
THE HAMMER FIVE

by

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THE DAYS BEFORE

Sirens were all over, with the noise from the chanting crowds reaching all around the vast city. The chaos intensified as one got closer to the building which had hosted the hearing--the place Edison had unsuccessfully tried to clear his name.

Above the endless crowds of rowdy, chanting men and women, roared tens of police helicopters at low altitudes; keeping a bird's eye view on the protesters who carried posters that screamed their demands. Some of the 'cardboards' and 'metal' plates they carried read:

"EDISON MUST GO!"

"SICK AND TIRED OF CORPORATIONS!"

"ROBOTS TOO DANGEROUS FOR USE!"

“MONOPOLY ON MILITARY MUST END!”

On one of the streets closer to the building, hundreds of molotov bombs were flying across with trails of flames; exploding into huge fires close to the formations of anti-riot officers backing away. In the opposite direction, tear gas canisters flew from the officer's guns, spraying milky white, choking fumes all over as the crowds dispersed.

Through the back streets, several police squads were pursuing rioters on foot; crossing with each other as they cut through the narrow back paths, chasing them into the low cost flats, sprinting after them through the small supermarkets, and straight along the corridors.

On getting closer, some of the officers dived onto their 'targets', taking them down and wrestling with them--forcefully cuffing their hands behind their backs and forcing them on their feet.

On the same back streets, determined groups of rioters were also chasing the officers; grabbing them and forcefully snatching their weapons; stripping them of their protective clothing and beating the hell out of them.

Tires were burning on the main roads, warning shots being fired in the air to scare the crowds which persisted. More ambulances were pulling up all over as others were sped away; with paramedics attending to the casualties from both sides on the battle-torn streets

They were receiving officers with knives thrust into their chests, nursing teenagers whose limbs were broken, and carrying away the elderly who were suffocating from the tear gas.

Around the building itself, congested crowds were stressing the police line; struggling to push into the compound and get into the hearing. They had battled like that earlier in the year and successfully ended the rule of the exploitative corporations.

And this time, they would persist as well, until Edison and his company had fallen for good.

As the man himself walked out after the hearing session, the crowds intensified their efforts; causing the officers to cover him and wrestle to keep them back from the path--helping him make way towards the heavily guarded, black SUVs.

In terms of age, Edison was about sixty; a physically fit man who appeared deeply remorseful. On his head, was white hair which was well kempt, on his eyes clear glass spectacles, and on that day, he was dressed in a neat, two piece, black suit.

Towards him, the crowds continued to force their way; leaning into the path and forcing the sweating officers to draw their pistols--shooting close to their legs to scare them back--pushing Edison through the path, and into his vehicle, protecting his convoy as it drove him off.

#

"We cannot have these, machines, in our armies!" The congressman on the floor firmly stated as the members erupted; shouting and shutting each other down, vigorously discussing among themselves and dismissing each other.

"Order! Order!" The elderly speaker of the house tried to quiet them, as his voice drowned in the rising arguments which started to 'fade' as another congressman shot up and firmly spoke up.

"We cannot stop strengthening our forces because of an accident!" He stated; as about half of the members shouted in support--giving him an ear as he continued.

"We cannot have this as an excuse!" He added as the members rose again. "Did we stop using nuclear power because tragedies struck!" He questioned the congressman on the floor--as the members took the opportunity to once again rise against each other in total disagreement.

“Order in the house!” The speaker begged while violently striking the gavel close to breaking. “We would have order!” He continued to beg; as the members rose close to physical confrontation--threatening each other and cursing out loud.

Keenly and silently, The President watched as the chaos proceeded, supporting his head by the chin while sitting back on his chair. He was a serious, fairly slim man who had a strict, commanding look.

As the congressman on the floor swallowed a ball of saliva and took to the microphone ones again, the confrontations started to ‘fade’.

“Does anyone of you realize, that we are talking about armed machines that can operate themselves!” He asked them as they started again. “Dangerous robots, which have caused us the loss of thirty nine! Thirty nine innocent, young men and women who have served this country...” He proceeded through the rising chaos.

They were failing to agree on the ‘*Robotics Regulations Bill*’ - A document that sought to stop all advanced military robotics research and development--to stop their use in the armed forces, and to shut down the Armed Forces Robotics which was the biggest developer.

#

The white double doors leading into the noisy room opened outwards; with the two, serious young men in blue, official military uniforms saluting as the president walked out fast. With the president, was a group of advisors and officials walking at his pace.

To his immediate left, was a tall, older, physically strong man in a highly decorated, official military uniform; holding his cap under his arm as he walked with his commander in chief.

A step behind to the president's left was a "suited", attractive lady carrying piles of files--rushing her steps to keep up with the pace in her heels.

"With all due respect sir we cannot shut down this program, no matter what happens!" The military officer stated.

"It's out, of my hands General, Congress can't even decide on what to do, give me a break!" The President requested.

"He's right sir, we cannot lose the program? We just cannot!" One of the advisors wearing round spectaclad insisted.

"It's not, my decision to make!"

"It will have to be sir, sooner or later." The General added, as the President stopped at a door and turned to face them.

"We will wait until the voting is done..."

"But sir..."

"Then and only then will we decide on what to do!" He insisted to the officer, who had tried to interrupt him,

"Am I clear?" He asked all of them,

"Absolutely sir!" Several of them responded.

#

Inside his mansion, Edison was alone as he had always been; standing by the big window and staring at the huge, relentless crowd chanting just outside his compound.

He looked weary, his body shaky; not knowing what to think or what to do as he stared. Everything was coming down too fast. Everything he had worked for.

Everything he had become--falling down on him with a weight that threatened to crash him.

What would he do? What would he become? Edison thought about these things and more, hating to have the thoughts in his head but they were there; sticking to his mind like a leach on flesh, scarring him as he pondered all over the idea of losing his company, losing everything he had struggled for decades to build.

The nightmare started a few days earlier, after a successful mission in which forty soldiers had rescued three hostages from a heavily guarded, terrorist base in northern Iran.

They had carried out the then classified operation in the cover of darkness with the help of a *Hammer-4*--a highly advanced, military robot built by Edison's company. And as they were heading into an airbase to rotate home, a strange, unexpected, 'mysterious error' had occurred and given the robot instruction to self destruct.

The Hammer-4 suddenly had blown itself up and killed thirty six of the forty soldiers, together with all the three rescued hostages.

Families of the deceased had come forward and openly blamed the deaths on Edison's company which was responsible for building the machines--a move that had drawn enormous public interest and support.

Following the events and the relentless public pressure, investigations and hearings had been carried out--determining that the robots were indeed a danger. And that though their service was invaluable, they posed a security risk--a conclusion that had forced members of congress to put forward a bill that sought to completely shut down all military robotics development and use--a move that would directly eliminate Edison's company.

A single, old, cracked and dusty road connected the city into the endless, dryness; extending from the sparsely populated residential area, from which one could notice as the city's structures gradually grew into the extremely tall, sky crappers standing in what was a misty sky. It was Edison's home city. The place he had lived all his life.

Straight through the hot earth, the road cut its way, and about two miles along its course, there stood a lone gas station at its side.

Its metal frames and surfaces were eaten away by rust, its dusty fuel dispensers licking, with the cracked windows of the shop and the office fogged with sand.

The dusty shelves inside the station's shop were almost empty, facing the counter in front of which sat a grey haired fat man reading the day's paper through his spectacles. One mile below the ground under the man's feet, through the barren earth under the gas station, stood the state of the art, well lit facility--a strong, ten stories, concrete and steel structure.

Through the centre of the entire structure, ran a cylindrical space, at the bottom of which the initials *A.F.R* were painted together with the *logo* on the white-tile floor.

All around the cylindrical space, ran a network of black, polished steel stairs; which connected all the corridors on the ten floors to the ground floor. Cylindrical, tinted glass elevators also ran vertically on the sides of the open centre; connecting the various departments and sections inside the building which was The Armed Forces Robotics--Edison's personal creation.

The smell of cables, steel, and machinery was traceable in the constantly purified air; which was being smoothly fanned into the offices and corridors, through which men and women in white coats and *identification tags* over their necks were rushing about busily.

While moving through the steel walkways in the corridors of the sixth floor, one could see inside the various, busy *sections* through the glass walls: as the tens of technicians moved miles of coiled cables and mechanical parts on big, steel trolleys into one of the huge *Assembly Halls*.

Inside the *Assembly Halls* were rows and rows of assembly lines, which had complicated, advanced machinery with which keen 'nerds' worked on the various, insanely complex, robot parts.

In a restricted section somewhere on the sixth floor, was the *Testing Area*; a vast hall inside of which an army of technicians were putting seven hundred of the latest generation robots--*The Hammer-5s*--through their paces.

Each of the robots was about the height of a military truck, standing on their complicated 'limbs' in their designated spots across the hall as the technicians worked on them.

Their polished titanium frames were partially visible under their cream white, hardened steel 'covering'--with state of the art, black glass covering their Heads Up Displays (HUDs).

Firmly attached on their big, 'bodies', were all kinds of combat equipment and machinery--Everything from state of the art radar systems and radio jammers, to rocket pods and heavy machine gun cannons. They were complicated machines that looked both beautiful and very deadly, each with the name *Hammer-5* and the armed forces robotics *logo* clearly inscribed on the same spot on their right limbs.

Across the hall's floor, ran hundreds of cables, connecting the robots to the many huge, super computers inside the *Testing Control Room*, which was separated from the hall by a glass wall. And inside the *control room*, was another team of up to fifty technicians--who were very keen on their monitors as they repeatedly tested the software running the machines.

At one of the robots, a slim bodied scientist in plain glass spectacles and an unbuttoned lab coat was standing on a stool. Very carefully attaching small welds to a circuit board at the robot's, open 'head side' by the use of a small, welding tool.

In general appearance, he appeared 'humble', with short yellow hair on his head, and wide, almost flat shoulders connecting to his neck. Down to his left side close to the same robot's lower limb, was a technician by the name of Briton, who was re-wiring another complex circuit using the same type of welding tool. Taller than his colleague, Briton was a younger technician who wore black-framed spectacles.

Through its flickering, black tinted Heads Up Display (HUD), the robot attempted to scan their faces and everything else around them; it's HUD becoming clearer as the scientists continued to weld, and finally settling into a crisp, high definition, detailed display.

It ran quick scans of everything on its line of sight; including the scientist's identification tag--"Dr. Stephens" it displayed - a man who was about forty years old but looked a little younger.

"What do you think happened?" Briton asked Stephens while working.

"Had to be the circuit boards." Stephens relied, "Must have..." He paused his answer as he was carefully split a wire from the circuit board, "... sent some kind of charge into the control matrix." He completed after splitting the wire, "Which got an overload, and initiated self destruct, somehow."

"Maybe it was the software?" Briton suggested, "Either way, how could something like that just happen?" He wondered as he paused, "I mean, there's like, ten, hard wired reasons for a robot to do that? How does it just blow up without any one of them?" He wondered.

"Well, there's no way to find out now, the damn thing's wreckage." Stephens stated as he continued to work, with Briton thinking about it.

“Could it be DoD?” He asked cautiously after a while.

“Why would they do that?” Stephens asked him back while working.

“I don’t know, just came to me. Still can’t believe they’re going it all down.”

“We don’t know that yet.” Stephens reminded him.

“You really think so?” Briton continued, as Stephens paused and looked down at him,

“Look, we work until the last minute, until they tell us we got to stop.” He told Briton and then turned back to work, “That’s all I know.” He finished his answer as Briton shrugged and joined him.

#

By mid-morning the next day, the voting on the bill was coming to a close. And having passed in the House of Representatives earlier that morning, it was now up to the senate. All over the streets outside, the citizens were following the proceedings on the big city screens; keen on the process that had to meet their expectations, failure to which they were more than willing to riot again.

Minutes later, the last vote was cast and the counting began; with a silence sweeping the streets as the speaker of the senate took to the microphone.

“Total votes cast, were one hundred.” He paused for some time, “Forty eight voted nay-,” most of senators and the crowds in the streets supportively affirming as he proceeded, “-and fifty two voted aye, the bill, passes.” He concluded.

By that evening, the president had signed it into law and it was all over; no more military robotics development. No more Armed Forced Robotics and by extension, no more Edison.

#

Helplessly, Edison walked slowly all over his large living room; almost breaking down in tears as his head started to ache. He could not bear the news; and in his mind, all that crossed was his falling. He had risen only to fall, committed decades of sleepless nights in back breaking work for it to end by some vote in a single day.

He hated it; hating his situation as he felt the feelings of frustration and rejection come back into his conscience. Feeling awful as they spread all through his nerves and consume him ones again.

Almost instantly, it all started to come back to him. What he had battled to prove wrong and escape had finally caught up with him. And in that moment, he became sure that it was true; what his father had constantly told him, it had been true all the while.

It was true when the pressures of life took his mother's life by her own hand, when he was constantly rejected and abused by his peers throughout his school days, and when he got fired three times from the robotics firms he had begged to work for; living on charity before finding his footing and through a tough mental struggle, started his own company - Armed Forces Robotics. It was all true.

"You will never amount to anything you fool! And no one will truly care about you!" His father had repeatedly insisted to him from the time he was five, swearing while whipping him with their VCR's AV cables.

"No matter where you run, no matter what you achieve, no matter who you become, you will never, ever, be worthy, you hear me? You will remain the biggest mistake life has ever made, and no one will ever care for you." He had repeatedly crashed him with words all through his early years, sometimes slapping him around while forcing him to affirm them to himself.

And so that night in that dark room, Edison sat on the sofa with eyes red with tears; holding a glass of wine as he stared at the wood cracking up into the warming flames which rose into the chimney.

Deeply, he thought to himself; playing the events of his life as he hated them. Hating the fact that everyone else had rejoiced upon his suffering; and that somehow, the world around him always seemed better whenever he was in pain.

Enough, Edison finally decided. Enough with trying to make himself acceptable; enough of trying to hold on and watch as 'everyone else' celebrated and rejoiced his suffering. Deciding that 'they' had taken enough from him and perhaps, it was time that he took something back. It was time he hurt 'them' like 'they' had hurt him. That it was time he made 'them' realize that he too was a person; that he showed them who he truly was - a force more powerful than they could ever imagine.

The next morning, Edison was found dead on his sofa; with the postmortem indicating that a strange kind of poison had caused him to suffocate, something he had consumed in the wine he had served himself.

By the evening of the day, almost everyone had forgotten the news of his passing. He was a secretive man without a family and there was not much about him the public cared to know, except the fact that his now unwanted creations had taken thirty nine innocent lives which he paid with his own.

#

Inside the clean, cold, Indian themed building was a faint smell of ash in the air; a building inside of which Edison's executors followed his reed casket as it made its way towards the lower, warmer, wider room.

Gently, the Indian attendants shut the thick doors behind as his casket was eased into the chamber. And when all was ready, all of them witnessed quietly as the box went up in flames, marking the end of Edison, at least for that moment in time.

#

K.I.A

The orange, evening sun was fading over the few clouds, above which the giant, four-engine C-19 military plane was swiftly 'dropping' in altitude. Inside its bay was a special team of five soldiers was; members of a detachment that was part the 5th group of the Army's Special Forces Airborne, calling themselves '*The Brothers of Mercy*'.

Their heads were covered with black beanies; dressed in black, tight, thick fabric, short sleeved t-shirts, on top of which they were strapping heavily loaded, black utility vests - which matched their loaded, black utility trousers.

The Team Sergeant was a Master Sergeant (MSG) by the name of Simon, about thirty seven in age; a physically strong, serious, "hard" looking man who had a goatee, and back flowing hair which reached his neck.

