

Ray pressed himself up against the outer wall of the complex, lurking in the shadows as the sentries passed. Evenly matched with him height-wise at 7' tall, the lizard-men walked in pairs, carrying bayonet-tipped rifles and talking boredly between themselves as they went by. The rabbit held still until they were out of sight, then slunk along the side of the wall away from the main gate. Once he was far enough away from the better-scrutinized parts of the complex, he pressed his ear against the wall and listened carefully. There was an insect crawling on the other side of the wall, but aside from that, the inside of the complex appeared to be still.

Flinging a grappling hook up over the edge of the wall, he hastily hauled himself up over the masonry. He was just about to leap down on the other side when he caught sight of a guard stationed right below him. He froze, cursing the reptile's nearly silent breathing, and took a second to regain his balance before dropping down right behind the sentry. His knife glinted as his hand came down around the guard's muzzle. A muffled gurgling noise came from the guard, and then Ray lowered him silently to the ground. Donning the sentry's hat to conceal his ears and cast shadow over his nose—far too short by reptilian standards—he held very still and glanced side-to-side to make sure nobody had seen him.

Okay, I'm in, he thought, satisfied.

Grabbing the sentry's gun and adopting the same swaggering gait of the reptilian soldiers, he began walking purposefully around the compound, trying to locate his objective. He'd dyed his normally snow-white fur olive drab to match the coloration of over half the enemy soldiers, and with a lean build and the hat and gun he'd pillaged, he looked at first glance just like anybody else. The only particularly notable difference was the absence of a tail, but there were enough soldiers in the compound who had lost theirs in battle that most people didn't even give him a second thought.

He spent the better part of an hour surveying the complex before he finally found what he was looking for: a large building about the size of an airplane hangar with a wooden sign painted over the door that read W.Y.V.E.R.N.

He kicked himself the minute he saw it for not finding it faster: the reptiles hadn't figured out the trick to aerial combat, so the massive building obviously did not serve the same purpose as its airplane-housing counterparts back home. No, there was only one thing the lizard-folk were working on that required a building that big. Where Ray's people had focused on technology and training—better guns, better tactics, air and sea superiority—the lizards had poured all their R&D into inventing a race of super-soldiers, and the Warfare capacitY Versatility Enhancement Research iNitiative (W.Y.V.E.R.N. for short) was the agency running it. Those so-called super-soldiers were the *only* thing big enough to command such a large building.

The organization had not left any detail to chance. The result was a genetically modified, flying, fire-breathing monstrosity two or three times the size of an ordinary reptile, ridiculously strong, impossibly fast and agile by anybody's standards but *particularly* alarming given its size, and—worst of all—endowed with nigh-obscene bullet-carrying capacity. Ray thought grimly of the one and only time he had seen them in action: during the massacre and razing to the ground of Icedl, his childhood village. One of the giant reptiles had shrugged off an entire case's worth of machine gun bullets, and then the gloss-black, 20-foot-tall behemoth had smirked, grabbed a tank by the turret, and hammer-thrown it into a nearby church. Ray's lip curled angrily, remembering the sight of buildings he'd grown up in being burned to the ground by jets of flame out of the super-soldiers' mouths, the screams of families he'd known his whole life as their loved ones were crushed underfoot or flung to their death by a whipping tail.

He shook his head. Now was not the time to think about all that; he'd have his revenge soon enough as long as he kept his wits about him. That cool-headedness under fire had earned him the nickname "Death Machine" and was the main reason his superiors had agreed to let him come when his motivation was so obviously personal. The other reason was, he threatened to go with or without their permission, and owning his own plane meant there was little they could do to stop him short of shooting him down themselves.

Putting all those thoughts out of his mind, the Death Machine walked up to the building, skirted around the sides of it, and then slipped into a back entrance. The second he was inside, he looked around, found some exposed rafters, and grappling-hooked his way up to them so he could observe without being observed himself. The space below had been subdivided into labs, offices, and warehouse space by means of ten-foot walls far below him. There was, however, one particularly high wall that divided the building in half

length-wise. The place was relatively deserted—unsurprising given the late hour—save for one impossible-to-miss exception on the other side of that wall.

