

# Storyboard-37

Paul froze.

He was halfway to the camp, and something was wrong.

It wasn't with the camp itself. The sounds he heard coming from there were what he'd gotten to associate as normal when the people were battle-ready security experts. It was...

He caught the motion among the trees, faint enough he might convince himself he had imagined it if not for the Chamber having surprised them already and the knowledge that Wassa had been giving them information. They might have ensured no one inside the forcefield spoke with anyone outside it, but those outside did know where the mansion was, and the cut communication would signal the location was under some form of attack.

He had his phone in one hand to warn Joseph, his handgun in the other, as the gunshots began. They came from the camp, but also from the woods behind him, where he'd been.

His decision was instantaneous. He was running back the way he'd come. Joseph would lead his people, and everyone else there was an expert. At best, Paul would get in there. Grant only had a dozen people with him, one of which was Paul's best friend. With them, one person, even as untrained as Paul was, could make a positive difference.

He reacted before the movement among the trees ahead of him registered, firing three times. The figure fell to the ground, then rolled on their back, raising a machine gun and firing back at Paul.

The golden tiger threw himself to the side, rolled, noticed the closer person in forest camo, stood, and turned them to take the next volley of bullets in his stead. Even as he considered reaching for the machine gun strapped to the woman's chest, it registered there were others around him.

He lowered himself as he let go of the body, kicked the legs out of the closest one, stood punched the next one hard, and as they flew away, round kicked the third. The first was up and coming at him. Paul smirked and raised his hand, only to be horrified he'd, somehow, dropped his gun.

He blocked and moved around the body on the ground. His counter was dodged, and he winced as the punch connected in his side, hard enough he knew he should be in excruciating pain. He caught the next punch in a hand but received one in the muzzle that sent his head snapping to the side and had him tasting blood. He righted his head and glared at the man before him, unusually pleased at the terror the motion caused in his opponent.

Holding him by the hand he punched him three times in quick succession in the face and the man went limp. With a snarl, he raised his boot to bring it down on the man's neck

but gunfire had him dropping and searching for the shooter.

It was further away, he realized, and the only people in that direction were his friend. He put what he had been about to do out of his mind and ran toward the gunfire. Elbowing in the face the woman he'd punched away as he passed.

He was out of his mind, the probably sane part yelled at him, to be running toward the fighting instead of away.

Paul didn't care.

Maybe it was Arnold's anger or Aaron's love of fighting, but Paul was going to make the Chamber pay for showing up now.

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The machine gun shattered under the impact as Paul swung it in the man's chest, sending him up and away. As much as shooting them at a distance was effective, there was nothing as satisfying as feeling the impact in his hand and arms.

On his back.

Paul staggered forward from the blow and turned, watching the stunned woman who had tried to imitate him with her machine gun. She tried again and he blocked, feeling the blow compounding the multiple bruises he had from blocking so many blows. He punched her and she went down.

The gunshot registered at the same time as the impact and he danced with the momentum to stay standing. The man missed his next shot, but the handgun's muzzle was squarely aimed at Paul's face where he managed to stop.

There was a flash of blue then the gun, and hand, fell to the ground. More ribbons of water flew around and through the man, then he too dropped. Paul looked for who had saved his life, saw the seal in the shimmering blue robe, and lunged for the gun, rolling and pointing it at her as what she'd done caught up to him.

"I'm confused," he said, crouched behind the firearm aimed at her.

"I have saved your life," Wassa replied, "I fail to see what is confusing about that."

Paul glanced around, he had no idea how far he'd made it before coming across this group, but there was still fighting going on in the distance where he'd been heading. "Why?"

The question annoyed her. "I believe the expression is 'I'm on your side'."

"Only you sold us off to the Chamber, twice."

He motioned, and it took all of Paul's willpower not to fire. To his left and behind him, a man screamed in pain, then that became a gurgle. Paul didn't want to see what his imagination was telling him Wassa was doing to him.

"I did not. I manipulated them into creating the situation that will guarantee we win."

"Grant," Paul said. "The hope thing."

"You are not one of us, therefore I do not expect you to understand. But Grant is the strongest of us, all of us, but only when things look hopeless. Only at our strongest, can we hope to win."

"You're right, I don't get it." Paul stood, not lowering his handgun. It wouldn't do any good, he's already seen that. But the part that had been added to his instinct when he received Alex's gift insisted that all he needed was the right angle, and he could take her out.

He lowered the gun. Only, taking her out wouldn't help anything.

"You do get that Grant is going to be pissed, if this is some ploy, right?"

Her smile seemed genuine. "Once this is over and the Chamber has been put in their place, I will gladly submit to his anger."