His special team included: Sergeant First Class Smoky, an equally strong, serious man about thirty five in age who was gearing up behind him. Smoky was the team's weapons sergeant, who had a tattoo of a military knife on the left side of his neck.

Behind Simon on Smoky's side, was a thirty three year old Staff Sergeant by the name of Samson; who was the team's communications sergeant, standing next to a strong, bearded Staff Sergeant by the name of Rusty who was the medical sergeant. He was about thirty three, and also gearing up next to him, was his assistant Sergeant First Class Dante; who was a young soldier about twenty five in age.

After loading up, the soldiers quickly set the timers on their big, circular wrist watches, after which they picked up their enormous, black, bags--strapping on their backs as one of the pilots opened the bay door.

"Seven thousand feet and dropping! Go! Go! Go!" He instructed as the soldiers dived out the airplane in quick succession--spreading their arms and legs as they gracefully fell through the thin air in formation.

Quickly and smoothly, they 'fell' through the clouds; emerging under them and dropping through the clear air. And as they fell, a brown, hilly landscape gradually came into view very far beneath them; and from the altitude, they could make out the village with mud houses congested on top of a highly uneven, hilly terrain close to a small waterfall.

'Three thousand feet'--Their watches beeped at them; after which they deployed their parachutes and slowed and controlled their descent towards what was a depression just next to the village.

To arrest their momentum, the soldiers ran for a few meters as their boots hit the ground; before stopping and quickly disconnecting the parachute sections from the backpack sections of the bags--Folding and stashing them before rallying close to Simon at the edge of the depression.

From their bags, they pulled out the parts and assembled their heavy, automatic, personally customized riffles; loading up and cocking them, carrying their back packs and filling up all their pockets with ammunition.

"Command do you read? Over?" Simon whispered through his earpiece into the communication network (*Comm.*).

#

“Copy that Team Sergeant, we read you loud and clear.” confirmed a strong, forty year old officer in a two star combat uniform--a Major General by the name of Rod Powers, who was personally supervising the operation from a busy control center inside MacDill Air force Base.

“We should have you on our satellite right about now!” He added, as the technicians ‘brought’ the high definition, well labeled satellite image of the area on the big screen--which helped the other monitors to light the otherwise dark room.

It showed positions of the team with that of the very many serious men in dresses and head wraps; who were mostly armed with customized, Hungarian AKM-63 assault rifles, and carrying RPG-2 rocket launchers on their backs. They were spreading out and taking ‘look out positions’ all over the village which was dead empty.

“Is that him?” The Major General asked - referring to the bushy haired man heading towards a big hut at the village centre. He had just exited a truck from which pairs of similarly dressed men were unloading weapon caskets and following him under the cover of darkness.

“Positive. Its him.” assured a female officer from her station.

“Team Sergeant be advised, we’ve got visual confirmation that Mr. Sharif himself is in the area. We’ve got heavily armed lookouts taking positions all over the village. You are cleared hot. Get in and find that weapon. Powers out!” He instructed; getting off the *comm.* and picking up a cup of coffee as he looked at the screen.

#

The highly uneven ground on which the village sat rose and fell very irregularly; with the many, empty mud houses almost following the pattern throughout the landscape.

On the rooftops, were the lookouts spreading apart; taking positions and establishing defense perimeters in what appeared to be lines--which intensified towards the centre of the village at which was the big hut housing Mr. Sharif.

Aiding them in the fast falling darkness, were the old and dim flood lights, which were tied to uneven posts spread all around the village; the same posts on which the speakers of the hand-cranked alarm were also tied while facing different directions.

At the outermost perimeter, were four of the lookouts almost evenly spaced on the rooftops; very seriously scanning the dark area as they started their watch.

One of them slowly walked towards the edge of the roof and stopped--seriously observing the darkness for any suspicious movements--and as he was slowly turning back around, Simon's strong, tattooed left hand quickly emerged from the dark and capped his mouth. As he sent his big, shiny knife right through his throat and pulled him down.

The second lookout at the other side was just turning around, away from the darkness while lighting a cigarette, when Smoky also capped his mouth and sent a knife through his chest--taking him out in the same fashion and pulling him down into the darkness.

The other two had moved around and were about five meters apart--watching the area keenly. One of them was closest to the edge, and as the other slowly turned and looked away, Dante's two hands holding a wire quickly emerged over his head; as he tightened the wire around his neck and choked him while pulling him off the roof top.

As his colleague quickly turned around and realized his fellow missing, a big knife flew in from the side and went straight through his throat; causing him to choke while collapsing towards a wooden roof of a small shed below. And just as he was falling, Rusty quickly sneaked out of the darkness and grabbed him--pulling him into the same darkness he had sneaked out off.

"Watch it Dante." Rusty advised through the comm.

"Rodger that." Dante replied; as they sneaked towards the second defense perimeter while still several meters apart.

"All right guys," Simon whispered through the *comm.*, "There's too many of them" He observed. "We'll have to make some noise. Patrols! Up ahead! Coming towards us!" He quickly noticed from his position at the side of the congested huts. "Take positions and pick targets." He instructed as they positioned themselves in the shadows; each of them aiming at one of the many foot patrols coming towards them while keenly checking the area.

"Smoky?" Simon called in a low tone.

"Ready." Smoky responded while still laying flat next to the wall of a hut, with his big gun aimed at the guard approaching him.

"Dante?"

"Standing by."

"Rusty?"

"Locked and loaded."

"Samson?"

"Just say the word."

All of them confirmed as they waited for the orders to execute the patrols.

"Get ready." Simon advised as the patrols got closer; keenly looking towards them but unable to make them out in the darkness.

“Here they come, here they come, okaaaay. Drop em!” Simon gave the word and they opened fire; quickly shooting down the targeted patrols, as the noise from their fire alerted all the other lookouts all over the village.

“Attack! We’re under attack!!” All hell immediately broke loose as some of the guards shouted while running all over the place; alerting everyone else as they rushed and took up their weapons in preparing themselves.

Suddenly shooting was all over the place, as the alarms went off with the surprised lookouts and guards running and strengthening the inner defense lines. Others were fearfully shooting while openly converging towards the dark areas under which the soldiers were hiding.

“They’re in the dark! In the dark!” Several of them yelled after spotting the origin of the soldiers’ fire--who started to slowly push forward through the darkness and punching bullet holes into the randomly scattered guards.

While taking cover around the empty huts, they paused and reloaded in turns; emerging and shooting their way towards the heavily defended, inner defense lines while converging at a line of empty huts.

Randomly, they moved through those huts; confusing the guards as they shot them down by surprise. While approaching the exit of the last hut in the line, they could hear a guard yelling very loudly as he approached; and as they shot their way out, the yelling guard suddenly came running on the rooftop of a hut a few meters in front of them.

In his hand, was an old sac which was quarter filled with some round objects; carrying it as he suddenly jumped into down as his fellows dispersed, with Simon and his soldiers spraying several bullets all over his body as he persisted and threw the sac at them.

“Back off!” Samson shouted as they rushed backwards in a fleeing stance, falling back into the huts as the sac of grenades exploded in loud, deafening blasts, and took out the walls of the huts.

“Kill them! Shoot them before they recover!” The guards took advantage and yelled as they converged ones again; their AK “s shaking their hands as they emptied their magazines in panic, relentlessly shooting at the remaining portions of the huts as the soldiers kept pulling back for cover.

From inside the huts, the soldiers could hear as more and more lookouts ran in towards them; listening as the others kept strengthening the innermost perimeter which was just up ahead - setting up their partly rusted, M249, big machine guns and taking positions with their RPG2 rocket launchers behind the sandbags on the rooftops.

“Shit!” Smoky exclaimed, just before the guards opened very heavy suppressive fire against them, killing some of their own but persisting in panic. Simon and his men held behind cover as the mud walls fell apart around them, crumbling and falling as the heavy fire intensified.

After some time, the Arabs stopped shooting, waiting for any movement; observing very keenly and seriously by moving their sweating heads to check for any signs of the soldiers. Simon, who was lying flat at the side of a partially destroyed hut, intentionally pushed a piece of mud off the section of the wall with his gloved hand, and as it fell onto a pile, the guards immediately opened random heavy fire ones again; shells after shells pouring out of their rusted machine guns and raining down on the ground, and over the bodies of some of their colleagues.

Click! Click! All the hammers of their guns suddenly signaled empty magazines, as they quickly checked their guns, fearfully pulling out fresh magazines from the sisal sacs to reload with urgency.

“Take them all out.” Simon instructed after they recovered from cover; taking advantage and rushing out with their powerful guns blazing--dropping the fumbling guards like flies while quickly switching from one target to another--shooting them down quickly while slowly moving towards their raised defense line.

“Retreat! Retreat!” The guards started yelling while abandoning their positions and backing away. “Down the...” One of them was yelling as bullets punched through his body and those of his fellows; dropping down dead as they attempted to flee.

Easily, the soldiers pushed through. Shooting towards a line of white huts which was to the right of the defense line; moving in one after another and shooting as they proceeded towards the village center.

As they pushed through to the huts, they noticed something unexpected. State of the art *computer stations* were inside the hut, with some kind of assembling table with several, huge mechanical parts all over it. Plenty of cables were on the floor hanging from the mechanical parts.

“This shit is ours!” Samson, the weapon’s specialist, observed as they hurried through.

“What the fuck was happening here!” Rusty wondered.

“We’ll find out! Just keep up the good pace!” Simon assured as they fought through to the next hut; pushing back the retreating guards and clearing their way towards the big hut at the village center.

Getting to the hut, they quickly surrounded it--pulling out their breaching charges from their backpacks and planting them at strategic points all around the walls--After which they backing away as they blew holes into the building.

And from all directions, they charged in with their weapons pointed at the five Arabs stranded at the centre of the hut; squeezing themselves together and dropping their weapons.

“Any sign of the weapon?” The Major General asked through the *comm.* after reconnecting with the Team Sergeant.

“It’s over Sharif! Tell me where the weapon is!” Simon directed the question to the trembling Sharif.

“What weapon! What are you saying!” Sharif fumbled with accented English in genuine uncertainty.

“Team Sergeant we cannot see inside the hut, but we’ve got a strong signal coming from some place there, the weapon, has to be there?” The Major General insisted through the *comm.* And while rushing their eyes around the hut, they noticed nothing strange, apart from the ordinary weapon caskets all around the breached walls.

“Don’t bullshit me! We know you have it!” Simon threatened Sharif.

“If he won’t talk, I say we kill him!” Smoky suggested.

“Wait!” Sharif begged, “Is that what you’re here for! What did they tell you?” He asked genuinely; like he had just remembered something. And as he asked, a tremor suddenly shook the weak building.

“What the hell was that?” Rusty asked; after which it hit again more strongly.

#

Inside the control center, the satellite image had started to flicker; *colored lines* papering all over the screen as the footage gradually disappeared.

“What the fuck is going on?” The Major General inquired.

“Some kind of strange interference!” The lady technician responded as she pounded her keyboard like the others.

“Somebody better clear this up!” The Major General commanded as several of the officers shot up and started rushing about.

#

“It’s the thing you want!” Sharif told the soldiers inside the hut.

“What thing!” Dante asked; as a heavily modified HAMMER-4 violently erupted from the ground below, taking out an entire wall.

From its densely scratched, white titanium body, dust from under the earth was poured off; as the soldiers noticed the partially visible, *Hammer-4* inscription and the *A.F.R* logo on its right limb.

Immediately, it ‘marked’ all of them as ‘hostiles’; their eyes opening wide as it turned on its canon and pointed it at them. And while grabbing and shielding the Arabs, they started backing away.

“Friendly fire! Friendly fire!” Simon attempted to call it in through the *comm.* as all their earpieces sparked out; moving backwards fast and pulling out of the hut as the robot turned through the walls while shooting at them.

“Team Sergeant! Team Sergeant do you read!” The Major General called through the *comm.*; looking up at the black screen upon getting no response.

“Holy shit!” He remarked while staring at the screen.

In the village, the soldiers were escaping with the Arabs; falling backwards into the huts as they rushed to get away from the approaching destructive machine - whose heavy fire was now landing very close to them.

While backing away, Sharif slipped and fell, the Robot's fire approached him as Simon rushed back and grabbed him; pulling him and falling with the others down through a roof of a hut, which was just over the steep sloping side of the ground they were on.

"Move! Move!" Simon instructed as they rushed up from the floor; running towards the hut's door as the robot CRASHED DOWN through the roof behind them.

Through the uneven paths, they sprinted as it got closer behind them. Charging through the huts while shooting heavily and forcing them to split up; with others escaping into the huts, climb through the houses' steps towards the rooftops, and running on through the narrow paths as its heavy fire struck down the first of the Sharif's men.

Simon and Sharif himself were running on the rooftops; with Samson following behind them, and just below him, was another of Sharif's men who was catching up through the huts.

To Simon's far right was Dante sprinting on the rooftops; and just down below to his left, was Rusty running on a rugged path, following behind another of Sharif's men to his right on which was Smoky jumping through windows and doors.

Opening its pods, the machine started unleashing rockets at them; two of them towards Simon and Sharif who were just jumping off a rooftop towards the next, with the rockets fiercely jetting past just under their feet before they landed and kept sprinting.

Down below them, the Hammer-4 was launching another round towards Smoky and Dante; With Smoky jumping into the next hut as the rocket struck the wall just behind him, as Dante suddenly changed his path--very closely missing the rocket and causing it to blow up a hut, and the second of Sharif's men who was running in front of him.

While jumping from roof to roof, Samson accidentally landed on a weak section of a rooftop and crashed down through it--falling inside an empty hut into which the Arab who was running below him jumped into.

Immediately the robot launched several rockets towards the hut; blowing it up and then charging through it.

"No!" Dante yelled as he hesitated,

"Keep moving! Keep moving!" Simon shouted at him as they ran on towards the edge of the rooftops.

"Jump! We have to jump!" He shouted as they approached the edge and jumped, rockets fiercely flying above them as they fell down towards the 'deep hole' --falling fast and freely through the air and finally splashing and drowning into the plunge pool of the waterfall.

One after another, they began to surface and gasp for air; all four of the soldiers and only one of Sharif's men.

"Shit!" Dante cursed out loud as he looked up--The machine was falling towards them with all its metal weight!

"Get to the cave! Move!" Simon instructed as they began to quickly swim towards the cave under the fall itself; barely getting away before the worn out robot heavily splashed down just behind them, with its mass pushing out a massive wave which entirely immersed them as it sank and suddenly "sparked out".

"Sharif! Where is Sharif!" The last of his men asked in fear while looking around right after they surfaced again. "Sharif!" He called out; as Simon swallowed a breath and dived into the water - swimming down towards the Hammer-4 wreckage at the bottom of the pool.

While looking around in the water, he spotted Sharif lying on the pool's floor. With his bleeding thigh stuck under the dead robot's heavy limb. And as they called Sharif out, Simon surfaced with him; the last of his men swimming towards him and helping to move his unconscious body into the cave.

"That was one of ours!" Rusty noted as he attended to Sharif, working the others to perform first aid on him.

"What the hell was it doing here!" Dante asked while bandaging Sharif's thigh.

"He's the only one who can tell us!" Smoky answered; as he moved to help the Team Sergeant revive Sharif.

"Don't you die Sharif? Come on!" Simon 'warned' as he tried to 'pump' water out of his lungs; as Sharif started to cough.

"Easy now. Easy." Simon continued as Sharif started to wake up, coughing out water and struggling for breath.