Ray leapt nimbly from one rafter to the next, keeping his eyes on his emerald-green target. As he positioned himself directly above the oversized wall, his quarry came into full view. Sprawled on his back on an immense bed, the 20-foot-tall wyvern was attempting to pleasure himself. Though perhaps not the most awe-inspiring activity, it was easy to see how the lizard-folk had quickly come to regard the super-soldiers as some kind of mythical gods among men. From this position, the creature's powerful, bulging thighs and calves, rippling abs, and meaty pecs and biceps were on full display. From head to toe, the creature's skin reflected metallic, emerald-green, a bold, ostentatious look that would have made him stand out in a crowd. Even if he hadn't been towering over it, his brilliant coloration was a far cry from the dull earth tones of his forebears. His long neck, ridged with a row of saw blade-like dorsal fins, was curved into a long arch to let him see what he was doing. His face looked almost canine, with a prominent, bulbous nose and wide mouth with a tooth arrangement not unlike that of a German shepherd. His forehead was long, flat, and sloped up to a pair of short, straight, backwards-pointing horns. His yellow eyes were set under deep brows that gave him an austere look even while engaged in his present activity.

One wing was flopped partially open while the other was folded in on itself as he grasped his erect, three-foot-long dick awkwardly with the three finger-like claws at the tip of his wing. Lacking anything resembling a thumb, he was obviously having trouble, and his girthy malehood, freed from its sheath, was straining in frustration from its root above a smooth scrotum about a foot in diameter. His three-clawed feet alternately squeezed closed and stretched wide as he pleased himself, and his tail, some twenty feet long in its own right, periodically flicked this way and that, occasionally slamming into the wall and leaving yet more holes in the masonry that already looked like a well-used dart board.

"Ugh, this was so much easier when I had hands!" he snarled, twisting his hips and adjusting his grip for better effect but without success.

Recognizing the significance of the statement, Ray raised his eyebrows and nodded faintly to himself.

Given their ability to withstand so much damage, the super-soldiers had initially been believed invincible, but a scientist in the W.Y.V.E.R.N. program had come forward with what he claimed was a weakness, saying that he could no longer support the reptiles' cause after hearing of the heartless destruction of a village with no military presence—Ray had only been in the area visiting relatives—and inhabited only by innocent, unarmed civilians. The mammalian defense ministry had rightly been suspicious but had passed the information along to Ray anyway on the chance it was indeed correct. In subsequent interrogations and interviews, they had learned the location of the program's headquarters as well as some details as to how the program worked. Now inside the compound and looking at one of the super-soldiers with his own eyes, Ray could personally confirm that the location intel was correct, and if the super-soldier had indeed been modified from regular troops, then that confirmed the other piece. Hopefully that meant that the original piece of information could also be relied upon, and Ray smirked to himself, watching the wyvern below, whose movements had managed to make the comically tiny dog tags around his neck jingle.

Be careful how you handle that, the rabbit thought grimly. *You might hurt yourself.*

He was tempted, given the circumstances, to put off locating the others and to take this one out immediately while he had the chance. But just as he was about to lower himself down behind the wyvern, a loud commotion outside caught his attention, and he whipped his head in the direction of the noise. The wyvern himself seemed not to notice or not to care, but Ray was already halfway across the building, leaping rafter-to-rafter in search of the source of the sound.

Reaching the far end of the building, he peered out of a gable vent and did a double-take. Two super-soldiers, one ruby-red and one sapphire-blue, were locked in an arm-wrestling contest, using an overturned transport truck as a table to rest their elbows on. A large group of soldiers had gathered around the pair, egging them on. The blue one's face was pulled back in a furious grimace as the red one's eyes flashed with impending triumph. All of a sudden, the blue one let out a sharp yell, his pectoral muscles bulged, and he slammed the red one's wrist down on the truck. Whoops and hollers erupted from the crowd.

"Aww, don't be such a sore loser," the blue one taunted the red one. "You *always* win; it's about time I won one for a change!"

"You only won because I *let* you win," the red one snapped.

"Come *on*, bro; I'll beat you again," the blue one challenged.

"You're on!" the red one snarled.

They squared off and put their elbows on the truck again, and clasped hands as the crowd roared in approval.

"Ten on Blue!" someone yelled.

"I'll take that bet!" someone else called.

"I've got twenty on—"

The shouts abruptly ended with a collective gasp. The competitors, sensing the sudden silence, whipped their heads to look as the final super-soldier crossed his hand-claws over his obsidian chest and glowered, his mood the only thing darker than his scales.

"I believe *you* two are supposed to be patrolling," he said, his expression icy. "Quit debasing yourselves like tittering hussies. The people need symbols of strength and virtue, not two juveniles engaging in dick-measuring." Turning, he glared at the other troops. "The rest of you, get back to your posts. This isn't recreation hour!" he snapped.

The crowd dispersed rapidly, leaving only the two super-soldiers looking very embarrassed.

Interesting, thought Ray. *They really are just like any other twenty-something jarhead.*

His eyes narrowed, glaring at the black one, who had given the other two one final reproving scowl before turning and walking back to his own post.

