart belonged to him the whole time. She just locked it up, buried it in the deepest part of her – the part that could only return when her mission was complete. Aidan is the one.” I draw in a steadying breath. “And yet, despite everything, Rebecca will never be able to choose. She cannot bear to hurt either of us, it goes against her very nature. She is too good, too selfless. It will tear her up inside, and ultimately destroy us all.”

Kwan pauses, scuffing at the leaves at his feet. “How can you be so sure?”

“Because I know her better than

she knows herself. And," I add, though it pains me to do, "I asked her once if she could choose. She tried to hide it, but in that moment, I saw the truth."

Kwan doesn't say anything, but I suspect deep down he knows I'm right. "She has done enough. She has sacrificed enough. It's time for her to be happy. With Alex, and with *him*."

"She will take a long time to heal," Kwan points out, "to get over the anguish of losing you. She is not coping well."

"But she *will* get over it," I reply pointedly.

"What about Brooke? She is, after all, your child."

I smile again, knowing exactly what he's trying to do.

"She will stay behind. She doesn't know who I am and she is happiest here, with them. To take her with me

would be a purely selfish act and I won't do that to her, no matter how difficult the alternative. Besides, Rebecca will take care of her." This time, my smile is more genuine. "It's my final punishment for Braveheart over there. Brooke is the part of me that I leave behind, the part of me that she will always love and hold dear to her heart."

Kwan nods, once, twice, and then he steps forward, offering his hand.

"It has been an honour and a privilege to know you."

"Same here," I drawl, taking his hand and shaking it. "I hope our paths cross again someday. Take care of her," I add.

"She can take care of herself."

"That ain't no lie," I agree, and then I take one last look at her and shut my heart.

Morgan and Archer say their goodbyes, Morgan taking longer than I expect, as she hugs Kwan so tightly I doubt he's able to breathe.

"All right, all right, let's get this show on the road! Come on, Trouble!" Morgan quickly releases Kwan and jogs after me.

"I hope you're not going to become a bossy boots now that you're in charge," Morgan teases as we walk back to the Humvee.

"Oh, you bet your ass I am," I tease, poking her ribs. "And just so you all know, I'm driving."

THE END.