

Lisbeth Perez

English 2 - Kay

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Iron Stream

War for Liberty

*Ding Dong!* The doorbell stirred me out of my sleep. *Ding! Dong!*

“Ugh!” I get up, groggily navigating my apartment. I reach the door and look through the peephole,

“Mrs. *Harker*.” I rush back to my sink. I grab some mouthwash and splash water on my face. I try to look alive, unlike how I feel. I throw on as bright a smile as I can manage.

“Mrs. *Harker*! What a pleasant surprise.” My voice is high and shrilly, it doesn’t sound like me. I don’t recognize it at all. Mrs. *Harker* examines my appearance, and displays a face of distaste.

“Hm,” Is all she says

“Good Morning to you too” I say, glancing down at her barren wrist.

“Yes, yes. I’ve come up to inform you that I am hosting a tea party next week at noon. Since you don’t get out much, You are welcome. Come well-dressed and ready to interact over tea and biscuits. Good day *Lysandra*.” She wobbles down the stairs and into her cave. Whatever she does in there, whether it’s cast spells or stir her cauldron, I don’t want to go. But I have no choice. *Sigh. See you next week.*

I glance at the clock. 7:35. *sigh*. Despite my exhaustion, I decide it's better to get ready for work. Briskly, I get some coffee brewing. Effortlessly, I navigate through my apartment. To any outsider I'd look, dare I say, peaceful. The thing to remember is that looks can be deceiving. In this case, deceit is an understatement. The thoughts that swarm my mind bring me anything but peace. Now in the bathroom, I look down at my wrist. This stupid thing is the reason why I smile in sorrow. This beautiful jewel, a frail chain, is an example of the brutal tyranny of today. This gold band lassos my tongue and takes my words as hostages. It holds a gun to their heads and tells them not to make a sound. I stare. My reflection doesn't look like me. My undereyes are dark and inflamed. My skin looks pale, sickly. My lips dry and cracked. I feel a hollowness so deep, the mariana trench would drown trying to compete. This facade I'm forced to put up everyday is exauhsting. *How long can I manage?* I hold on to the sink for support and bow my head. The frustration is too much. A hot tear slips down my cheek and the flood gates open. I cry. I cry like I haven't in a long time. Grandma's voice comes to mind and I cry harder. "Lysandra, if what's ahead scares you, and what's behind hurts you, just look up sweetheart. He never fails to help those in need." I manage whispers through sobs,

"God, if you're there...If you exist...please help. I can't hold on much longer. " I stay crumpled on the bathroom floor for a while. I get up and look in the mirror once again. I grab some ice for my puffy face before continuing to get ready. I get my coffee, a bagel and pray no one asks any questions.

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I return late. I shouldn't be out at this time, but work got complicated and I had to close shop. There is something calming, eerily chilling about the world at this hour. At half past 1,

everyone is sleeping. Finding freedom the only place they know they can have it, in their dreams. We're all at ease, consumed by the darkness. I lose myself in thought and mindlessly climb the stairs to my apartment. Unlocking the door I twist the knob, but the sound of movement beneath interrupts me. The *Click, Click* of locks being undone is heard. *At this hour? Creaaakkk*. I freeze, my breath hitches and all I hear is the drum of my heart beat in my ears. Calming down I hear something else, Footsteps. Soft, and barely there but purposeful. Whoever this was, they moved like a man on a mission. I sneak over to the edge of the balcony, careful to stay silent and invisible. The figure is hooded, round and oddly clumsy. Imagine my surprise when I realize this isn't a strange man. It's a woman, and one I am familiar with for that matter. *Mrs. Harker?! I* gasped audibly. If I hadn't ducked, my cover would've been blown. She whips around, sensing my gaze. I shut my eyes tight and make myself small, praying that she doesn't see me. After some silence, I know, she's gone.

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I examine my appearance in the mirror taking a deep breath. My attire is simple and neat. I'm wearing a red sundress and some tan sandal flats. My makeup is natural and minimal with a bright red lip to add some boldness to the look. I let my mind drift back to last week. When I woke up the next morning I was confused and questioning my recollection of the night before. I didn't know if what I had seen was real, maybe I saw it wrong. Yes, a figment of my imagination, that's all. Still, I feel uneasy. In a minute, I find myself standing in front of Mrs. Harker's lair- I mean *home*. I knock before I regret this. The door swings open and I direct my eyes down at the host.