Except that one. He seems to have some authority around here.

"I *told* you we should have waited until he was asleep," Blue hissed to Red as they trudged off towards their posts.

Ray did a double-take. *They sleep? Hmm...*

He nodded to himself. This was all useful intel; he could use it against them. And, now that he had located all four of his targets, he could get down to the *real* work. Glancing over his shoulder and finding the green wyvern in the same place as before, he quickly retraced his steps, hopping from rafter to rafter and perching himself right over the wyvern's bed.

Taking a roll of recently-invented tape from one hip and a grenade from the other, he slipped his thumb through the loop on the pin, timed his movements to the motions of the wyvern's claw-hands, and then jumped down. He landed on the wyvern's chest. The wyvern gasped in shock, the air momentarily knocked out of him. Before he could react, Ray yanked the pin from the grenade, grasped the explosive in his hand, and punched into the wyvern's urethra for all he was worth. The wyvern's lips parted much easier than Ray expected, and the force of his punch drove his hand and the grenade all the way down the super-soldier's piss-slit up to the shoulder.

Completely blind-sighted by the attack, the wyvern flailed and started to yell, but Ray yanked his arm out of the reptile's dick, pulled off a length of tape, and clamped it around the reptile's snout.

"Rest in pieces, you piece of shit," Ray growled, looking the oversized soldier in the eyes. "This is for *Icied!*"

The flicker of recognition and resulting horror sparked in the wyvern's eyes just as Ray leapt off the bed, tucked and rolled, and took cover on the other side of the wall.

The grenade exploded, launching pieces of shrapnel into the wyvern's oversized cock. Slivers of jagged metal sliced, tore, and ripped their way through the spongy tissue while scalding heat seared what was left, cooking it from the inside out. Blood erupted from the wyvern's urethra, and seconds later, his penis exploded, tiny fragments of flesh and vasculature joining the flying metal and texturing the wall with red splatter.

Nodding grimly in satisfaction, Ray got to his feet and strode into the room, fully expecting the wyvern to be dead. He gasped and ducked just in time as a flailing tail whizzed an inch above his head, slammed into the wall, and knocked a hole the size of a microwave into it. Confused, he leapt behind the wall and peered in, watching as the wyvern's body lurched this way and that, wracked by sharp muscle spasms. A sharp screech emanated from the emerald nostrils, rising in pitch and volume as the muscle spasms grew more and more violent. The shock of one such spasm threw the wyvern off the bed, and a sharp *crack* echoed in the room as his spine wrenched itself so badly that it erupted from his back. Blood gushed from what remained of the wyvern's cock—gnarled and tattered like a splintered tree—and joined rivers of blood from his anus, eyes, nose, mouth, and ears.

The shrieking continued, joined by a soft hissing noise as blood began to spray out of the wyvern's pores like spray paint, filling the room with a fine mist. The agonized creature's eyes bulged, his wings jerking this way and that, catching and tearing on a nearby table. His tail continued bashing its way around the room out of control before the muscles abruptly locked up, strained, and then bent it at 90 degrees across a single vertebra. There was a *snap*, and the tip beyond the bend went limp, flying like a flail as the base resumed its erratic spasming.

The wyvern still had not died, and as Ray watched with a mixed sense of shock and karmic justice, the wyvern's foot snapped upward, arced towards his face, and caught him in the eye. The screaming continued as the long, sharp claw got stuck in his eye socket.

The reptile's body flopped to the side, knocking the legs out from under the bed in the process and momentarily pinning his tail before it erupted and launched the bed through the far wall, crashing into a lab and breaking countless beakers, test tubes, and other glassware.

With another sharp jerk, the wyvern's leg pulled free of his face, ripping open his skull in the process and striping the rafters with a line of blood and brains. The screaming and motion abruptly ceased, and the room was suddenly deathly still.

Ray suddenly gasped, realizing he'd been holding his breath. Hearing a commotion outside, he flung his grappling hook up into the rafters, hauled himself up, and pressed himself against the underside of the roof, not daring to breathe.

"What the *shit?! a voice* cried, horrified.

Below Ray, a lizard-soldier collapsed to his knees in a pool of blood, his jaw gaping in dismay and disbelief. Several others rushed in and practically fell over from shock.

Just then, a fireball erupted from the corpse's groin, filled the room, and flung the soldiers into the walls, killing them on impact. Ray put up his arm to shield his face from the blast. When the heat at last subsided, he moved his arm out of the way and gasped. Nothing remained of the green wyvern but a black pockmark on the concrete. The explosion had blown the rest of the tall wall out, and the broken glass in the adjoining lab had been fused into a twisted, horrific mass.