"He's lost too much blood!" Dante observed as they struggled to stop the bleeding.

"What happened back there Sharif! Talk to me!" Simon started asking as he helped him breathe more steadily; With Sharif looking at the last of his men who nodded approvingly - letting him know it was okay to tell them.

"He... He was testing something..." Sharif struggled through the coughs.

"Who was testing what Sharif? Come on!" Simon insisted as he tried his best to help him.

"... he offered me a deal..."

“What deal Sharif! What deal?” He questioned, Sharif coughing, “... he was to give me... a classified weapon... most expensive on the market... and... and I was to find him... a place to do some research...” Coughing,

“Go on Sharif, Go on.” Simon encouraged him; as Sharif struggled with the pain on his thigh and with his breathing, squinting his eyes in agony.

“He’s lost a lot of blood Team Sergeant!” Dante tried to advice, as Sharif struggled and grabbed Simon by the collar.

“Listen to me... He is going to attack... a city... Dawn tomorrow...”

“Who will attack? Who will attack Sharif?” Simon interrupted.

“Tomorrow... dawn... They will rise... All of them... He... He will...” Sharif tried as he coughed.

“Who is he Sharif? Who is he? You have to tell us, listen,” Getting his attention, “You have, to tell us.” He begged Sharif who struggled with his last breath while looking up at him,

“Edison.” He told him as he let his life go.

“Edison died weeks ago what are talking about? Sharif!” Simon called as the medical sergeants tried to revive him, slowing their efforts upon realizing he was beyond saving.

“We need more than that Sharif come on!” Simon continued to beg while still trying to wake him.

“Team Sergeant.” Dante tried to stop him, “Team Sergeant!” He called louder and finally stopped him, “He’s gone.” He concluded.

Simon sighed in confusion, “We need more.” He said afterwards.

“What if he was bull shitting?” Smoky questioned.

“There’s only one way to find out.” Simon responded after a while as he turned his head towards the last of Sharif’s men who was mourning.

#

D-DAY

Across the oceans, dawn was cracking over the city--rising above the desert under which was the Armed Forces Robotics. Inside the facility itself, much had been moved away in the hustles of shutting down; with several workers still moving away huge, assembly-line parts on huge trolleys on the corridors and in elevators.

Inside the offices and labs, several of the tired scientists and technicians were still resting their heads on the desks; others napping on their couches and on the portable mattresses on the floors of their offices.

No one was inside the dead silent testing area; in which the brand new, ‘off line’ Hammer-5s were standing still. Inside the testing control room, several of the technicians were napping; yawning and sitting around at their stations on which even fewer working.

Unexpectedly, the robots started to power themselves up; immediately identifying the connections to the control room's super computers as an '*enemy breach*'--marking everyone in the room as a *hostile target*.

At his station, Briton was relaxed; reading a magazine on cars while sitting back on the swivel chair with legs crossed on his desk besides the big monitor.

On his computer, a beeping alert picked up; as he moved the magazine and glanced at the complex displays on the monitor, then back to the magazine. And as if he had seen a ghost on the screen, he quickly closed the magazine and sat properly to observe the data more keenly.

"Is anyone else getting this?" a technician asked while keenly observing the strange pattern on his screen; as the napping technicians got up and started to pay attention to their computers.

"Is this real data here?" Another wondered.

"Holy shit. Holy shit!" Briton exclaimed as he studied the pattern of data--grabbing a notepad and scribbling something down fast--jetting off his seat towards the door as murmurs picked up in the room.

Inside his office, Stephens was a sleep on the couch; as persistent knocks started at his door which 'burst' open with Briton flying in towards him.

"Damn it man don't you knock?" Stephens asked as he sat up and reached for his glasses. "What?" He asking as he grabbed the paper from the nervous Briton; his eyes opening wide as he read the information.

Out his office with Briton, Stephens rushed. Running along the corridor as their colleagues wondered what the hell was up with them. And just after Stephens opened the glass door leading into the testing control room, they were stopped on their tracks;

as one of the Hammer-5s violently shattered the thick glass as it stormed into the control room up ahead.

In terror, the technicians rushed to flee the control room; most ducking as the machine rushed above their heads towards Stephens and Briton. And while pulling Briton away, they started running back on the walkway.

The Robot charged out through the glass entrance behind them, moving and crashing through the offices on either side of the corridor while turning on its cannon. It started shooting and blowing up everything around it; with the scientists screaming and yelling as they ran out of the offices and labs, joining Stephens and Briton.

All around the structure, the Hammer-5s were spreading; storming through the tiled, concrete walls and glass partitions--Shooting as several of the workers dropped flat on the floor and rushed to find cover; with more running out onto the walkways and the corridors towards the already congested stairs.

Through a glass wall, a Hammer-5 exploded out and hovered in the open centre; displaying a set of bright, scary lights as it opened heavy machine gun and rocket fire at the terrified scientists scrambling on the stairs. It tore them apart, blowing up the sections of the stair cases and walkways they were on and causing others to fall off towards the bottom.

In a scam, several of the scientists started running back into the corridors; attempting to escape the jam packed stairs as their colleagues jam-packed the elevators. Off the rails, the hammer five blew up the moving elevators; shooting through the tinted glass and killing the scientists who were inside.

Somewhere in the sixth floor, Stephens and Briton were running through a corridor, heading towards a heavily congested stair case as the offices kept falling apart all around them.

Getting to the stairs landing, they rushed on towards the lower floors; regardless of the fact that the stairs were falling apart under heavy fire from the robot which was hovering just a few meters to their right.

“You got to call this in!” Briton yelled as they scrambled down the stairs; with the hovering machine unleashing round after round of lethal rocket fire all over the structure.

With several other scientists, Stephens and Briton jumped from one piece of stair case to another; as the heavy bullets ‘dropped’ their colleagues behind and in front of them.

“You have to call this in!” Briton insisted as they got to the staircase landing of the fifth floor; from which they dived into an office just next to the landing--falling on its floor and crawling towards the back of the desk as the robot swept heavy machine gun fire through the office just above them.

“I need a secure line!” Stephens yelled.

“Got it!” Briton replied as he quickly crawled to the side and grabbed the telephone which had fallen on the floor; bringing it behind the desk and immediately ‘tuning it in’.

“It’s secure!” Briton assured after a few seconds, as Stephens grabbed the phone and punched in the complex, ‘coded message’--hitting the *send*--as the entire, upper section of the side of the structure they were on started to move about in huge, massive cracks.

For a moment, they froze, processing the fact that they were on top of the section which was about to fall-in towards the center.

Onto the desk, Stephens and Briton tried to hold as everything started sliding towards the centre; with huge cracking sounds filling the air as the section started to fall in--pouring out the scientists, the desks, and the contents of the offices and labs.

Losing grip of the desk, Stephens and Briton sled in the direction of the falling section; desperately moving their hands around to find anything to hold onto as they sled off floor and down towards the rubble filled bottom.

The entire upper section was falling onto the opposite side; crashing and rubbing itself against it as it slid towards the bottom--closing in fast on Stephens and Briton who were falling underneath it. And just as it was about to crash them, it got jammed somewhere on the third floor; as the falling Stephens and Briton grabbed a weak piece of stair rail to avoid crashing down.

The bottom floor, which was about two floors beneath them, was filled with rubble: big pieces of pointed glass and steel beams that had buried several of their colleagues.

Gradually the upper section began to move ones again, as Briton's side of the rail cracked lose and began to tear off in the vibrations.

"No!" Stephens yelled as Briton tried to climb towards his side of the rail, his movement shaking the piece he was holding and causing it to completely tear off, and suddenly, he fell backwards towards the rubble below.

Stephens cried out loud as the falling section started to slide faster towards him. And in fear, he let himself fall from the rail, dropping to the second floor and grabbing the rail at its landing, climbing onto the shaking floor and running into the heavily cracked corridor as the section crashed past the floor just behind him.

Across the lose floor, he ran towards the other side; as the structure continued to fall apart in explosions and tremors. And as he was running, the entire floor suddenly

gave in and he fell through with it--crashing down on top of a mountain of cement and broken blocks.

#

Hundreds of 'civilian' and military technicians were busy at the rows and rows of state of the art computer stations; with several others busily pacing on the walkways between the rows inside The Pentagon.

At specific areas all around that floor, were huge, high definition, transparent glass screens; on which different sets of national security data and information was being displayed in real time.

At one of the stations along one of the busy rows, was a military technician wearing headphones over his head. He was keen on his monitor as he received *the coded message* from the A.F.R. Squeezing his eyes in concentration, he read and re-read it--grabbing a pad and scribbling it down--tearing off the sheet and rushing off the seat.

With urgency, he paced through the busy walkways; rushing towards another bigger station. On which a tall, strong, 'sharp' and serious, four-star Army General by the name of Michaels was discussing with three officers while looking at a file. They had just gotten word of the operation *The Brothers* were conducting just hours ago before completely vanishing 'off radar'.

Straight towards Michaels, the technician rushed; as the general looked up at him as he approached and handed him the piece of paper.

"We have a red alert at the labs." He informed him.

"How bad is it?" The general asked as he confirmed the coded message.

"Level one."

“Postpone this.” The General instructed the other officers as he handed one of them the closed file.

“Make this our priority.” He told another as he started walking with the technician.

“Initiate emergency protocols. I want them all shut down.” He instructed him as they walked towards a station which stood out as the biggest. It had four big screens angled-in towards it, and at which a team of technicians just settling in.

“I’m afraid that’s not possible sir.” The technician replied,

“What do you mean?”

“The Hammer-5s weren’t commissioned yet; we don’t have the controlling servers.” He informed the general as they got to the station.

Among the technicians setting up, was Abie; a military communications expert who was about thirty but looked much younger. She was a pretty lady who appeared tough and attractive at the same time. Dressed in combat uniform with a beret over her head, Abie was among the best communications technicians in the entire floor.

On her team, was Jack; a tall, young, civilian employee who had huge curly hair, spectacles over his eyes, and rubber shoes on his feet.

“Do we have eyes in there?” Michaels asked as he took control of the station.

“All cameras are like, down.” Jack replied while pounding his keyboard, “Wait a second,” He added, “I think I got one.” He said as he ‘brought up’ one of the camera feeds from the A.F.R on one of the big screens.

“My god!” The General remarked to himself as he looked at the live footage from the devastated A.F.R; with several of the other officers noticing and paying attention to the footage.

“Any sign of Stephens?” He asked.

“Tracking his tag now!” Abie replied as she punched her keyboard.

“I’ve got him, entering the parking lot!” She added as the footage started to ‘fall’ with the collapsing section of the building housing the camera.

“That was the last one.” Jack informed them.

“Keep tracking him!” Michaels instructed - referring to Stephens

#

Tremors were shaking dust and small pieces of rubble into the A.F.R’s parking lot; in which the last few of the wounded, surviving scientists struggled to find way towards their vehicles. From the side of a pillar in the parking lot, the bleeding Stephens rushed in; jumping over the jammed vehicles as he tried to find a way towards his orange-yellow, Ford GT mustang on the other side of the lot.

He approached one of the scientists had just entered his sedan, and as he was starting the engine, a Hammer-5 crashed itself down through the cement roof above; landing on top of the car and crashing it under its weight as it started shooting up the place.

To cover, the scientists fell while screaming and yelling. Crawling towards their vehicles into which three of them managed to dive in; driving off through the destruction and into the curving exit tunnel. Like the others, Stephens kept moving behind cover; forced to lie flat on the floor and crawl under the vehicles as the machine continued to bring the place down.

Under the burning vehicles, Stephens crawled; hiding from the heavy fire while moving towards his orange Ford-GT. And on getting up from under its chassis, he got in and immediately started the engine; driving over a huge pile of broken blocks and into the exit tunnel after a Chrysler SUV that had just managed to drive off.

After them, the Hammer-5 charged into the tunnel; launching round after round of rockets at Stephen's Ford-GT - fiercely blowing up the walls on the tunnel's curvature close to the car--which raced behind the first five up the spiral drive way.

#

Up on the surface, the gas station was as abandoned as always. And inside its supposed service bay, some kind of gate was slowly opening upwards. Computers had sensed the vehicles speeding and had sent the command to open the exit--out of which the five vehicles came speeding out in quick succession and racing on towards the cracked tarmac.

Behind the vehicles on the dusty road, came the Hammer-5; stamping quickly as the drivers swerved and switched positions in an effort to avoid being 'locked on'. The speed and the swerving caused a huge cloud of dust to rise into the air; partially hindering the robots 'sight' as it weighed its attack options.

Through the dust, it sped up and caught up with the sedan which was the last in the 'race'; *adjusting* one of its 'upper limbs' into a hard, 'steel block', and side ramming the sedan off the road - Sending it rolling several times and crashing onto the rocks at the road side. Opening its pods, it launched two missiles towards the next car; blowing it up into hot, burning wreckage flying into the air and crashing down a few meters in front of Stephens's Ford-GT.

Towards at Stephen's vehicle, it launched two missiles; just as he was dodging the crashed wreckage to the left and in the event, missing the missiles which struck the wreckage ones again as he swerved back right. Tearing through the flames, The Hammer-5 maintained pursuit.

'The chase' was getting closer to the sparsely populated residential area on the outskirts of the city; with Stephens Ford tailgating with the Chrysler SUV a couple meters behind another sedan, behind which the Hammer-5 closing in.

Through the dust, it locked onto the two vehicles, towards which it fired two, well targeted missiles. And by the vehicles swerving apart, the missiles jetted past between them; exploding on the cracked road at both sides of the sedan and blowing out its wheels - sending it toppling and rolling over along the road as the two vehicles dodged it on both sides.

#

The residential area had identical houses in identical, individual compounds; each of them with a identical pools and water harvesting structures. All across the rooftops of each of the houses were state of the art solar panels; harvesting the energy from the sun and powering the homes.

Inside one of the compounds was a man who was cooling off in his pool; placing the magazine he was reading aside as he tried to have a clear look at the 'approaching dust'.

"What the hell!" An elderly man who was crossing the road with other residents exclaimed as he set sight on the Hammer-5 pursuing the vehicles--with the other residents around him scattering off the road as the chase arrived at their area.

Ahead of Stephens Ford, the SUV accelerated; leaving it open to attack as another Hammer-5 'erupted' from a sewer tunnel under the road--charging the SUV up into the air and sending it flying towards 'the compound'.

Towards the man, it came falling, as he quickly rushed out of his pool and ran towards his house; escaping as it crashed upside down on top of his pool.

Unprepared, Stephens swerved to avoid colliding with the robot, driving through a fence and into a compound as the machine hovered and started bombarding the place. He lost control as the vehicle moved and rammed through the house's walls; crashing to a dead stop after hitting a pole inside the house close to a sofa--on which a woman and her seven year old daughter were screaming while holding onto each other.

Outside the house, the other residents were scattering; screaming and running as the two Hammer-5s unleashed destruction upon their homes. They were shooting down anyone on their scopes, blowing up anything and everything within range.

In an attempt to escape, a man and his wife were running further into the road; when another Hammer-5 suddenly CHARGED up right in front of them from the sewers below.

#

"I've got him!" Abie yelled, "I think he just crashed!" She added. As a group of 'officers' approached the station fast. Two of them stood out, one of whom was a serious man in a three piece suit who was about fifty, and the other a four star, Air force General by the name of Morez - younger than Michaels but equally authoritative in appearance.

"We just cancelled the meeting! What the hell is happening?" The serious man in suit asked loudly as he approached Michaels.

"Code red at the labs, very serious." Michaels informed him.

