

Forsaken
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The cold, dry air filled my lungs with oxygen and ash, which rose as I sat up to glanced at John. He was standing, staring at the door.

He turned to look at me. 'We need to move, Jose. They've already sent the wolves after us,' he said, as he threw me my jacket.

I responded with a sigh as I stood up, and we tied our jackets around our waists as ash fell from the surrounding piles onto the outlines of our bodies where we had been sleeping. John picked up his gun, attached the suppressor, and went upstairs, while I packed my backpack. Soon, I heard a quiet shot and a faint shriek.

It was safe to go outside now.

John came downstairs and opened the door. I grabbed the handle of the wagon and followed him outside. I saw the body lying in a thick pile of ash.

John saw that I was worried. 'It's not human. They look like that when they die,' he explained.

I knew this already, but sometimes I couldn't help but think we might be able to help the people who were affected by the virus. We trudged through the snow and ash. With the tower finally in sight, I felt a sliver of hope.

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'Let's go, Jose. We have to hurry.'

I ran outside and looked up to see the structure that stood before me. The government told us to evacuate but didn't tell us why. All the public knew was there were rockets, and those rockets were built to keep us safe. Lucy wound up the window as I got in the car.

'You got Bob?' she asked.

I glanced at the tiny fluffy head that emerged from the mound of blankets that were strewn across the backseat. 'Yep.'

Lucy started towards the line of cars in front of us, moving at a steady but slow pace. I turned to look at Bob. 'We payed extra for you.' He gave a yelp that, despite my sadness, made me laugh. It still hadn't kicked in that we were leaving our home, and that I would never see it again. Lucy saw me frown and turned the radio on, perhaps thinking it would help.

‘We interrupt this program to bring you urgent news. If you are still in your homes, lock all doors and windows. And if you have a basement, get in it. Otherwise, stay as low as possible. For those who have commenced your journey to the Atlas—’

Lucy and I stare at each other in shock and horror, as static blared in the from the radio. Although we didn’t know what was happening, we knew it was not good. Before either of us could speak, we heard a loud explosion. I stared up at the Atlas 9 and saw a cloud of dust, smoke, and ash speeding towards us, buildings collapsing in its wake.

Nothing can save us, I thought.

As the wave came towards us, I did the only thing possible.

Run.

‘Basement,’ I yelled, grabbing Bob and sprinting towards the nearest house that had windows at ground level. I banged on the door and there he was: John. He saved me, but a price must always be paid. Lucy was still at the car, grabbing our emergency bags. John yanked my arm and I fell backwards into the house, letting Bob loose.

At that moment, I couldn’t move from the fear of losing two of my best friends. But, as Bob ran towards the door, John slammed it shut and locked it. I couldn’t hear John yelling because of all the thoughts that were going through my head, and I didn’t want to hear him. I wanted to save Lucy. Before I could, John tightened his hand around my arm and pulled me up. I grabbed Bob and followed John downstairs into the basement.

I knew I couldn’t save her.

John slammed the door shut behind me and locked it. He flicked a switch and a metal sheet slid down to cover each window and the door.

‘Good job kid. You picked the right house,’ said John.

I let Bob go as I heard what sounded like a tsunami mixed with the screams of millions of people crashing into the house. All I could do in that moment was stand, frozen, as I heard the upper level of the house crumbling. I had no energy left to yell at John for not saving Lucy. I used it on the one thought I had: From now on, I’d be living without Lucy, in a pile of rubble.

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John and I stared at each other. We had known each other for less than two weeks, but we thought and felt the same things. We had set up camp in another destroyed building in order to avoid the Forsaken who patrolled the tower’s borders at night. I lifted the blanket that covered the wagon to see Bob’s twitching, scarred body. Staring at a Wolf’s sword-like teeth wasn’t pleasant, but the fact that Bob survived a bite from one was close to a miracle. He let

out a whimper as I rubbed his head. We were less than five hundred metres from the door that would save us. John grabbed his gun and I grabbed the handle of the wagon.

‘Leave the wagon,’ said John. Pick him up.’

I lifted Bob towards my chest. ‘We’re almost there, boy,’ I whispered, then we set off.

We wove in and out of the mangled structures that were once people’s homes, moving towards the doors. I looked up and saw two gun barrels sticking out of the wall of the tower; they killed anything that showed signs of infection. I saw four men behind the holographic door, waiting for us to get through.

Then came the sound everyone dreaded: a howl in the distance, followed by another, then another. It grew louder. John and I sprinted towards the door. The men were readying themselves. I threw Bob through the door and he was caught by one of the men and passed to a woman standing behind him. I leaped through the door and was caught by another man.

I looked at them and saw not to smiles but looks of shock. I turned toward John, who was two metres from me and being attacked by two Forsaken. Their black bodies shook with determination to kill John.

I couldn’t bear the thought of losing another friend. I tried to run towards John to help him, but I was pulled back by one of the men. This felt exactly like when I lost Lucy. I yelled at them to help him, but they watched him, as if there was no hope left. Before I knew it, John was surrounded by Forsaken and Wolves, which at were tearing him apart.

‘We can’t help him, kid. We would be swarmed and killed,’ said one of the men.

Another man flicked a switch and two metal shutters closed over the door.

I watched as John mouthed his final words. ‘You picked the right house kid.’

Despite my anger and sadness, I knew what he meant. I gave smile and closed my eyes as the shutters hid the pile of Forsaken that covered his body.