They did not tell me that was part of the deal, he thought. *Maybe it's a perk*, he added with grim satisfaction.

As more soldiers rushed in to investigate what had happened, Ray used the mass confusion to his advantage and slipped out the back door. Getting far enough away from the building to have plausible deniability as to whether he'd heard the explosion or not, he made a wide detour, made his way back to where he'd last seen the other super-soldiers, and tracked the first of them to his post.

He found the blue super-soldier guarding a remote gate far away from the excitement. So far, in fact, that the blue guy seemed to be dozing. Leaning against the wall, his long neck drooping, his eyes were closed and his chest was moving slowly in and out.

It can't be this easy, Ray thought, shaking his head in disgust. *Just goes to show: you can give a reptile superpowers, and he'll still just be a dumb lizard.*

He was not about to complain, though. Looking around to make sure the coast was clear, he took his gun and casually walked up close to the sleeping giant. Even with Ray standing up, the super-soldier's balls were still out of reach above his head. With one more glance around, he shouldered his gun, aimed, and shot off two rounds in quick succession.

The Goliath stirred, seemingly more from the noise than from any particular pain. By the time he looked down, Ray had vanished into a nearby storage shed, but not before observing with satisfaction that both bullets had pierced, penetrated, and blown out the top of the wyvern's scrotum.

The wyvern looked down and did a double-take.

"My *nuts!*" he screamed. "What happened to my nuts?!"

His body was suddenly wracked by a sharp muscle spasm that launched him into the air. With every muscle still locked up, he couldn't catch himself on landing and fell on his face before flopping to his side. His tail thrashed, crashing into the wall with a sickening *snap* that broke the appendage in half and knocked several bricks out from under the bottom of the wall. His body twitched again, and his foot followed his tail, slamming into the wall with a horrendous *crunch* that made even Ray cringe. Blood began to spurt from the wyvern's penis like a red geyser to mark his location. A scream rose in his throat as the skin on his sheath began to wither and flake off in layers. The first few layers looked just like dry skin, but as the layers deepened, the skin covering his blood vessels began to flake away, too, and blood began to seep down his groin. As his sheath continued to slough off once-healthy skin, it began to expose his cock, which to Ray's astonishment had been doing the exact same thing. When the last of the creature's sheath vanished, all the loosened penile flesh dropped to the ground like snowflakes, exposing the porous, spongy tissue underneath. Blood gushed from all these pores, and the wyvern's voice was a never-ending, piteous wail. The holes where the bullets had pierced had likewise begun to run with blood, and it gushed thickly down the wyvern's inner thighs, pooling on the ground below him.

Ray cringed, thinking for a split-second that it might have been kinder to cut the beast's cock off entirely rather than leaving him to suffer like that. But the image flashed into his head of that same super-soldier burning to the ground the elementary school where Ray had started his schooling. His eyes narrowed, and his lip curled into a sneer.

Let the fucker suffer.

The wyvern's shouting had attracted the attention of nearby soldiers, who rushed over to see what the matter was. The unlucky few that got close enough to him were launched out of the compound as his tail abruptly flicked and slammed into them. The rest witnessed as his neck contorted itself into grotesque ways, eventually snapping itself right at the base of his shoulders. Flopping on the ground, it looked like an eel whose tail was caught, thrashing frantically yet unable to get free.

All the while, his penis continued to disintegrate before everybody's eyes, the spongy tissue eventually eroding away to leave nothing but a bleeding piss-tube. As Ray watched the wyvern's urethra slowly dissolving, he suddenly gasped.

It's like a lit fuse.

Scrambling, he got to the back of the storage shed and barricaded himself behind some pallets of materiel. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw something red and brilliant go past the doorway.

"Little bro!" the red wyvern's voice cried. "My gosh! What the hell is happening?! Who did this to—"

BOOM!

There was a clatter of bodies raining down as the soldiers near the dead wyvern flew through the air.

CRASH!

The entire roof of the shed was taken off as the red wyvern came down, sprawling on the ground. Dazed, he got to his feet with his tail thrashing and destroying anything within reach, including hurling his fellow soldiers into walls, killing them instantly.

"Who the *hell* killed my brother?!" he screamed, his voice deafening. "Come out, you coward, and fight me!"

Shaking off the tinnitus that started when the blue wyvern's groin exploded, Ray got to his feet amid the ruined shed. Dusting himself off and checking for broken bones, he called up to the red wyvern.

"Down here, you piece of shit!" he yelled.

The wyvern's head whipped around, his pupils constricted to slits, and he lunged at Ray.