"What the hell caused it?"

"Nobody knows for sure." Michaels replied.

"We've got a bigger problem!" Abie shouted again.

"What is it?" Michaels asked.

"They're headed for the city!" She told them.

"But I've got - nothing on satellite?" A technician genuinely questioned her information while observing his screen.

"Me too?" Jack added.

“That’s because they’re moving underground.”

“What!” The man in the suit exclaimed,

“Through the tunnels - in their hundreds.” Abie informed them.

“They’re going, *into*, the city!” The man in suit asked for clarity,

“About five hundred of them.” Abie confirmed,

“The president’s there!” The man in suit made them aware.

#

Most of the vast city centre was covered by the extremely tall, ‘simple’ towers; which were mostly finished with glass and disappeared into the very high, misty air. Between the towers, crossed the smooth, wide roads; on which thousands of congested vehicles were jammed in all positions all over the tarmac.

Escaping in the same direction, were tens of thousands of civilians and police officers; men and women abandoning their cars and running for their lives.

At different spots from the tunnels under the roads, were tens of Hammer-5s erupting onto the surface--landing and suddenly shooting and blowing up the cars and the buildings.

Civilians were rushing out of the super markets, dashing out of the cafeterias, flying out of the offices as the machines stormed in and tore the places apart.

Children were crying, women screaming, men yelling as round after round of rockets and machine gun fire rained all around the place with an intensity.

Inside a small electronics store, screaming buyers and attendants alike were ducking and taking cover as they watched the chaos outside; just before a Hammer-5 fiercely charged in through the wall behind the counter--rushing in just above the

terrified lady cashier who was squatting behind her desk and landing in the middle of the store.

Very quickly it '*adjusted*' itself and launched an intense, electronic pulse; which immediately blew up all the electronics and sent currents all over the floor and walls--shocking everyone inside the building.

Out on the streets, dead bodies were falling all over as the robots kept hammering the place; charging through and blowing up the base frames of several of the towers, causing them to weaken and crack up in extremely terrifying echoes.

At one of the streets, the civilians were running as fast as they could; escaping as a very, very tall, cracking tower started coming down in overwhelming tremor. They tried their best to escape as it thundered down with some of the other structures, crashing down and burying the entire street with everyone and everything that was on it.

#

"I want a line of defense two miles out of that entire zone!"

"Yes sir!"

"I want them held back tight! They, do not go beyond that line!"

"Understood sir." The young officer assured as he took off with his orders; marching away fast as Michaels resumed monitoring the situation.

On one of the big screens, they could see as more of the Hammer-5s were coming out and heavily attacking the streets.

"What about Stephens!" The man in suit asked.

"I've got a team on its way. We're tracking him through his tag." Michaels informed him.

“He’s moving again!” Jack shouted from his station.

#

Stephens head was aching and his eyes ‘drowsy’, his ears ‘buzzing’ as he opened the folded car door; falling outside the wrecked car and struggling to get up as his vision started to clear. Through his cracked glasses, he looked around; spotting the terrified woman holding on to her child as the sound of explosions and cries ‘faded back’ into his ears.

With his headache reducing, he ‘snapped out of it’; struggling to get up and rush towards them as they held tighter onto each other.

“We have to get out!” He started telling the woman as heavy machine gun fire tore through the roof section of the house; forcing him to fall back behind his Ford.

“Come on!” He called the woman stuck at her sofa; insisting to her until she gathered courage and crawled with her kid towards him.

The neighborhood was all rubble and flames; with dead bodies lying all over as the robots kept bombarding the houses. Several of the surviving residents were running and jumping down into the sewer tunnels through the holes made by the ‘eruption’ of the Hammer-5s.

“To get to the tunnels! Come on!” Stephens told the woman as he led her out the wrecked house; running as she covered her crying daughter from seeing the dead bodies lying all over the place.

While helping her down the hole, one of the Hammer-5s turned its ‘head’ and spotted him; identifying him as ‘*priority target*’ before fully turning around to face him. And as Stephens followed the woman down the hole, the Hammer-5 started ‘stamping towards him.

Stephens was the last in the line of escapees inside the tunnel, running very fast behind the woman and the other survivors in the direction of the city. While running, the woman tripped on a crossing pipe; and as she was falling with her daughter, Stephens jumped-in and grabbed her.

“Get up! Go!” He shouting at her as he grabbed the child from her arms; carrying her as the woman got up and ran on. Following closely, Stephens ran as the Hammer-5 crashed down a distance behind him and started chasing him.

#

In the city streets, tens of advanced, Cougar four by four personnel couriers and Humvees were pulling up; and with them, were the fearsome WILD BEASTS - Six wheeled, completely self-controlled, armored, armed robotic vehicles - each about the size of an average lorry.

Out of the vehicles, the hundreds of soldiers were diving out; heavily armed with the heavy assault rifles loaded with explosive rounds, and the hand held, multiple-rocket launchers. While setting up the defense line, they cleared the civilian off the streets; taking positions and preparing to take on the fast approaching, destructive machines.

In no time, an exchange had started; as the soldiers and the wild beasts launched tens of missiles and rockets across miles towards the fiercely advancing Hammer-5s; blowing up a few and maiming others as more erupted onto the surface and started returning heavy fire.

#

About five miles behind the defense line, stood ‘The Grand hotel’; a beautiful, classy, ten-story, tinted glass structure standing in an area untouched by the chaos. Inside a light-orange lit corridor in its fourth floor, were several, serious faced men in neat, black suits and earpieces keeping watch; standing keen with their colleagues

patrolling around an open door leading into a large suite which had a nice, golden-orange-theme finish.

Inside the suite was, The President discussing with an 'official' who was wearing round spectacles while going through a document; as the Lead agent, a serious, well built, hard looking man with short brown hair, walked in towards him.

"Sec Def on the line for you sir. We've got a big problem." He informed the president who handed the official the folder; walking fast out of the suite with the Lead agent and several others, and getting into another room which had several more secret service agents. On the telephone, was an agent who had his shirt folded to his elbow.

"Put it on speaker please." The president requested the agent, who placed back the earpiece and placed the call on speaker.

"What is it Mr. Secretary?" The President asked,

"We've got a code red at the labs, Hammer-5s on the loose, they're attacking the city." Said the man in suit from the pentagon over the phone--He was the Defense Secretary (Sec Def).

"How did this happen!" The President wondered,

"We're still trying to figure that out."

"You mean to tell me that we have our own robots, running lose in the city, and killing people!" The President asked again.

"We're trying to contain the situation. It looks bad but we've got a defense line set up as we try to get the civilians out."

"What about the labs! They should answer for this?"

"Everything went down but we've tracked Stephens. We've got a team on its way to bring him in."

“Find him and keep me up to speed with whatever happens. I want this dealt with immediately!”

“Absolutely sir, we’ve also got a team is on its way to escort you out of the hotel.”

“Understood secretary, keep me posted.” The president responded and then got off the phone. “Cancel the school trips; I need to deal with this.” He instructed the secret service agent with the folded shirt; who picked up the phone as the president turned to walk out of the room.

#

“How far are they?” the Sec Def asked just as he got off the phone.

“Making way towards him now.” Abie answered.

“Put them on.” Michaels requested as Abie connected the *comm.* to Stephens’s evacuation team, whose codename was *Extraction*.

“Extraction do you read? Over?” Michaels called through the *comm.*

#

An army squad of nine, properly armed soldiers, *Extraction* was waiting at a corner of a shoe store besides a rubble filled, war torn street; along which a platoon of thirty two soldiers was struggling to put down a relentless Hammer-5.

“We read you command! Over!” the commanding officer of *Extraction*, Sergeant Lugo, replied through his radio.

“We’re tracking the doctor moving along a series of tunnels about three miles north-east of your position, sending the signal over to you now.” Michaels informed Lugo as one of his subordinates--a young communications specialist--pulled an enclosed tablet device on which he received Stephens’s location.

“Got it.” He informed Lugo. “Alright we got the signal, moving towards him now. Over.” Lugo informed the General and then got off the radio.

“We’re going to push across the streets that way towards the signal!” He started instructing his men, “We should meet him someplace between fourth and fifth! Okay! Let’s move!” He ordered as they started making way across the battle torn street; taking cover behind huge chunks of dug up tarmac and moving behind the jammed cars. Cautiously while assisting the other soldiers to suppress the firing Hammer-5, to help clear their passage across.

Inside the series of connecting tunnels down below, Stephens and the others were still running. He was still the last in the line with the Hummer-5 charging after him. Suddenly, Stephens and the woman split from the others and branched into a different tunnel--with the machine ‘sticking with them’ and demolishing the walls and corners as it moved through.

“We have to keep switching the tunnels! Go!” Stephens yelled as they approached another junction of tunnels--running like hell to lose the persistent machine behind them.

“Right! Take the right!” He added as the woman in front of him suddenly jumped into the smaller tunnel to the right, her feet drowning into the river water as she stepped in as Stephens, carrying her child, followed her lead.

Into the same tunnel, the Hammer-5 forced itself; knocking off several blocks as it jammed its body at the entrance. It opened its rocket pods, only for them to be jammed halfway by the tunnel wall; as Stephens and the woman tried their best to move their feet faster against the water--taking advantage and glancing back several times as they tried to stay ahead.

Forcefully, the Hammer five adjusted itself several times. Squeezing in and rubbing its metal body against the walls as it persisted in proceeding after them.

#

Inside an evacuated, partially demolished super market, *Extraction* was moving through in a group; at the middle of which was the *comms.* specialist, keenly observing the tablet device.

“He’s moving on west of our position!” He informed the others.

“Okay!” Lugo responded. After which he proceeded to call the commanding officer of the company of sixty engaged on the next street.

Jammed all over that street, were cars, trucks, and buses; ‘standing’ immobile on the road surface which was cracked and dug up into big blocks. Lying all over the place, were dead bodies; with several other civilians trying to crawl to safety under the overwhelming fire.

A Wild Beast whose armored body was partly folded and whose engine was smocking, was assisting the soldiers to suppress two, partially destroyed Hammer-5s. As it easily moved about and maintained constant rocket fire at the robots a few hundred meters away. Over the cars and rubble, it easily climbed; dodging the robots’ missiles and re-positioning itself to fire.

Taking cover behind the vehicles and inside the buses, the soldiers were launching rockets and shooting heavily at the Hammer-5s. Which were relentlessly struggling to push towards their direction while firing back fiercely. Blowing up some of the soldiers and the vehicles behind which they were taking cover.

With their heads low, Lugo and team ran out the super market and joined the fight. Taking cover with the Captain and some of his soldiers behind a wrecked truck lying on its side just two meters in front of the firing Wild Beast.

“We need to cross over to that street!” Lugo shouted at The Captain.

“I know!” He replied, “We’re going to do the best we can! Hope that guy is worth it!” He commented; as three missiles jetted past above them and struck the wild beast with a huge explosion.

Constantly, the other soldiers kept firing at the machines; holding them back from advancing as the Captain and Lugo recovered. Up through the flames, the Wild Beast charged. Climbing onto the jammed vehicles as its giant, partly torn, hard wheels rushed just above the soldiers’ heads. They turned with an engine roar as it rushed above them and climbed onto the wrecked truck.

On top of two, jammed taxis, it took position; continuously pounding the Hammer-5 that had shot the missiles. It started tearing it apart slowly as it “adjusted” itself; turning on these lights and trying to hover. And as it turned and pointed its guns at the moving Wild Beast, The Captain together with Lugo and team came out shooting from cover.

“We got to take it down!” The Captain shouted as they focused very heavy fire on the machine. Tearing it apart piece by piece; as the Wild Beast took proper position ones again and aimed at the hammer five--shooting four of its precious, radar guided missiles which completely blew it apart.

“Move Sergeant! Move!” The Captain yelled at Lugo while helping his soldier maintain fire at the remaining Hammer-5; fiercely approaching while shooting by stamping on vehicles and ramming them to the side. They held it back as they hurried towards the next line of buildings; across the destroyed street and into an empty café.

#

Inside the tunnels, the machine was still ‘on them’; scrapping off big chunks of the tunnel walls as it forced itself through. Out of exhaustion, the panting woman slowed down; her lungs aching as the worn out Stephens encouraged, as he followed behind her.

“Not now! We have to keep moving!” He yelled at her as the approaching machine tried to open its cannon--which jammed against the walls of the small tunnel. Locked very clearly onto them, it tried repeatedly to open its rocket pods--which kept jamming against the walls.

Through the café, Lugo and team were rushing towards the next street; moving over the cups and broken plates on the floor, and between the overturned tables and chairs.

“Status!” Lugo asked his *comms.* specialist, who quickly pulled out the tablet device and checked for Stephens location.

“Still moving!” He said, “Coming in from the north east, five hundred meters!” He updated him.

“We’ll get him at the museum!” Lugo instructed as they proceeded to exit through a big hole on the wall that had been made by an explosion.

Much larger than the previous, the entire street was covered in dust and smoke; which was a result of a large section of a concrete tower collapsing. Through the thick dust and smoke, intense fighting was still taking place on the street; across which was the *museum of ancient art*--a beautiful, four story, tinted glass structure.

On the road surface, several civilians and soldiers laid dead; with some of the few survivors struggling to drag the wounded out of the lines of fire, performing first aid as their able colleagues struggled against a Hammer-5 through the dust and smoke--defending their last position which was close to the museum.

As they were fighting, another Hammer-5 suddenly landed through the dust behind their position. The soldiers falling back in fear as it opened its guns at them. And as it was about to blow them up, a Wild beast charged-in through the dust and rammed the Hammer-5 into the museum through the thick, tinted glass wall.

Under the museum's floor crossed a single tunnel, inside of which the other Hammer-5 was still pursuing Stephens and the woman. Its pods were still jammed. And as the tunnel started getting wider and wider, they started to open properly.

To out run the machine, they struggled, as the Hammer-5 that was rammed by the Wild Beast crashed down the tunnel just in front of them; trying to get up as the flowing water fried its exposed circuits.

In terror, the woman stopped as Stephens kept running towards her.

"Get up the hole! Keep moving!" He shouted as the other robot got closer behind. "Go!" he insisted as the horrified woman forced herself up the tunnel--climbing on the slightly moving machine as Stephens rushed towards her with the crying child.

"Take the Kid!" he said while handing the child over to her; struggling to climb with his rubber shoes sliding on the metal.

Out the 'hole', the woman was lifting her crying daughter into the dark museum, into which dust from the devastated street was blowing through the 'burst' glass wall.

In the museum were all kinds of replicas of gigantic ancient carvings and artifacts; three story high sculptures of Greek gods, remains of Egyptian pharaohs, old, Italian paintings, just to mention a few.

Into the museum, Stephens was struggling to climb, as the approaching Hammer-5 began ramming the floor behind him; scaring the woman who started running towards the 'hole' leading into the dust filled street.

"No!" Stephens tried to stop her as he climbed out, trying to stop her as she ran on through the dust towards the streets. He tried to follow her, and just as she ran out through the hole in the glass wall, five rockets which were already in motion suddenly

flew from her right side and exploded close to her; blowing her up together with the soldiers who were behind cover.

Blowing in huge amounts of dust, the shockwave from the explosion pushed Stephens backwards onto the floor behind the hole. From where he struggled to get his tired, injured body up as the Hammer-5 that had pursued him finally charged up the hole.

As it approached him while opening its scratched rocket pods, Stephens moved backwards slowly, unable to escape and shaking with fear in unpreparedness to be blow apart.