“Good evening Mrs. Har-”

“Good evening.” I’m yanked into her apartment and the door is shut behind me.

“Uh-” a pair of hands pushes a cup of gold liquid to me. Another tips me back into a chair. I try to adjust to the busyness around me. So many women, young and old alike. Before I even open my mouth Mrs. Harker speaks.

“Ladies give her some space.” They all back up some, and thankful for the oxygen I take a deep breath. I look around at all the unfamiliar faces. Awkward and caught off guard I shrink into my seat noticing something strange. None of these women have bracelets. Not one of them. My eyebrows scrunch in confusion. I look back up and realize they’re all staring at me with...pity?

“W-what’s going on?” None of them respond, instead they look at Mrs. Harker. She steps forward.

“Lysandra, child. There’s something you need to know.”

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“What?” I yell.

“So you mean to tell me that this whole time there’s been an organiza-” the rest of my words come out muffled. Three hands covered my mouth. Someone mouthed,

“The bracelet, they’re listening” My bracelet was glowing in a way it never had before. Bright, hot, too hot.

“Ow!” The women jumped,

“Hurry!” yelled Mrs. Harker. Again, they ran all over the place. Finally someone brought a stone and smashed the bracelet into oblivion. The now pulverized item left a wound that would most likely scar. I look up in horror.

“That dear, is what the government does when people defy. That’s what we’re trying to fight against” said a woman.

“We fight back silently, for now” interjected a younger girl. Then, all at once.

“We can’t speak-”

“Our voices don’t matter”

“We aren’t happy-”

“And that’s why we’re going to change the system”

“We’ll break it!” Tears came to my eyes, I couldn’t speak.

“Lysandra,” spoke Mrs. Harker

“Do you know what your name means, child? Do you have any idea where it comes from?” I stared at her confused

“My name? No, no clue”

“Your name means ‘Liberator’ and it belonged to your grandmother. It was her middle name. And do you know what she did?” She didn’t wait for my reply,

“She started an organization many years ago. An organization to fight for our freedom of speech and expression. Your grandmother is the founder of *War for Liberty*.” My head spun.

This was too much to take in all at once. Nodding understandingly, Mrs. Harker spoke,

“I know it’s a lot to process right now, just take a seat darling” I did.

“Join us Lysandra. I know you feel the misery we did all those years.” I looked around me once again. The women around me possessed somber faces. These women had lost people,

these women knew pain. I saw myself in the eyes of each and every one of them. I faced the ground. Seeing my hesitation they spoke out from the crowd.

“Join us, Lysandra.”

“Yeah, join us.”

“We’ll beat them, but only if we do it together” A fire was lit within me. It burned viciously. After years of frigid loneliness and fear, it felt good. We could take the system down. We could reverse all the damage done through the years. I would be foolish to think this an easy task. It’s hard to be brave, bold and fight. But it’s harder to suffer in miserable silence. And if I have to make a choice, I choose freedom. I look up from the ground, determination bright in my eyes.

“Alright.”

“Yeah!” The women break out into cheers and whoops. Mrs. Harker looks at me and for the first time ever, smiles warmly. I smile back. I don’t know what happens from here. I have no idea where this ends. However it happens though, I’m ready for a fight.

5 months later...

I sit in the warm glow of the sunset and sigh deeply. Who would’ve thought? If someone told me 5 months ago that I would be here right now happy to be alive, I wouldn’t have believed them. Strangely though, I’m more at risk of dying now than I ever was then. The difference is that now I’ve found something worth dying for. I’ve found something that would make me proud if I died tomorrow. Things at the organization have been going good. In the last month we’ve grown significantly in numbers. 700 new members, to be exact. I feel my wrist, the only thing

left is the scar from the burn that day. *War for Liberty* has been gaining contacts all throughout the world. We are amassing power, reputation, and ammunition. Soon we are going to war. Soon the government will ask us to forfeit or die. And we're not quitting. We can all sense the impending danger that looms around us and we've never been more excited. I glance back at all the women I've come to adopt as my sisters and friends these last 5 months. We're all ready for this and I know we're going to win. For my grandma, for her legacy and in her memory, we'll fight.

*Shalom.*