"A *mamma!* You fucking *coward!* That was my brother!" he roared, whipping his tail around in a wide arc.

Ray hit the ground, and the super-soldier's tail whisked by above his head. Rolling on instinct, he narrowly escaped as the insanely fast appendage changed course, whipped into the air, and came down on top of the spot where he had just been. Wood crunched and splintered under the heavy, club-like tail.

"You call *me* a coward?" Ray retorted, shouldering his gun and firing off a couple of rounds aimed at the wyvern's crotch. "You and your *brothers* attacked a village of innocent civilians and burned the place to the ground! How cowardly is it to attack a town that can't fight back?"

He leapt up onto a crate, parkour-jumped his way up to the shed's roof, and leapt towards the wyvern, his dagger glinting.

"They were mammal *scum* like you, no better than vermin to be destroyed beneath my foot!"

Ray yelled out as the wyvern's tail caught him mid-jump. It was just a glancing blow, but it sent him hurtling towards the ground nevertheless. Tucking and rolling at the last second, he scurried out of range of the wyvern's tail, shouldered his gun, and popped off a few more rounds.

"Augh!" the wyvern cried, holding his eye.

Do it now!

Ray sprinted towards the wyvern, yelled, leapt, and grabbed the super-soldier's red scrotum at the base. Wrapping his arms around the fleshy bag and holding on for dear life, he swung his legs up to press them into the small of the wyvern's back. Using his left arm around the wyvern's nut-sack in a vise-like grip to hold himself in place, he used his right hand to begin stabbing the sack under him over and over again.

"Oh, *shit!*" the wyvern screamed, instinctively grabbing his groin.

Ray moved his head out of the way just in time to avoid getting caught in the wyvern's claws, then continued stabbing, shifting his focus to the other side of the wyvern's scrotum. The wyvern began clawing at his crotch, and it was all Ray could do to stay clear of the flailing appendages. As the red menace's claws closed in on him, he let go, threw his weight behind his dagger, and plunged it into the top of the wyvern's sheath. The wyvern screamed, his muscles locking up as the blade caught, sank in deeper, and then began to haltingly cut its way towards his balls, pulled downward by gravity and Ray's body weight. The blade caught momentarily on the tip of the wyvern's penis, buried deep inside his sheath. But the weight of the rabbit clinging to it urged the sharp edge onward, and it sliced into the wyvern's urethra and continued its descent, ripping and tearing through spongy material and striated urethral wall alike. A jagged, bloody gouge appeared in the wyvern's sheath, exposing his ruined cock, which flopped out through the gushing slit. Blood streamed out of the ripped gash, cascading like a miniature waterfall. The knife made it to the wyvern's balls, snagged on the loose skin, and then sliced through it. With nothing left to keep him aloft, Ray clutched his knife as he fell, tucked and rolled, and sprang to his feet to find cover as the wyvern took a halting step forward.

Don't worry; you won't be separated from your brother for long, he thought.

Soldiers had heard the commotion and came running.

"Get back!" the wyvern yelled. "Get back! All of you! Where is he? I get to kill him myself!"

The troops hesitated, not sure how to take what the obviously very-injured super-soldier was saying.

That proved to be a fatal mistake.

He fell to the ground, and like the other two before him, began to flail around. His tail caught several of the soldiers and ended them by slamming them into a building. His neck caught several others, impaling them on his neck-spikes and flinging them into the air. As his body writhed and lurched, bones shot through skin and blood poured everywhere. More soldiers arrived to stare, dumbfounded, at the mass carnage while Ray took cover, watching the wyvern's slit-open urethra dissolving like a fuse.

BOOM!

The explosion rocked the ground and reduced several nearby buildings to rubble. A blackened crater appeared where the red wyvern had been lying, and molten, excavated earth rained down like brown hailstones. Shouts echoed through the compound as soldiers streamed in from all over.

There are a lot fewer buildings now than there were when I got here, Ray thought as he looked for a place to hide. Scrambling to the shadows, he watched as the soldiers gathered around the latest pockmark in dismay.

There are too many of them; I'd be shot before I even set eyes on Black. Let's go back to the lab and regroup.

Following the darkened space along the perimeter of the compound wall, he made his way back to the lab, checked to make sure the coast was clear, and then slipped into the darkened warehouse.

"I expect you're feeling awfully proud of yourself."

The lights came on all at once. Ray froze.

The black wyvern fixed him with a hard look, as if trying to decide what to do with him.

"Ah, yes," Ray spat back. "You must be the head-motherfucker-in-charge. I saw you dressing down the other two a while ago."