No sooner had the robot fired a single rocket than several, explosive machine gun rounds came through the dust and struck its pods from behind Stephens. And with round after round of heavy fire, *Extraction* bombarded and pushed it back into the dust.

"Come on!" One of the soldiers shouted as he grabbed Stephens by the collar--dragging him on the floor as they backed away while shooting.

Randomly, the robot kept firing as they pulled back towards the very huge sculpture of Zeus - the Greek god - taking cover behind its foundation behind which it suppressed them.

"Command this is Extraction!" The Sergeant called in through the *comm* as his soldiers kept shooting. "We have the doctor! I repeat! We have the doctor! Making way to the hospital ASAP! That evac better be there on time! Over!" He threatened and then cut the line.

"We need to move now!" One of the shooting soldiers shouted,

"Come on!" another added as they shielded Stephens; shooting into the dust at the Hammer-5 while moving back, exiting the same way they came in.

#

“How far is that air support?” The Secretary turned and asked General Morez, who was getting off the phone.

“About fifteen minutes.” He assured.

“We need those planes over there right now.” Michaels insisted.

Out in the streets, the multitudes of terrified, desperate civilians were still screaming while fleeing the city centre; jamming on the wide highways which connected to the next city visible a great distance away.

All the traffic was jammed on those highways, as other many other civilians just exited their vehicles and joined the confusion.

Up above, tens of squadrons of advanced, heavily ‘loaded’, Boeing AH-64D apache assault helicopters, and formations of General Atomics Rotor Drones roared across at low altitudes.

About the size of a hatchback, the Rotor Drones were heavily armed, self-propelled planes; which flew on four, specially designed rotors in formations of five. Together with the helicopters, they roared aggressively in a direction opposite to that of the running civilians.

#

Back inside The Grand Hotel, the team of secret service agents was quickly walking the president through a corridor.

“Any word from the secretary?” The President asked--just before a sudden tremor shook the entire building--with the agents pausing for a moment, ready to cover the president. And as they wondered, another larger tremor hit.

“The hell was that!” The President wondered as a distant sound of heavy machine gun fire from the lower floors became clearer.

"Getting you out of here!" The Lead agent said as they turned in the opposite direction,

"Taking secondary exit, let's move!" He instructed the others as they moved the President towards the back.

#

"I want Stephens brought in the moment that chopper picks him up!" Michaels instructed another officer--who left as he proceeded to monitor the situation.

Over Abie's face, a disturbing look settled as she stared at her monitor, pressing keys as she studied her satellite feed. Pulling out her earpiece, she turned to face the generals.

"They're already at the hotel!" She said, as the Secretary and the two generals turned their heads and stared at her.

Back at the bottom floors of the hotel, guests and attendants alike were screaming as two Hammer-5s continued to bombard the place; running as huge sections of the walls came crashing down all over the building.

People struggled to pour out the doors, stepping on top of the others who were crawling on the floor, as the machines rammed themselves through the place and destroyed their way towards the upper floors.

Inside a classy suite, a man was quickly packing his briefcase--as a Hammer-5 STORMED IN through the wall and crashed him to the side--rushing through the suite and out through the wall.

#

"How did they get there!" The secretary inside the pentagon asked--with a tone that seemed to indicate he was blaming it on the employees.

"I've got no idea!" Abie answered as she kept at her keyboard.

"Something is off here!" Jack commented.

"Really! Everything has been off since we started the damn day!" Michaels responded.

"He's right!" Abie agreed with Jack, after which she shot up her chair.

The Generals, the secretary, and several of her colleagues turned to look at her ones again; as she moved her fingers slightly and quickly started to explain:

"There's about two miles between that hotel and the hot zone! Yet all of it is clear!" She paused as if waiting for them to realize something,

"No shit!" Morez responded, "The damn robots targeted that hotel! By themselves!"

"Why the hell would they do that!" Michaels wondered with the others.

"I don't know sir but someone else, or something, has programmed the orders!" Abie suggested.

"We've got to get him out of there right now!" Sec Def advised as they rushed back to their stations.

Over at the hotel, the Hammer-5s were approaching the third floor; shooting down large sections of the floors which crumbled down with the guests and all the contents of their suites.

Inside the fourth floor, lights were flickering as the tremors got more random and much more intense. The walls were crashing in, the floors cracking as the secret service rushed the president through a series of doors, very quickly towards the back side of the building.

“We’re not going to make it to the convoy! We need immediate evac from the roof! I repeat! We need immediate evac from the roof over!” The Lead agent stressed through his earpiece.

#

“The choppers will never get there on time! They’ll take at least ten minutes flying at top speed!” Morez informed Sec Def and Michaels.

“How far is your team?” The secretary asked Michaels.

“About five minutes out!”

“They need to get over there right now!” He insisted.

“Pass me through!” Michaels turned and requested as ‘they’ connected him to the team that was to escort the president’s convoy--an experienced squad whose codename was *Extraction Actual*.

“Extraction Actual do you read me?” Michaels called.

#

Speeding in line through the city’s, dirty back streets, were four Humvees with their full lights on; moving at top speed on the narrow back paths as pieces of paper flew all over. Closely resembling the H2 hummers, the humvees were made entirely of thick, amour metal; reinforced by steel frames that gave them an aggressive appearance.

Inside the Humvees sat the heavily geared soldiers, who were ‘loading up’ and preparing their heavy riffles; fitting their gloves and filling up their utility vests as they got ready for combat.

The officer in charge was a Staff Sergeant (SSG) by the name of Mark; who was a ‘cute’, serious-faced young man wearing an ‘ivy league’ haircut.

He sat next to a Private (PV2) by the name of Rodgers--who was the driver of the first humvee--and behind Rodgers, sat a Corporal (CPL) by the name of Collins. Loading up behind Mark was a weapons Specialist by the name of Miller, who was the youngest on the team and appeared the 'smartest'.

Driving the second humvee was a Corporal by the name of Mike, with another called Nelson sitting next to him, and two others at the back seats. Another Corporal by the name of Brian sat in the third Humvee with the other three soldiers.

"We read you general! We're about seven hundred meters from the hotel and moving fast! Over!" Mark replied through the radio as he continued to prepare his weapon.

"We've got the president trapped on the fourth floor as we speak! Choppers won't make it until the next nine minutes! You need to get over there right now!" Michaels advised through the radio.

"Copy that sir! Requesting aerial view of the hotel! Over!"

"You'll be receiving it shortly! Standby!" Michaels assured--as the ten-inch, glass screen on the dashboard turned on and started 'loading...' After three seconds, a high definition, live aerial view of the hotel and the buildings around it appeared.

"Got it sir." Mark confirmed as he observed the image.

"Tell them to hold on that floor, we're going to extract them from above."

"Mind me asking how you're going to do that Sergeant?"

"Better if you don't know sir. Over." Mark ended the call.

"Gracie?" He called 'the vehicle's computer',

"Yes sir?" The computer responded with a female voice.

“Run a full scan of the area?” He requested.

“Running scans now.” Gracie replied as she quickly scanned all the buildings in the vicinity of the Grand Hotel--labeling and displaying all relevant information about them. And from the well labeled footage, Mark noticed a parking structure behind the hotel--it was the closest to the building and while studying it, he quickly thought.

“Okay everybody, listen up!” he started instructing his soldiers through the radio while referring to the footage which was appearing inside all of the humvees.

“We’re going to split up! Brian, you’re going to take half the team and go all the way around to the front of the hotel! You’ll provide cover as we get out!” He ordered.

“Mike, you’re with me! We’re going up the parking structure to the fifth floor; we’re going to drop to hotel’s fourth floor!”

“You’re out of your mind Staff Sergeant!” Cpl. Mike responded through the radio.

“It’s the only way they’re getting out of that place! Push it Rodgers!” He said to the driver as the vehicles charged on.

#

Back inside the hotel, terrified attendants were running across a cracked floor, as one of the Hammer-5’s suddenly charged up from below; causing the floor to completely give in with the servants falling through towards the bottom.

Through the large kitchen, it rammed quickly as the confused chefs dived under the slabs; trying to save themselves as it made its way towards the back side of the fourth floor--the same direction towards which the secret service was rushing the President.

“We need that evac right now!” The Lead agent demanded through his earpiece as the robot stormed out of the kitchen towards them. As it approached, some of his agents stopped and drew their ‘folded’ P90 submachine guns--openly shooting in an attempt to cover them as they rushed the president behind the tons of supplies and equipment--through the unfinished storage area towards the big windows.

“You better have good reason for keeping us on this god damn floor!” the lead agent yelled through his earpiece from behind cover; bearing witness as his agents were getting wiped out by the machine which was coming fast towards them.

Doing their best, they kept moving the president towards the big windows--outside of which was parking structure across the narrow street. And ascending the barely occupied parking structure on the spiral driveway, were the first two humvees moving at high speed speeding up; accelerating further as they raced into the third floor.

Inside the Hotel, the three secret service agents who were left had gotten the president closest to the windows; and with nowhere else to go, they watched as the others got obliterated while trying to shield them with their P90s.

“Keep punching it!” Mark kept pushing the drivers, who kept accelerating into the fifth floor with their speed gauges reading close to two hundred; and on towards the glass wall, they sped without any hesitation.

“Right through it! Punch it!” Mark continued as the vehicles accelerated even further--Charging out the glass wall and with their momentum, falling forwards in curve towards the fourth floor of the hotel.

“We’re not going to make it! I repeat! We’re not going to...” The lead Agent was reporting as the two humvees CRASHED IN through the windows very close behind them--Landing to a dead stop two meters in front of them as the Staff Sergeant and his

soldiers swung out doors--immediately shooting heavily at the approaching hammer-five.

"Get in"! Come on!" The Staff sergeant yelled as he helped the others suppress the robot; with Cpl. Mike and Pv2. Rodgers grabbing the president and the three secret service agents--one of whom got struck by the forty caliber bullets as they were being led into the humvees.

On the reserved back seats of the first Humvee, they strapped the two agents and the president--securing them in with seat belts that held them down tight by their shoulders.

On the Hammer-5s artillery, they focused their heavy fire -- 'messing up' its aim while holding it back from advancing.

"Plant charges around the vehicles!" Mark tried to command through the noise.

"What!" Miller asked.

"Plant charges around the vehicles got damn it! You're going to blow us to the lower levels! We need to access stairs!"

"Got it!" Miller confirmed as the Staff Sergeant continued to maintain suppressive fire with the other soldiers.

The *robot's circuits* started 'sparking up' as a result of the bombardment from the soldiers; charging about the storage area with some of its random fire landing dangerously close to the Humvees and the soldiers who kept suppressing it.

Through the exchange, Miller quickly planted the breaching charges on the cracked floor all around the circumference of the humvees.

"Charges planted!" He shouted upon completion.

“Blow it! Blow it now!” Mark shouted back as Miller pulled out the detonator-- with the soldiers stepping outside ‘the circle’ as he hit the switch. The charges blew holes around the Humvees, ‘cutting out’ a hole on the floor through which the vehicles fell through to the cracked, third floor below.

“Pull back!” Mike commanded as they pulled back while shooting, jumping down through the hole and landing on top, and around the humvees.

“No stairs!” Cpl. Rodgers quickly observed, as the ‘electrically sparking’ robot crashed down from above into the third floor a few rooms in front of them.

The floor they were standing on was moving about unsteadily, with cracks ‘snaking’ through it as the bombardments continued.

“Blow it again!” The Staff Sergeant ordered Mike.

“Come on!” Cpl. Collins added--putting pressure on Miller as they heard the robot approach through the walls.

Quickly, Miller pulled out the next round of charges from the pockets of his trousers and started planting, as the others started shooting in the robot’s direction in an attempt to keep it away.

“Blow it miller!” Rodgers shouted while shooting.

“Blow it!” Collins added.

Miller hit the switch ones again, just as the robot stormed into their room and launched two missiles at the first humvee. The missiles jetted past above the humvee’s roof as it sunk with the breached floor--falling towards the second floor below.

As the humvees fell, a piece of floor beneath Cpl. Collins gave in and he fell through with it--crashing on his back on top of the first humvee after it landed on the second floor.

“Collins!” Pv2.Rodgers called him out as they jumped down through the hole-- the spiral stairway now right in front of them.

Another humvee which was demolishing the second floor was now several meters behind the humvees, turning its ‘head’ around and spotting the soldiers who had just jumped down through the hole.

“Shit Shit Shit!” Mike remarked at the hammer-5 as the floor beneath the vehicles started to give in--section by section--tilting as the robot turned its attention at them.

Quickly, Rodgers and Nelson grabbed Collins from the roof of the humvee, he was panting while bleeding through his mouth; easing him down fast as the others opened the doors.

“Get in!” Mark instructed as they rushed into the vehicles, placing Collins at the very back of the first humvee, and jumping in as the vehicles accelerated towards the stairs; climbing over rubble, charging forward as sections of the floor fell in just behind their wheels.

With the falling floor, the Hammer-5 behind them fell through, as the wrecked one from above dropped down and hovered just before falling through.

Randomly, it fired at the humvees as they raced down the cracked, rubble filled, spiral staircase; striking the curvature of walls in a random fashion as the vehicles accelerated.

Half of the left side tires of the humvees were hanging off the stair cases, and to avoid falling over, the drivers ‘squeezed’ the right sides of the vehicles against the cracking right walls; the metal rubbing against the cement and ‘sparking’ as the right side mirrors folded in.

“You better be waiting up front Corporal!” Mark commanded through the *comm.* as the vehicles got to the first floor--which was buried under entire floor sections, big

pieces of walls, dead bodies, and huge concrete blocks. Sand and cement pieces were constantly 'raining down' as the bombardments continued, with the building collapsing in stages.

"We're going to be a little late!" Cpl. Brian replied.

"What!" Mark exclaimed, "We won't make it if you don't cover our arses Corporal!" He explained.

"Copy that staff sergeant but it's falling apart out here! We're struggling to get through! These things are all over the damn place!"

Outside the slowly collapsing hotel, more Hammer-5s were bursting out onto the surface from the tunnels below, charging up through vehicles and fiercely hammering the entire place.

"Extraction Actual to command, do you read!" The Staff Sergeant tried to call in. "Command this is Extraction Actual, we've got the president, do you read got damn it!" He insisted as they drove down a hill of crashed blocks, with the partially wrecked robot following while trying to shoot them down.

Towards what was ones the magnificent entrance, the vehicles charged as the other Hammer-5 struggled to rise from underneath the rubble.

"I can't get through!" Mark his soldiers.

"What the fuck Staff Sergeant!" Private Rodgers asked.

"It's jammed!" Mark said as the vehicles accelerated up a big piece of floor-- which was angled upwards towards the entrance.

Just outside the tower, two hammer-5s were hovering above the crashed cars, moving in fast towards the entrance, out of which the two humvees stormed out into the air, speeding past above them and landing on the road just behind them.

“Got damn it Brian!” Mark complained as the robots adjusted themselves and turned back around to humvees driving away. And on locking onto them, they opened their rocket pods as a Rotor Drone swooped in from behind a six story building--pounding them with several rounds of rockets as they tried to adjust themselves.

Across the sky, roared the squadrons of attack helicopters and rotor drones, getting into the fight as the last two humvees sped in from the side of the falling hotel.

“We got air support!” Cpl. Brian said through the radio.

“Copy that Brian! Get back to formation!” Mark instructed as the two humvees made their way through the wide, jammed road, speeding towards the first two several hundred meters ahead.

Crossing the dusty, misty sky were white and orange trails of missiles and rockets; flying across in all directions as the battle entered an all new level.