The wyvern was silent a moment. "I find it hard to believe that someone who has never fought one of my kind before could waltz in and take out three of us back-to-back without so much a scratch on himself," he said at last, ignoring the comment. His voice swelled with pride and indignation as fire burned in his eyes. "Trenches full of machine guns cannot thwart us; *tank mortars* cannot slow our advance. We burn your pathetic villages to the ground while your *pathetic* army watches helplessly. What good are your tanks and planes against us? What chance do you stand against our glorious might?" We are, in a word, *invincible!* To you and your pathetic race, we are fucking *gods!*" The fury in his eyes cooled, and he took a more thoughtful tone. "And yet, here I am: the last of my kind. And here you are, having slain my brethren single-handedly. One or two we might chalk up to good luck, but three? That establishes a pattern." His eyes suddenly fixed Ray with a piercing gaze. "What is it that you know, Mammal? What weakness have you discovered in my impregnable defenses? Did you discover it on your own?" His eyes narrowed. "Or, did you have help?" A seething growl escaped his lips. "Yes. That's it, isn't it? There is—or was—a traitor in our midst." He nodded to himself, having cracked the code. "I look forward to torturing you until you tell me who the traitor is, and then I shall continue torturing you just for the sheer satisfaction of it until I grow bored and finally allow you to die." He licked his lips and sneered. "And then, I shall *relish* peeling that traitor's skin from his muscles, one strip at a time, and feeding it to him."

"I'm sure you would," Ray replied icily. "You seem to have a thing for slowly murdering everybody in your path. That was *you* leading the campaign at Icedl, wasn't it?"

The wyvern frowned. "I don't recall a campaign there," he replied.

Ray bristled. "Then what would you call—"

"I *do* recall an infestation that was to be cleared out there, though," the wyvern added, smirking faintly. "The mission was...an unmitigated success."

"Not *quite* unmitigated," Ray said pointedly. "I survived."

"One does not mourn having missed one ant," the wyvern replied dismissively. "One merely squashes it later on finding it. And, once you and that traitorous disgrace to my kind have been snuffed from history—once this *minor* setback has been overcome—we will rebuild our army of super-soldiers, and then?" He lowered his voice into an ominous growl. "We will sweep across your pathetic country like hellfire, raining death and destruction down upon your worthless race. Your military will watch helplessly from their bunkers as males, females, and young are slaughtered before their eyes. From the smallest village to the most advanced metropolis, *all* will fall before us to be crushed beneath our feet." He smiled coldly. "And when we are done, we will find the remnants of your churches, your schools—all of your most cherished places—and dig great pits to use as communal latrines."

Ray's stomach twisted, reminded of the cost to his people if he failed to complete his mission. Everything the wyvern was saying was exactly as the mammalian defenses had predicted.

But hearing it said with such malice and sadistic intent made his blood boil.

"Not today," he snarled, shouldering his rifle.

But before he could get a round off, the wyvern's tail launched at him, knocking the gun from his hand and nearly taking his head clean off.

"You killed three of my comrades," the black wyvern said coolly, tracking Ray's movements with machine-like precision but biding his time. "They were foolish and ill-trained. I warned Hans they were not ready, but *Dr. Ranger* insisted that only the young were eligible to undergo the metamorphosis, that it would kill anyone older. So, I volunteered. Proved him wrong, that cocky bookworm. It's only fair to warn you that I will not go down so easily."

"Mm, I should hope not. You know, it was so easy to take them out, I was beginning to think I might even be home before dawn," Ray replied. "I mean, honestly, your people actually think you guys are *gods*? I've seen better-behaved kits."

"Ah, but can a kit do this?"

The wyvern's lips pulled back, and his facial expression looked nauseous. All of a sudden, a plume of flame erupted from his mouth, hurtling towards Ray. The rabbit leapt out of the way, tucked and rolled, and then sprang up, sprinting as fast as he could as the wyvern's head tracked him, the spray of fire hot on his heels. Sensing an opportunity, Ray bounded off towards the labs.

"What the—stop this!" the wyvern snapped, stopping the stream of flames. "Stand and fight!"

"Oh, sure, *there's* a fair fight," Ray called from behind a row of file cabinets. "Fire-breathing giant versus soft, fluffy, little bunny," he sneered.

"Oh, don't sell yourself short," the wyvern taunted. "You've taken out three such giants so far. Why be bashful now?"

Catching sight of Ray, he belched out a fireball. Ray leapt out of the way, and the entire row of file cabinets burst into flames. Angered, the wyvern lashed his tail out, nearly catching Ray but instead demolishing a wall that separated two labs.

"Oh, I dunno," the rabbit called, cupping his hands around his mouth and throwing his voice into the newly-exposed lab space. "I guess I just don't think I'm up to the task of taking on a *competent*, fire-breathing giant such as yourself."

The wyvern's head turned in the direction of the sound. Something glinted from the far lab. A cruel smile crossed his lips as he advanced.

"You flatter me," he said. "Alas, there are no brownie points for that."

Without warning, he fired a stream of flames into the lab, immolating everything inside. The glass shattered and melted, and the experiments in progress vaporized to ashes. This went on for over a minute before the wyvern finally let up. Panting from the exertion of so much fire-breathing, he took a moment to catch his breath.

"And *that*," he said, "is how you end the mammalian pestilence."

"Is it?"

Incredulous, tried, and frustrated, the wyvern whirled his head to look behind him, but there was nothing there. Moving his flexible neck over the wrecked lab, he saw no sign of the intruder.

"The thing I wonder, is—"

The voice came from directly below him. He moved his head to look just as the rabbit's grappling hook flew upward, looped around his sheath and balls, and latched on itself.

"—do those wings even work?"

Ray tied off the end of his grapple rope to a stout anchor in the floor and then sprinted for the door. Exhausted, the wyvern lashed out at him but missed, then had to turn his body to give chase. By the time he got turned around, Ray had already opened the door and darted out.

Man, I hope this works.

Running like his life depended on it—not an inaccurate sentiment—Ray put as much distance between himself and the lab as possible amid confused shouts from the other soldiers.

Come on, Black-Bitchy, come at me! he thought as the other soldiers began to give chase.

A deafening *crash* drowned out the shouts, and the soldiers all gasped to see the wyvern erupt from the top of the lab. Trailing Ray's rope, he soared into the sky, fury in his eyes as he looked for the impudent infiltrator.

Phew Ray thought, glad the power of suggestion had worked on the hotheaded wyvern.

"MOVE!" the black beast yelled, catching sight of Ray and swooping down after him.

Soldiers dove out of the way as Ray continued sprinting for all he was worth with the wyvern closing in fast. At the last second, the rabbit jerked off to the left, and the wyvern, caught off guard, sailed past and crashed through a wall, yelling obscenities. Exhausted and running on adrenaline and endorphins, he used his momentum to climb back into the sky, locking eyes on his prey as soon as the rabbit came into view.

"Die, you little pest!" he screamed.

Ray feigned a jerk to the left, which the wyvern anticipated, but then jerked to the right, and the wyvern crashed into another building. Furious, the wyvern took off after the rabbit again, who was running back towards the lab.

"Ah, ha! I have you now!" he roared as the rabbit hit a dead-end, trapped between the wall of the lab, soldiers closing in on either side, and himself from behind. "There is no escape for you now! You can run, but you can't—"

Ray hit the deck, flattening himself out on the ground as the wyvern flew in for the kill. Had the wyvern been slightly less exhausted, a little more well-rested, or even a bit less frustrated, it would have been a killing blow. But as he sailed by, his claws grasping at air and just barely missing Ray's head, he exploded in anger.

"Motherfucker!" he screamed.

All of a sudden, something yanked backwards on his groin, and he slammed into the ground as if flung from a slingshot

"Augh!" he screamed, crashing into the lab and taking out the exterior wall and several of the interior ones with him.

Right on time, Ray thought, breathing a sigh of relief and scrambling to his feet.

Writhing on the ground, the wyvern struggled to get to his feet, but the rope, still anchored to the floor and pinned by several heavy piles of rubble across the compound, kept throwing him off balance.

"Where is he?!" he screamed. "I'll kill him!"

Blood spurted from his groin, and for the first time since crashing, he stared in horror at his scrotum. The sharp movement had driven the grappling hook into him like a fishhook, and the crash had ripped one of the hooks completely through his flesh. Another of the hooks had snared him and remained firmly embedded, and as he thrashed, it punctured one of his testes. In his exhausted, foggy mental state, he couldn't think of anything smarter or more effective to do than to keep struggling, even as doing so dug the grapple even deeper into his flesh, engaging or re-engaging all three of the hooks. Screaming, he began to kick and thrash, blindly trying to free himself. Soldiers began to rush in to try to help, but his flailing tail kept sending them flying. A foul odor flooded his nostrils as he struggled to get to his feet, and an annoying hiss began to drown out the other sounds. Yet all of that paled in comparison to the increasing pain in his

groin as his jerking movements began yanking on the well-embedded grapples, piercing his urethra, scrotum, and meatus, and ripping out bloody, shredded ribbons of flesh with each thrash.

As the light of dawn began to creep into the darkness overhead, he suddenly spied the rabbit beside his head. His eyes flashed with fury, and he pulled his lips back.