At one of the streets below, a group of four Hammer-5s heavily adjusted themselves and pulled out *titanium clamps*, which they used to very firmly ‘bolt’ themselves onto the road surface while opening their concealed Anti-Aircraft missile racks.

High above them was a flight of four attack helicopters; which made *a pass* and bombarded their formation. They took out one of the robots, maiming another and barely causing any harm to the other two. As the helicopters circled back to make another pass, the three robots ‘re-bolted’ themselves and re-opened their A-A pods. And on *locking* onto the choppers, they fired a total of about thirty, lethal *anti-aircraft missiles*--several of which completely blew up three of the helicopters, blowing off the tail section of the fourth, and causing it to spin towards an office tower inside of which the employees ran from their cover as it crashed in.

"We've got our lines back!" Abie told everyone as she rushed back towards her station.

"Call him! Call him now!" Michaels instructed as the officers responsible made the radio call happen--listening in as they attempted to contact the evac team.

"Extraction Actual do you read me? Over?" Michaels called with no response. "Staff Sergeant do you read me, over?" he called again and waited, no response, after which some *radio noise* picked up on speaker. "Staff Sergeant!" Michaels called again as the radio noise began to clear.

"... and this is Extraction Actual! We have the president! Do you read me!" Mark continued to call in as everyone involved sighing in some relief, "What the hell happened back there!" Mark continued,

"Technical issue but we fixed it, please advise on the president's condition? Over?"

"Couple scratches, but he's alright!" Mark responded.

"Hell of a stunt back there Staff Sergeant! Good job!"

"Thank you sir."

"We need you to make way to Liberty airfield five miles south of your location; area too hot for those choppers to land, trusting you to handle this Staff sergeant!"

"Copy that sir! Mapping route now." Mark assured--as the president spoke up into the radio: "Do you have Stephens yet?" He inquired.

"Sir?" Sec Def exclaimed upon hearing his voice.

"Do you have him? He's got to answer for all of this!" The president continued.

"The team is heading over to bring him here as we speak, he's fine." Sec Def. informed him.

"Have you seen, what is happening out here?" The President asked with grief through the radio, "Have you seen what we've done?" He continued as they listened silently. "Even God can't forgive us for this secretary. He can't." They reflected as he continued. "Dead bodies, of innocent children, women, just all, over the place. How shall we explain this?" He asked them as they remained silent--reflecting as the four humvees sped swiftly through the street--approaching a junction.

"Watch out!" Private Mike--who was in the first humvee-- yelled through the radio just as they were crossing the junction. And as Mark and the others quickly turned their heads right to see what had caused him to yell, two missiles from two, fast approaching Hammer-5s struck the right side of their vehicle.

In the explosion, the armored metal on the right side folded-in slightly as the humvee rolled leftwards into the air; with the tight seatbelts keeping everyone strapped in as they turned, and fell through the entrance of an unfinished tower--crashing down on the left side and sliding on the floor through several of the many support pillars.

Losing control, the second humvee drove into the same building before colliding to a stop into a pillar. In front of the building, the last two screeched to a dead stop, as Cpl. Brian and the others swung out the doors while loading their missile launcher, taking firing positions behind the 'safer side' of the humvees opposite of which the robots started firing.

From behind the cover, the soldiers launched their missiles towards the closest Hammer-5, reloading and launching again--pounding the robot which started falling apart--keeping at it as it approached while shooting at the humvees which began to wreck.

Backwards towards the building, the soldiers retreated while shooting; as a rotor drone flew in above and tore apart the first, partially wrecked Hammer-5.

“Stay with me!” Rodgers begged as he helped Nelson attend to the unconscious Collins.

“Get back!” Brian shouted as he led the eight soldiers in backing away into the building, with the Hammer-5 storming in through the remaining portion of the entrance after them.

“We’ve got to move to the back! Go!” Mark instructed as they started moving the barely conscious President and the unconscious Collins towards the ‘shielded side’ of their fallen humvee.

Brian and the others turned the robot’s attention away from them by firing intensely at it—causing it to fire back at them as they used the pillars for cover while reloading.

Through the pillars, it kept charging randomly as it tried to locate the President; with Brian and the others still distracting its focus with their heavy fire, getting its attention and once again, drawing it towards them.

To *suppress* them, it turned back and fired heavily, demolishing the pillars behind which they were taking cover before turning again towards the humvee—at which it quickly fired rockets which struck its armored chassis—‘pushing’ the vehicle against the soldiers who were attending to the wounded behind it.

Through the entrance, the rotor drone rushed in and hovered, helping Brian and the others in attacking the persistent beast.

“We have to keep moving towards the back door!” Mark suggested as the Hammer-5 divided its attention between the heavily firing drone, and the soldiers.

“Cover to cover!” Mark instructed, as they got into a formation, taking advantage of the drone’s distraction and shielding the two agents who supported the barely conscious president between them, together with Rodgers and Nelson who carried the unconscious Collins.

Mark led the way in assisting Brian and the others to suppress the Robot, while moving backwards towards the door which led to the back of the building. Following backwards while shooting, Brian and the other soldiers followed them, backing away as the Hammer-5 rammed through the pillars and adjusted itself into a hover--releasing a massive Electronic pulse which fried the drone’s circuits and the soldiers’ earpieces.

Out of control, the drone flew around as the hammer-5 re-adjusted itself and blew it up into pieces; after which it immediately charged towards the escaping soldiers.

At the back of the incomplete building was a narrow back path; most of which was piled up with compressed garbage stacked up in layers to form some kind of ‘platform’. The back path itself was pure flattened earth, along the sides on which a lot of construction machinery and tools were covered.

Out the raised back door, *Extraction Actual* came while shooting and shielding their wounded, going up the ‘garbage platform’ on top of which they turned and started running towards its edge.

“Into that building!” Mark told them as they rushed towards the end of the trash platform; with the robot rushing out behind them and standing on the garbage--clearly *locking on* all of them--and as they hurried to jump down the platform, it chose its weapon and fired without hesitation.

The missile fiercely approached as the soldiers were just about to jump down the platform, with Cpl. Mike immediately turning around and throwing himself on its trajectory. As the missile struck him, it instantly blew up; absorbing the impact and part

of the explosion whose shockwave pushed all the others off their feet--falling off the garbage towards the flattened, sandy surface down in front.

Onto the earth, all of them crashed; as huge amounts of garbage from the pile poured all over them. Mark's vision became too bright and blurred, his ears ringing. And to reduce the 'light', he slowly raised his injured gloved hand in front of his face, seeing partially as the Hammer-5 hovered across from behind him, landing in front of them and opening its rocket pods.

#

SALVATION

Just as Mark was waiting for the robot to blow them into the afterlife, a partly wrecked, armored SUV rushed through the air above him--ramming the Hammer-5 and crashing it into the back wall of the building which was behind it. As the vehicle landed, its doors swung open, letting out Master Sergeant Simon and the three surviving members of his team, heavily armed as they were in Iran.

Immediately, they started firing at the beast, destroying it with intense, explosive machine gun rounds as Mark struggled to recover.

“Mike!” The noise of Pvt. Nelson mourning ‘zoomed’ back into his ears as he struggled to get up, his vision returning as he looked at Miller, who was struggling towards Cpl. Collins, trying to wake him before realizing he was already dead.

As Simon and his men rushed back towards them, Mark gathered strength, and struggled up, his strength returning as he picked up his weapon and rushed towards the struggling, bleeding President.

Partly conscious, the president was lying between the two secret service agents, trembling in excruciating pain from thick piece of glass which had pierced through his foot--cutting through his profusely bleeding flesh and touching his bone.

Towards him, Mark and Simon rushed--working together to getting him up quickly but carefully--as Smoky, Dante, and Rusty moving to assist the two secret service agents, and the soldiers to get back up on their feet.

On the streets and buildings around, several Hammer-5s were still charging up from below the surface, moving through the walls and converging towards them.

“Thanks for the assist! What’s your unit?” Mark asked Simon as they started moving the President.

“Not now! We have to get him out of here!” He said to mark,

“Agreed!” Mark replied,

“Get the others! Into that building!” He instructed as his men assisted the other soldiers towards the building--onto which they had rammed the Hammer-5.

“Aaagh! Get the hell out of here, go! Aaaagh!” One of the secret service agents who had shielded the president told Dante who was trying to help him up, with blood pouring out of his mouth and several of his bones broken.

“We can’t just leave you out here! Come on man!” Dante tried to get him up.

“Go! Go!” he insisted, “I’m not going to make it that long! Get the president out of here! Go!” He shouted.

“Dante!” Smoky called while dragging Nelson away, pulling him and preventing him from running back towards the spot of Corporal Mike’s death.

From the agent, Dante backed away, following the others towards the building as the Hammer-5s violently made way towards them.

#

High above the devastated streets, a grey, Avenger-E, winged military drone gracefully flew between the towers through the mist, focusing its state of the art cameras on the streets below.

“I’ve got them!” The drone pilot said over the *comm.* as the high definition image captured by the drone’s super camera appeared on one of the big screens. It showed the president’s location as the soldiers rushed him into the building.

“Is that, Simon!” Gen. Michaels wondered,

“I’ll be damned!” Morez remarked.

“Does he have any radio on him?” Michaels inquired.

“Don’t know for sure.” Jack replied.

“Find out. Find out now.” He told Jack. “They’re going to need that air general.” He reminded Morez.

#

High in the city sky, roared a flight of five apaches, flying in an *arrow formation* with the flight leader’s plane at the tip.

“Alright fellas, we’ve got orders to rotate and cover a team saving the President down there!” The flight leader told his pilots through the radios.

“The President!” one of the pilots asked.

“Damn straight. Form up on me.” He instructed as he led the helicopters in banking sharply towards the building below.

Back on the back street, The Hammer-5’s were converging on the soldier’s, attacking just as they were rushing into the building which was a truck parking lot.

“Team Sergeant? Team Sergeant do you read me?” Michaels called through Simon’s earpiece--as two Hammer-5s charged-in in front of them from the front side of the parking lot.

“I hear you general!” Simon replied as he started engaging the on-coming machines. Behind them, the other robots were just about to move in, as missiles fiercely struck them from the apaches which had just arrived.

“You are K.I.A! What the hell are you doing here!” The general wondered.

“Saving this city! Saving the President!” Simon replied while fiercely and heavily engaging; working with the other soldiers to cover the Lead agent who was moving the President cover to cover, behind the trucks and pillars.

“Any idea what the hell is happening team sergeant!” The Secretary asked.

“It’s an invasion secretary!” Simon replied just before a shockwave from an exploding truck pushed them backwards onto the ground, sending dust and parts of vehicles all over the place.

“Simon?” Michaels called again through his earpiece, as he shook his head while getting back up from the dust with the others.

“Can’t talk now general! We need a way out of this mess ASAP!” Simon said while getting back into the fight--fiercely shooting through the dust and stopping the two robots from advancing.

“Copy that but we lost contact with *Extraction Actual*, what is the condition of the President!” The Secretary asked.

“In bad shape but alive!”

“Copy that Simon! Sending an APC team towards you!” Michaels informed him. “They’ve got some tools you guys might need! Take care of the president! Over!” he instructed as Simon continued with the relentless engagement.

“Sit tight! Help is coming!” He shouted to all of them while reloading behind a support pillar.

“He’s losing a lot of blood!” Dante yelled while attending to the president who was now struggling to breathe--his deeply cut leg still bleeding dangerously through the bandages.

“We need to pull out this glass! It’s killing him!” The Lead agent, whose head side was also bleeding, suggested to Pvt. Nelson.

“I know but we can’t do it now!” Nelson advised against it, “We won’t be able to contain the further bleeding!” He explained as he helped nurse the leg behind the cover of the trucks.

While shooting, one of the Hammer-5’s heavy bullets tore through Smoky’s foot while he was switching cover; causing him to slide and fall on his side, cursing in pain as Rusty kept shooting while moving to cover him.

#

With the assistance of the helicopters and drones, the surviving squads all over the streets were still fiercely engaging the hardened machines; fighting hard to keep them from advancing while buying the surviving civilians time to get away.

The ground was shaking, with towers cracking; breaking and crashing on the streets on which many civilians and soldiers laid dead, with several injured crying in pain while struggling to crawl to safety.

Inside a ravaged, five story hospital building, an entire platoon of sixty was engaged; their numbers reduced to about half by the Hammer-5s which were taking the place apart mercilessly.

Under Sergeant Lugo's command, *Extraction* moved into the hospital through the crumbling entrance, moving into the ground floor where soldiers were engaging a partly destroyed Hammer-5; a resistant beast which was shooting while rushing through the remaining pieces of what were ones the walls.

All over the cracked floors, were broken beds and bodies of dead patients, medical equipment scattered and lying on top of the dead nurses and doctors.

As *Extraction* moved in, they were received by the Lieutenant and a few of his soldiers; informing them that he had been instructed to help them get Stephens to the *extraction point*.

Joining forces, they started fighting their way up stairs. Getting to the first floor on which they moved over a wreckage of a Hammer-5, and assisted the engaged soldiers to put down another one.

Violently, the machine was charging across first floor, moving through the walls while shooting and suddenly ramming some of the many soldiers who were engaging it from behind cover.

While shielding Stephens, the soldiers moved across the place and battled upwards towards the second floor; on which they were forced to take cover behind a hill of blocks as two Hammer-5s were tearing the floor apart--obliterating the soldiers who were engaging them.

From the roof through the upper floors, a big 'hole' extended and stopped at the second floor--on which were wreckages of two, apache helicopters that appeared to have crashed into each other before crashing into the hospital.

Lugo and team joined the fight from behind cover, as a Wild Beast charged in through the left wall a few meters in front of them. And immediately, it started heavily engaging the robots, roaring its powerful engines while easily moving about the place and taking 'the pressure' from the soldiers.

"Where the hell are you captain! We're losing it down here!" Lugo asked through his radio.

"We just lost part of our escort!" The black hawk captain replied. "Not going to make it to the Landing Zone! I'm bringing her down 'that hole'! Over!" He added quickly.

"Copy that captain! Making way to the third floor! Over!" Lugo informed him after which they moved from cover. And with the help of the Wild Beast, they battled upstairs--fighting with the soldiers through the wards and up the barely standing staircases.

The third floor was devastated. With many decapitated soldiers, patients, their doctors and nurses lying dead in pools of their own blood. While hurrying through the devastation, the soldiers moved past a Wild Beast which was heavily wrecked--struggling in vain to move under a mountain of rubble which was covering it.

On the other side across 'the big hole', was an almost completely wrecked Hammer-5--also struggling to move after an intense battle it had had with the Wild Beast and the dead soldiers.

With some 'mechanical effort', it managed to turn its cannon on the soldiers, shooting and 'dropping' several of them as they tried to get to cover behind the wrecked Wild Beast. And as they took cover, the black hawk helicopter arrived above the hole.

"You've got to clear the area Sergeant! I'm coming down now!" its captain yelled as the soldiers pulled out their missile launchers under the lieutenant's instruction. And after loading them, they peeked from behind cover and launched the explosives across the hole--Flying and striking the Hammer-5 as they reloaded again. With the last rounds of rockets, they almost completely incapacitated it, as the descending Black hawk stopped at the fourth floor.

As the blackhawk hovered, the soldier behind the mini-gun at its door started shooting at the hammer-5s on the upper floors, suppressing them as the captain tried to control the hover.

"Air pressure too low Sergeant! You're going to have to come to me!" The captain said through their radios.

"Come on!" The Lieutenant 'pushed' Lugo, leading the way out of cover and through the devastation towards the fourth floor.