"I—wouldn't do that if I were you," the rabbit said, putting one hand to his ear and the other to his nose. "You smell that?"

The question didn't fully register with the wyvern; the only thought that went through his mind was to kill that vile creature while he had the chance. Like trying to force out a belch, he began summoning fire from deep inside of himself, knowing but not caring that he would surely pass out from the effort.

"Now, what did I just say?" Ray demanded.

The rabbit was on him in a flash, and before the exhausted reptile could piece together what was happening, his mouth was taped shut. He snarled and thrashed in fury, realizing he'd been trapped, but the rabbit had already moved well out of range of his claws.

Standing in the small, sweet spot beside the wyvern's waist where the wyvern's claws and tail could not reach him without a significant change in position, Ray reached down and grasped the grappling rope in both hands. "I think it's about time we ended this," he said grimly.

Before the super-soldier could react, the rabbit yanked hard on the grapple. It dug in and began tearing through the wyvern's sheath, cock, and scrotum, carving thick trails of flesh out of his penis, yet the resistance it met was so great that it couldn't make it all the way through. Shouting and straining with effort, Ray yanked again, dragging the embedded hooks through the wyvern's cock like a dredge on the bottom of a river. Ribbons of shredded, spongy flesh scooped from deep within the wyvern's genitals splattered to the ground while the reduced resistance allowed the straining grapple to tear long, deep holes in the little tissue that remained. The remaining tissue strained, ripped, and tore, and the grapple ripped free. The shredded, hollowed-out cock, lacking any flesh inside to keep it upright, flopped down like an empty sock.

"Now, *die*, you piece of shit," Ray panted.

The wyvern was about to retort when his muscles suddenly locked up and began to thrash on their own. The rabbit vanished from sight, and the reptile let out an anguished scream as his back bent sideways and snapped. His hips suddenly rocketed into the air, abruptly yanking on the freed hook, catching it on his scrotum, and driving it into his other testicle. Brilliant, painfully bright lights flashed before his eyes, and the sound of his own shrieking rang in his ears. His legs each bent a different way, his right shin snapping in two and the claws on his left foot abruptly kicking out to sever the rope on the grapple.

But, it was too little, too late. His vision went dark as his eyeballs rotated so far in his head that they snapped his optic nerves. Blood burbled up from his ruined groin like a weak fountain, and the air grew sticky with his aerosolized blood. All the while, that foul stench got stronger and stronger, the hiss ever-present beneath the sound of his own screams.

Abruptly, his neck snapped, and he went silent. Footsteps rushed in, then froze. The last thing he heard over that incessant hiss was the sound of one of his soldiers.

"Gas leak! Everybody get—"

KABOOM!

Ray felt the explosion in his chest from all the way across the compound. The second he'd seen the black menace start going through his death sequence, he'd high-tailed it out of there, putting as much distance between himself and the lab as he could muster. Stopping to look, he gasped and started sprinting again.

"Oh, shit!" he cried.

The explosion caught up to him and launched him into the air, carrying him clear of the compound wall by over a hundred yards. He tucked and rolled, yelling as seared skin met the rough ground. Panting, he scrambled to his feet and looked back at the wreckage. Flames and several columns of smoke licked at the sunrise. He watched for a few minutes and then he began making his way back inside. Grabbing a gun off one of the countless corpses, he shouldered it and shot anything that moved, the occasional *POP* of his

gun going off in syncopation with various pops and explosions throughout the compound and the dull roar of fires in the distance.

Making his way back to the lab, he confirmed that it was, as he expected, nothing but another black pockmark sitting atop a bare foundation. The violence of the wyvern's explosion combined with the ample gas source had obliterated the lab and everything in it. A hundred-foot-wide ring of laid-over bodies surrounded the epicenter, and all over the compound, boxes of ammunition were overheating and going off, setting new fires and causing mayhem.

I believe my work here is just about done, Ray thought to himself.

Scrounging around the bodies, he found one with a notepad in his pocket, pulled it out, and scrawled something on the page.

What was that guy's name? Oh, right.

Using a piece of debris, he put it in the center of the pad where the lab had been, and then he left.

It would be several days before an investigation team found the note:

WE CREATED GODS FOR OURSELVES, BUT THEN HE CAME AND KILLED THEM. THERE WAS ONLY ONE. OUR GODS ARE NOW BLACK SCARS ON THE GROUND; THIS BURNED-OUT SHELL IS ALL THAT REMAINS OF OUR WORK. W.Y.V.E.R.N. WAS AN UNMITIGATED FAILURE. I DIE WITH THAT BURDEN ON MY SOUL.

- DR. HANS RANGER