Randomly scattered all over the structure, were several Hammer-5s, whose surprise appearances slowed down the soldiers and forced them to take cover.

"I'm losing pressure Sergeant! You got to come in now!" The captain insisted.

"You have to keep moving!" The Lieutenant supported the Captain, as they swung from cover again--with the cross fire from the other engaged soldiers on the

floor shooting down another of Lugo's men and forcing all of them to quickly get into formation--shielding Stephens while shooting and proceeding through the heavy fighting.

"Stairs!" One of the Lieutenant's soldiers pointed out, just before he got struck with several fifty caliber rounds.

"In coming!" Shouted another as a Hammer-5 randomly swept heavy machine-gun fire through the place. Taking down another soldier as they rushed for the broken stair cased.

"I can't hold her much longer Sergeant!" The Captain informed him as the plane started the shake unsteadily. Bowing low to avoid the sweeping gun fire, the Lieutenant led them towards the stairway, pushing them to proceed as heavy fire sprayed all around them.

Just as they stepped on the stairs, the cases started to crumble, forcing the soldiers to jump from piece to piece and proceed towards the fourth floor regardless.

"Come On!" The Captain yelled.

"Keep moving Sergeant! Keep moving!" The Lieutenant pushed as he stopped with his men on the fourth floor, keeping the randomly firing robots away, and protecting the helicopter as the surviving members of *Extraction* covered Stephens while making a run for its door.

"Come on!" The pilot insisted as they ran through the crossfire, with Stephens stumbling and falling in exhaustion. Quickly, one of Lugo's soldiers grabbed him and helped him on his feet, running on with him straight towards the helicopter's door.

"Jump Sergeant! Jump!" The Captain insisted as they approached the door--jumping of the floor and into the helicopter--with the soldiers at the door grabbing and pulling them in as the helicopter started to ascend.

#

Back in the truck parking lot, *Extraction Actual* was still holding against the two, death resistant robots; with the apaches keeping the many other aggressive ones from getting into the building from any other angle.

Covering Smoky, Rusty was still shooting from beside the pillar, which was a few steps behind Simon, Brian, and Mark who were engaged at the 'frontline'.

Slugs were all over the floor, dust in the air, with Nelson and Dante still performing first aid on the president who was now completely unconscious.

"He needs proper attention!" Dante shouted, just before their evac called in through Simon's earpiece.

"Extraction Actual this is Sergeant Mitchell, do you read me! Over!"

"Standing in for Extraction Actual, we read you Sergeant!" Simon replied while shooting.

"We got orders to transport you and the President to liberty airfield ASAP! Please advise on your status and that of the commander in chief! Over!"

"He's lost blood, we're doing the best but getting hammered up really bad!" Simon informed him--as a rocket exploded close to the team nursing the president.

"Extraction Actual we copy, coming in from the east! I've got a well-equipped medical team standing by! Just have to hold on a little longer! Over!"

"Copy that Sergeant! We're going to push through towards you! Over and out!" Simon informed Mitchell and resumed his shooting.

Under his instruction, the other soldiers started to move, with Dante and the lead agent carrying the President between them with his hands over their shoulders.

Rusty helped Smoky on his feet, supporting him as they moved in the same fashion--cover to cover while the capable ones kept the robots away.

As they crossed out onto the devastated street, the Apaches covered them from the air; shooting and suppressing the Hammer-5s that attempted to engage them as they crossed and headed into the back of a classy, glass restaurant.

"We're coming in through the restaurant!" Simon updated Mitchell.

"Got it!" Mitchell replied, as his convoy suddenly sped in from the left of a junction at the front side of the same restaurant.

It was led by two, fiercely firing Wild Beasts, which were clearing the way for two, modified, M1126 Infantry Couriers (ICV)--eight by eight wheeled, armored vehicles--behind which two more Wild Beasts followed closely.

The convoy stopped just close to the restaurant's entrance, as the helicopters that had covered *Extraction Actual* flew in and hovered above it--helping the Wild Beasts to clear the street.

Out the infantry couriers, Mitchell led his team towards the restaurant, out of which Simon and Mark led their soldiers and the injured.

"This way!" Mitchell showed them the way towards the vehicles, with his soldiers leading the injured into the second ICV, which was modified into a properly equipped ambulance.

Into the first ICV, Simon and the other soldiers entered. And under heavy protection of the five apaches and the Wild Beasts, the convoy drove off.

Through the heavily jammed, wrecked roads, the convoy sped; with several of the Hammer-5s coming after them while shooting their missiles. And by swerving, the vehicles dodged the explosives which struck the road surface dangerously close to their wheels.

“Ram through that shit! Keep moving!” Simon insisted at the driver as the convoy accelerated through the stagnant cars on the freeway, speeding towards the airfield. Through the chaos, one of the explosions punctured the left front wheel of the first ICV.

“We lost a god damn wheel!” The driver shouted.

“Just keep driving!” Mitchell insisted as the vehicles pushed on.

#

Ones a small field reserved for light aircrafts, Liberty Airfield had been converted into a fully functional, helicopter airbase due to the circumstances. And at specific points all over the field, temporary command centers and hangers had been erected.

All over the field, engineers and pilots were rushing about, fueling the gunships and servicing the rotor drones for deployment.

At the center of the small tarmac, were four, powered up military helicopters, one of which was an advanced, NH90. A medium sized, military transport helicopter, its back doors were drawn open--waiting with the three others which were heavily armed, Boeing AH-64E attack helicopters.

In opposite directions, two soldiers ran as they slid the massive airfield gates open. Others clearing the way as the convoy sped in straight towards the waiting helicopters.

From the NH90, soldiers in air force overalls rushed towards the second ICV; from which the other medics carried the unconscious President and the wounded Smoky out on stretchers. Receiving them, the medics from the ICVs explained their condition while rushing them towards the back of the helicopter.

"My job ends here Master Sergeant!" Mitchell told Simon as they shook each other's arms.

"Thank you Sergeant!" Simon appreciated.

"Good luck! Take good care of them!" Mitchell said while tapping him on the shoulder, rushing back to the convoy as an officer from the NH90 approached Simon.

"We don't have much time!" the officer from the helicopter said, as he led Simon and all the other soldiers towards the NH90, on which they were helped aboard after the injured.

After the doors drew close, the four helicopters lifted off at max power; rising through the smoke and mist away from the devastation down below.

#

"They just lifted off." Gen. Morez informed Sec Def as he got off the phone.

"I need to talk to them." Sec Def requested, as Abie connected the phone to the choppers.

"Team Sergeant?" Sec Def called.

"Shit Secretary! The damn city's falling!" Simon complained.

"How's the president?" The Sec Def asked.

"Going to be fine!" Mark replied.

"Mind explaining all of this Master Sergeant?" Michaels asked.

"Edison." Simon said.

"I don't follow." Michaels remarked.

"That bastard is causing all of this." Simon stated.

"Edison died! How the hell could he be doing this?" Morez inquired as they listened.

"It's quite a story, can't talk on the phone."

"Understood Master Sergeant, I'll have the pilots bring you, and your team ASAP." Morez informed him.

"How else can we stop this?" Sec Def asked.

"Believe me Secretary, there's nothing you can do about it. We just have to find that bastard." Simon assured--as the President was heard coughing through the radio.

"Sit back down sir! You have to relax you..." One of the medics was heard pleading with him.

"Aaaagh... I'm fine!" The President was heard insisting.

"Sir!" The Secretary called.

"Stephens there yet?" The President asked.

"On his way as we speak." Michaels informed him.

"And what's all this chatter about Edison?" He asked before coughing again, unable to breathe easily.

"You have to lay back sir!" The medic was heard pleading with him again.

"I said I'm fine!" The President insisted back, coughing harder.

"Sir you have to lay back! Please! You have to relax!"

"Get me to the pentagon." he instructed through his coughs.

"But sir your condition..."

“Take me, to the pentagon, right now!” He ordered. “Next time I wake up, I want to be in there!” He persisted.

“Prepare the conference room.” Sec Def instructed one of the civilian officers who had been standing behind him, and as he turned away to get it done, a young officer in combat uniform came from the side and whispered to his ear. As the secretary listened, he stared for a moment, after which he rushed off towards the corridor after the officer.

Just outside the building, several military officers were keeping watch at the entrance, as the Blackhawk descended on the helipad with its door drawing open.

Upon touching down, Lugo and the surviving members of his squad stepped outside and helped Stephens exit the helicopter. And as he stepped down, he stood and watched as the furious Secretary walked very fast towards him.

“You better have a very! Very clear explanation for all of this!” He started demanding angrily as he rushed towards him.

“I can explain this!” Stephens started as they got closer to each other.

“Explain this!” The secretary asked. “Do you have any idea how much damage has been caused!” he continued.

“I don’t know what happened but...”

“You were put in charge of this project because you said you could get the job done didn’t you!”

“Yes! And I can...”

“We are facing a crisis of an imaginable nature because...”

“I don’t know what happened!” Stephens yelled it out, “But I can explain it!” He continued.

For a moment the two stared eye to eye as the wind from the helicopter's rotors blew over their hair.

"Conference room! Now!" Sec Def told Stephens after which he turned away.

The conference room was well lit and separated from the busy Command and Control Centre by glass wall. And angled in at the centre, was a 100 inch, glass screen facing the glass table around which were equally spaced chairs.

At one of the chairs sat Stephens, who was facing the Secretary on the opposite side of the table; watching as he stopped pacing before placing his hands flat on the table top.

"Explain to me doctor, I'm listening." The Secretary demanded.

"Someone is controlling the robots." Stephens started.

"And how exactly does that happen!"

"I don't know for sure but the fault didn't come from our side, our servers weren't even ready! Someone out there has another server that's giving them orders! It's the only way all of this can happen! The only way!" Stephens assured the secretary who stared into his eyes.

The officers and technicians in the Command and Control Centre started to stand up from their stations--facing the corridor, with the secretary turning his attention to the glass door as Abie rushed towards it from the outside.

"He's here." She informed him after peeping in, with the Secretary glancing at Stephens after which he walked towards the door.

With him were Simon, Mark, and all the other surviving soldiers, The President limped in through the corridor. Everyone standing up as they stepped into the vast room and stopped. Silence sweeping as he looked around.

“A lot of damage has been caused today. A lot of innocent lives lost.” He started as they reflected for a moment. “A great city is at the brink of total collapse, falling apart right before our eyes! I find it a deeply disturbing irony that this day we have to fight an enemy that we built ourselves! That we have to be attacked so brutally by creations of our own hands! How do we explain this?” He asked and paused as they continued to reflect.

“It’s a disturbing thought to bear, but I’ve been informed that the cause of all this is much more complicated than it appears. I will stay here today, until all of this is over. Let us get to the bottom of it!” He sent them back to their work as the Secretary reached for his hand,

“Sir?” He called him as they shook hands.

“Where is he?” The President asked him.

“Conference room.” He replied. After which he led him towards it.

“You’re coming with us Simon.” Michaels told him as they followed the President and Sec Def towards the conference room.

Minutes later, all of them were in the conference room, standing around the table as they settled in.

“Tell them what you told me.” The Sec Def asked Stephens, who hesitated for a moment.

“Someone is controlling the Hammer-5s.” He started.

“Someone?” The president questioned. “Who could put up such a complex, classified control system? On their own!” He questioned hi. “Weren’t you in charge of this project?”

“I was sir”

"And so how could this happen? Behind your back!" The President questioned.

"Edison." Simon answered while looking down at the table, everyone turning their eyes at him as he kept gazing at the glass on which his hands were placed.

"The, Edison?" Mark asked, for clarity.

"Exactly." Simon assured.

"Edison died? He was cremated days ago?" The President wondered with the others.

"How do you know of this?" The Secretary inquired, as Simon paused for a moment before he started.

"Thirty hours ago, we were in Iran to grab some classified weapon whose signal had shown up on your screens?" He said referring to the Pentagon.

"Damn straight, and we got word you mysteriously disappeared without a trace? We were just working on that when all of this started?" Michaels confirmed his story.

"Turned out the signal came from some kind of, super robot Edison was using to test some, concept." Wondering as Simon continued. "Some old, modified Hammer-4 or something, it attacked us right after we got to Sharif."

"The weapon's dealer?" Michaels followed.

"The weapons dealer, Edison had offered him some kind of deal, the bastard was going to field test the thing on a location Sharif was to provide, in exchange for a classified weapon."

"The Hammer-4? That was the weapon he was going to give them?" Michaels asked.

"Most likely, all signs pointed to it, there was nothing else there." Simon said.

"Explain general?" The secretary asked Michaels on his thoughts.

"You say the robot was old?" Michaels asked Simon.

"All scratched up." He confirmed.

"DoD usually installs a secret beacon right after we commission the robots. They send a signal after sensing they're in hostile territory illegally--helps us keep track of them during overseas missions. That must have been the signal we tracked. He must not have known the beacon would start transmitting right after he powered the robot, or even that it was there."

"So Edison manages to play dead, according to this story, and somehow moves this, decommissioned machine all that far, across the planet? How did he do all of that? Without anybody noticing? What was he testing there to begin with?" The President asked Simon, who paused for another moment before proceeding:

"Sharif's guys were helping him set up shop when they saw the plans, with everything laid out."

"What plans?" The President asked.

"Turns out he was planning some kind of invasion, of the damn city, his own city."

He said as they got shocked with the information, paying more attention as he continued.

"He was going to take control of the Hammer-5s, and was probably testing how he would do it." He explained.

"If Edison was to give them the Hammer-4, why did it attack you, and them?" Morez asked.

“He must have had it re-programmed remotely? It detected you as hostiles, together with the Arabs you were, associating with?” Stephens noticed.

“And you got this from Sharif, and his men?” The Secretary asked Simon.

“All of it, Sharif himself and one of his men. We questioned them.” He confirmed.

“What if Sharif was just lying?” Mark asked.

“Exactly what we thought at first, until one of his men told us exactly what was going to happen.”

“The attack?” The Secretary asked,

“Exactly” Simon confirmed. “No ideas on why he planned it, we’ll just have to find that out from him, soon.” He concluded.

“If that is the case, where the hell is he?” The President asked, with everybody thinking for a moment.

“His grave.” Simon said while still looking down at the table. “His fucking mausoleum.” He added.

“Holy shit!” Michaels remarked, as ‘it came to him’.

“What?” The secretary wondered, as the General turned and looked at Simon.

“The got damn mausoleum?” He said.

“If it’s him, he’s got to be there!” He said as everyone else remained ‘in the dark’.

#

Ones again, all of them were gathered in the command centre, watching the big screens as Abie, Jack, and the other technicians performed *scans* of the mausoleum area.

“Negative!” Abie said out loud. “Nothing’s there! Only earth!” She added. Leaving everyone thinking as Stephens realized something.

“Scan for reinforced metals only!” He suggested.

“There’s metal all over the earth?” Abie questioned--with good intentions.

“Scan it!” Michaels insisted and she started the *scan*, punching keyboards as the satellite image started to change; displaying all the metals in the ground around the area.

“Holy shit.” Gen. Morez remarked while stepping closer, as they got amazed by the result, some kind of *metallic structure* was definitely under the mausoleum, something big.

“What the hell is that?” The President wondered.

“Some kind of, bunker.” Sec Def observed.

“Freaking genius.” Michaels exclaimed as they watched the structure.

#

THE BUNKER

The tilt-rotor aircraft whose back door was open flew in straight through the mist; speeding at a constant altitude between the heavily destroyed towers above the city turned battle field.

While avoiding looking outside the door, Stephens tried to control his breath as he tightening his seat belt.

“Ones we find the guy, I want to be the one that kills him!” Simon requested as he loaded his heavy riffle. Dante, Rusty and Smoky, whose leg was bandaged under his trousers, were loading up alongside Brian, and Mark; who was adjusting a small camera fitted at the chest section of his loaded utility vest.

One of the big screens inside the Pentagon was showing a high definition image of the back of the tilt rotor - a feed from the camera on Mark’s chest - as another showed feed from a camera on the avenger drone flying high above the mausoleum.

“Alright General, make us a hole.” Simon requested through the *comm* which was on speaker.

“Drop it.” Morez instructed the drone pilot over the phone.

“Dropping now.” The drone pilot responded as he executed the order.

Up in the sky, high above the tilt rotor, was the winged Avenger-E drone; which opened its bay and dropped the *v-bomb*. An explosive, the *v-bomb* was the size of a tank shell; falling freely and vertically through the dirty air, and dropping past the tilt rotor. It ‘sank’ straight into the center of the mausoleum, and for a moment, nothing happened; after which ‘blastings’ occurred as the earth around its impact ‘fell in’ into a tunnel.

Under Simon’s lead, the six soldiers dropped the ropes out the back of the plane; along which they rappelled down towards the tunnel with the nervous Stephens coming out last. Into the tunnel, they descended as soil kept pouring down around

them; getting lower as they spotted a bright, smooth, white light shining out of a 'hole'. It appeared to be coming out of the side of what appeared to be a white corridor.

Upon landing on the sand at the bottom of the tunnel, the soldiers enlarged the hole by knocking-in the constituent blocks with their rifle butts. Inside the pentagon, all the officers involved were following the mission through the camera on Mark's chest; watching as they stepped inside the enlarged hole, walking into the white corridor.

From the glassy floor tiles to the walls, the corridor was all white; with black plates of strong glass vertically dividing the corridor's sides into sections.

"Jesus Christ." Dante remarked to himself as they cautiously walked in, looking around the strange, empty place. And as they were 'processing' the scene, the unexpected happened.

Suddenly, this big, complex, 'evil' looking machine **STORMED IN** through the wall a few meters in front of them; a beast that looked much, much more advanced, and much more dangerous. It appeared as if it was unfinished; with its hardened steel skeleton, its thousands of connecting wires, and several of its titanium moving parts visible through the 'gaps' left by the covering steel.

Big and scary, it stopped them right on their tracks; and as they stared at its supposed, black glass face, it just stared back at them without moving.

"Take cover!" Simon suddenly yelled as he led the move to take cover; the machine opening fire as they rushed behind the hardened glass partitions, behind which Mark shielded Stephens as they started firing back.

"We got to push it back!" Simon shouted as he fired from behind the glass; the others following his lead as they focused their fire on the mechanical beast.

In a zigzag fashion, Simon moved out to the next glass partitions through the spraying, 40 caliber bullets; maintaining heavy against the robot's hard body with a force that started to push it backwards.

"Target its got damn cannons! Don't give it a fucking break!" Mark advised as they focused their fire on its 'guns' - causing its intense fire to randomly hit the corridor and the glass behind which they were taking cover.

Relentlessly, they struggled to push back the robot; taking turns to reload and firing as it moved all the way back into a white, sophisticated lab area--in which they kept pushing it towards the other side--where it found enough room to move about and take a position.

Properly, it returned overwhelming fire; forcing the soldiers to take cover behind the work stations, which started cracking and falling apart due to the constant bombardments.

Above their heads, several of the rockets flew past; striking the walls in front them as pieces of the cracking tiles flew all over.

"We got to blast this thing!" Dante suggested through the noise.

"It's too close!" Mark disagreed.

"We don't have a choice!" Simon supported the blasting idea.

"Blast grenades! On me!" Dante yelled as all of them pulled out the grenades--turning the two halves of the oval devices in opposite directions until they blinked red.

Under Dante's count, they peeked out of cover and threw the grenades towards the restlessly shooting machine; rolling on the floor close to the machine's limbs as the soldiers fell back behind cover.

“Everybody hold on!” Simon shouting as they held tight behind the cracking work station--Covering their ears before the huge, blasting explosions occurred as each of the grenades went off.

As the explosion settled, they peered from behind cover into the devastated lab area; trying to get a view of the dead machine while getting up slowly.

“Where the hell did it go!” Dante wondered as he looked around for a wreckage--which was nowhere to be seen.

“We better keep moving.” Simon advised as they cautiously proceeded into the next corridor--almost similar to the previous except for the black, polished, steel elevator doors at the far end.

“Better get to it doctor.” Mark suggested as they got to the elevator door; after which Stephens pulled out a hacking device and started hacking the *access panel*.

While waiting on Stephens who was blinking repeatedly while bypassing the security on the access panel, *a noise* from back in the lab area caught Simon’s attention. He turned around, as his eyes opened wide in disbelief.

“You better make it quick doctor.” He said while starring as the others turned around; bearing witness as the severely wrecked body of the machine began pulling itself together. It was re-assembling fast; with folded parts of its body ‘pulling and sticking’ together in perfect positions like pieces of a lego set.

Randomly, it started firing at the soldiers who ones again rushed to the glasses for cover; escaping its random rockets which struck the elevator doors and distracted Stephens who was trying his best.

“You better hurry up doc!” Smoky shouted as he covered Stephen’s; helping the others keep at the Machine which climbed onto the ceiling and dropped at different spots all over the lab area.

“Open!” Stephens finally yelled as the door into the well-lit, black elevator opened, with the soldiers moving backwards towards it while maintaining fire.

From the far end of the devastated lab area, the machine locked onto the soldiers; launching a properly targeted missile at them just as they were rushing into the elevator. And as it was jetting towards them, Mark quickly hit the single elevator switch with his foot, closing the doors outside of which the missile struck with a tremor.

“What the fuck was that!” Smoky wondered as the elevator started to descend. As - BOOM! - Something landed on top of it. Pausing for a moment, all of them looked up; hearing the sound again as the elevator suddenly started to descend much faster.

Aiming their heavy weapons upwards, they constantly fired at the same machine which struggled and tore a hole through the roof--insisting on getting itself inside the elevator by storming through the hole.

Pulling itself back, it rammed on the hole again and again; enlarging it as the intense fire prevented it from successfully exploding in. Repeatedly, it kept coming and they kept shooting; finally forcing it to give up and suddenly ‘disappear’ to the side.

Click! Click!, the hammers of their rifles signaled empty barrels just as the machine vanished, with silence taking over as they looked at each other’s sweating faces.

“You know what his means right?” Simon asked Mark as they looked at each other.

“We’re fucked.” Mark replied –just as the robot suddenly stormed back in from the side of the roof--squeezing itself into the elevator through the enlarged hole as the soldiers fell to the sides.

Just as it landed, Simon immediately jumped onto its ‘neck’; forcing his strong hand into its body and pulling out the wires. Following his lead, all the five soldiers

dropped their weapons and jumped onto the robot--helping Simon to plug out the cables and ruin its circuits.

By moving about vigorously, it struggled to shake them off; stamping about on the steel floor on which Stephens moved about to dodge its giant metallic limbs.

On the machine, the soldiers stuck and kept causing as much damage as they could; pulling out their side arms and pointing them into the open spaces on its body--emptying their clips into its circuits which started to spark and catch fire.

Slowly, it started to "die out", moving about more vigorously from side to side and this time, successfully ramming Dante's back hard against the elevator. While letting go, Dante yelled in pain, dropping onto the floor close to the terrified Stephens who was moving about.

While moving to ram Rusty onto the other side, he let go of his grip and dropped to the floor; saving himself and causing the machine to ram its own limb. While on the floor, Rusty pulled out his other side arm and started shooting at its metal 'joints'; which started falling apart as he dodged its steps with Stephens and Dante, lying on the floor as the giant steel limb moved over just above his head.

Out of panic, Stephens rushed up and drew the other sidearm from Smoky's thigh; assisting Rusty to shoot the lower joints of the randomly moving machine and accidentally, slicing the side of Smoky's already injured foot with a bullet.

In pain excruciating pain, Smoky yelled as he let himself fall unprepared on the floor; dodging the machine's steps with them as Mark, Brian, and Simon kept struggling to destroy it.

Emptying the clip of his side arm, Simon threw it to the side and drew a desert eagle from his back waist; pointing its mouth up the machines 'neck' and quickly blasting bullet after bullet.

As its circuits went up in massive, scary sparks, the robot finally stopped 'struggling. As the elevator crashed to a dead stop with all of the soldiers falling to the floor--coughing as the jammed doors attempted to open.

As it stumbled about out of control, its circuits continued 'sparking' and 'blasting'; before it finally shut down and started coming down towards Mark and Simon, who were lying on the floor right under it.

As it came down, the two rolled out in opposite directions as the others backed off; moving aside as it crashed down with a tremor that shook the elevator, and caused the jammed doors to open.

"We need to talk after this doctor!" Smoky said to Stephens, as they struggled up to step out of the elevator which had descended lower than its pre-designed level.

On leaving the elevator, they found themselves walking into a golden themed, lavish *living room* of what appeared to be a cool, quiet, medium sized mansion. And in that living room, a light orange, furry carpet was on the floor; around which two comfy sofas were standing while facing a medium sized, stone fire place.

Above on the ceiling, was an orange-tinted glass 'diffuser' surrounding the bulb; which was shining down softly and brightly on the glass coffee table standing between the sofas and the fire place. On the coffee table, was an empty glass that appeared to have been containing some drink; and in the fire place, a low fire was slowly dying out.

"Check all the rooms." Simon instructed as they spread out; reloading their side arms as they cautiously looked around.

Armed with the sidearm he had pulled from Smoky's thigh, Stephens remained close to Mark, looking around the place which was dead quiet. In great surprise and silence, everyone involved back in the pentagon followed the mission, as the camera moved through the very classy, vacant mansion.

Cautiously, Simon opened and walked through a door that led into what was a big, home office. Inside of which was a wide, dark brown, leather finished desk facing the door, and behind which was a dark brown, leather swivel chair.

Along one of the office walls was a big, twenty by twenty meter wide aquarium; along which was a one meter high, rectangular bed on the floor on which well kept, exotic flowers were thriving.

Several steps behind the desk, was a big, virtual-realistic window. In front of which Edison himself was standing in a two piece, black suit; holding his hands behind him as he stared 'outside' into the 'orange snow'.

On his face Edison wore an expression of deep disappointment--which he suppressing with a deep calmness as he remained undisturbed by Simon's entry.

"So much for a grave don't you think?" Simon said as the others walked in--shocked at the sight of the calm man facing away from them. The same surprise swept the entire floor inside the pentagon as they watched.

"He's alive?" Gen. Morez couldn't believe it.

"Son of a bitch?" Gen. Michaels added.

With their side arms, all the soldiers together with Stephens were lining up several steps behind the desk; facing Edison who kept staring out the 'window', calm as ever but clearly deeply troubled.

After a short while, Edison slowly turned around to face them, with his face turning slightly hard and serious as he looked at all of them.

"Why?" Simon asked Edison who was stepping forward; as everyone in the pentagon watched with questions running through their minds. How could he have been alive? All that time? Why would he do all of it? How did he do it in the first place? They quietly wondered.

"After all of this, someone still, didn't care." Edison started; not ashamed that they were watching him. "Can you imagine that? Sergeant?" He asked Simon.

"My father he -" Pausing and almost smiling for a second, "I went to see him the other day." He paused again, almost sighing in regret. "Tell me Sergeant?" He turned again to Simon, "How can one still feel worthless after achieving all of this?" He asked almost bitterly. "How can it, how can it hurt so bad?" He added.

"You, will stop this invasion, right now." Simon assured as he stepped closer, avoiding any deviation from the topic.

"Invasion?" Edison asked with a light tone,

"Where are the servers!" Simon asked out loud as Stephens keenly observed Edison--who slowly turned away to face the window ones again.

"People! Are dying!" Simon yelled at him, Edison remaining silent as Stephens keenly observed him.

"Am I supposed to care?" He asked while looking 'outside'.

"What!" Simon exclaimed at his question as the man sighed,

"I think it's too late for this Sergeant, you could be right." He said, looking very tired as he continued, "I've done things I desperately wish I could undo, no doubt about that. Those regrets, have become a part of who I am now." He paused, almost smiling again. "I realize that to spend time trying to change one's life, mmh. It's like chasing clouds." He finished as he thought to himself; turning around to face them ones again as Stephens kept his eye on him.

"No more people, have to die for whatever the reason is. You have to stop this. Right now." Simon reasoned with him, as he finally settled a sorry, yet composed gaze into Stephens's eyes who had been watching him.

“You have to tell us Edison!” Simon continued; as Stephens quickly raised his side arm and shot Edison on the chest.

“The fuck did you just do!” Mark asked as they turned and looked at Stephens with shock. Back in the pentagon, officials were dropping their files and placing their hands on their heads; standing and capping their mouths in disbelief as they stared.

Edison was their only way out of the nightmare and he had just shot him! How the hell would they end the disaster! They wondered in shock. And just as Simon turned around to face him with rage, Stephens slowly lowered his side arm,

“He was the server.” he calmly said; looking at Edison’s eyes as he fell down backwards.

Out on the streets, the Hammer-5s were starting to power down; turning on and off as they moved about out of control--With the various soldiers engaged taking advantage and hammering them with heavy fire.

“Something’s wrong!” Abie shouted as she watched her monitor – with all the shocked eyes turning to her.

“I think they’re powering down?” Jack added--taking some of the attention from her.

Inside the bunker, Edison was lying on the floor half dead; watching as Simon stared down right at his eyes, with his face now filled with nothing but hate.

Ever since he was twelve, Simon had hated Edison’s kind with a passion. He had grown up with an insatiable desire for vengeance against such ‘mass murderers’; ever since “they” took his mother from him when he was twelve, when “they” blew up the building inside of which she was working.

"Looks like the doctor's right, they appear to be shutting down." Michaels confirmed through his earpiece as he cocked his desert eagle--now with the all clear to kill him.

"So this... is how it ends?" Edison struggled to ask Simon.

"Damn right Edison, this is how it ends. For you. For all like you." He assured him as if he was the one responsible for his own mother's death. "This is how it ends." He confirmed to him.

With his mouth bleeding, Edison looked right into Simon's eyes, which reflected nothing but hatred and anger

"I'm... sorry..." Edison continued, "Please... don't... don't..." He struggled to say something as Simon pointed the desert eagle at his forehead, and pulled the trigger--looking into his eyes as he watched life depart from him.

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Over the devastated streets, the firemen struggled to put out the fires. From under rubble, armies of rescue workers struggled to pull out the thousands of trapped, crying survivors; who yelled in pain as tens of ambulances and paramedic helicopters kept flooding in.

Tens of black SUV's were parked outside the mausoleum; as the scores of FBI and NSA agents started casing the place.

Inside the pentagon conference room, the President was standing at the glass wall; starring outside at the busy employees while thinking about all that had happened. At his side, Sec Def walked in and joined him in silence.

"How do we recover from all of this?" The President asked in a low tone after a while--as they thought and stared together.

"It's just too much to process." He added after a silent moment.

"I know." The Secretary agreed with him. "But to recover is the only thing we can do now." He added. "It's all we are left to do." He concluded as he placed his hand over his shoulder, trying to console him.

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Flying away between the towers was the tilt rotor; inside of which Stephens and all the others sat quietly while thinking to themselves. Seated closest to the door, was Simon; whose elbows rested on his thighs with his hands held close to his chin, also reflecting silently and deeply while gazing.

·THE END·