Paul shook his head in disbelief, then turned. "Come on. We'd better make sure they survive so Grant can shut them down." He started running again.

"You must have faith in him."

"I'll have a lot more faith once we make sure he can survive."

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Where did they all come from? Paul mentally complained as he punched another one. Did the Chamber have some vat in the wood they could pull attackers out of? He elbowed the one at his back and heard ribs break. Glancing around, he saw Wassa, fighting a Chamber holding talisman that caused her water to turn to steam anytime she added that to her attacks. It wasn't helping the man all that much, even without using water, the seal was a menace.

The glance was enough for three Chamber to regroup and come at him as a unit. A gunshot brought one down and surprised the other two a second shot took another down and Paul punched the turn hard enough the muzzle broke.

He turned to face the buffalo and wolf heading in his direction.

"Do you have any idea what Aaron's going to do to us if you get killed under our watch?" Joseph demanded, cutting off Paul's thanks.

"Probably not going to give you a raise."

"You were supposed to come back after the kangaroo's thing," the buffalo said, ignoring Paul's attempt at humor.

"I was, but the Chamber attacked and—"

"You went in the opposite direction of where we were!"

Paul looked at the wolf, who vehemently shook his head. Paul was clearly on his own here. "I went where I was needed. I'd have gotten in the way among all the professionals in the camp."

"I'd have known where you are!"

"I'm in charge!" Paul yelled back. "I'll fucking go help who every I think needs it!"

"I'm here to make sure you stay alive," the buffalo growled, stepping closer to Paul.

Paul closed the distance. "Then take that big gun in your hands and come shoot something with me."

The two of them glared at each other.

"Just to be clear," the wolf said. "You do mean his actual gun, and not his cock, right? Because I don't think now—" He shut his muzzle as they both turned their glaring on him. He raised his hands in defeat and Paul went back to glaring at the buffalo, but it was too late. The image was firmly planted in his mind.

"Well," the golden tiger, "you are pretty big."

Joseph sighed. "Civilians."

“Is the courting over?” Wassa said, and immediately she was facing two machine guns but didn’t look impressed

“How did you get out?” Joseph demanded.

“Magic,” she replied with a straight face.

That took the buffalo off guard.

“She saved my life,” Paul said. “For the time being, I trust her.”

“Where’s your firearm?” the wolf asked.

Paul sighed. “Don’t remind me.”

“Don’t remind you of what?”

“That I can’t seem to keep hold of one in the middle of this fighting.” He indicated the remnant of the machine gun. “Or keep them intact.”

The wolf took a step back, holding his machine gun to his chest protectively.

“Civilians,” Joseph grumbled.

The wolf opened his mouth, then closed it, ears plastered to his head in embarrassment.

“How about we go that way.” Paul pointed toward the continued fighting in the distance, “and take out our frustrations on some Chamber bad guys?” he looked at the wolf and buffalo, one still looking shamed and the other angry. “I’ll be happy to vent whatever frustration I have left once this is all done on both of you.”

That cheered the wolf up.

“I thought you were different from them,” Joseph asked.

“I am.”

The buffalo narrowed his eyes.

“I’m offering to vent it on you. I’m not telling you to drop-em and take it.”

Wassa said something that didn’t sound complimentary at all with a throwing of the hand in the air that was universal before storming in the direction of the fighting.

“What if she’s going there to stab our people in the back?” the wolf asked.

Joseph kept glaring at Paul for a second. “Then we’d better follow her to make sure she doesn’t get to. If that’s okay with you, boss?”

Paul smiled. “I couldn’t have said it better.”

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The scene Paul walked onto confused him. Only two of the Steel Link people were down, the rest were fighting against the Chamber, but the Chamber stood between them and Grant, passing himself off as Wassa, who was with his back to a small gated entrance to the property. He couldn’t see Thomas or Denton among the fighters or the bodies on the ground.

He knew his best friend wouldn’t just run off and leave Grant in...whatever this situation was, and he couldn’t believe a god’s champion would flee either. So where ever they were, it had to be part of some plan.

Next to him, Wassa was looking at the scene too.

“He’s passing himself off as you so—”

She raised a hand and Paul closed his mouth. "I do not need explanations. But I can not take part in this fight if Grant is to succeed at what he attempting."

"Get God Wolf to drop the forcefield so some of our people can get in and stop all this." He ignored the buffalo's glares. If Wassa was here to cause them to fail, all she had to do was run in and fight. It didn't matter what side she took in that battle, the presence of two of her would ensure the forcefield stayed up.

Paul took the handgun out of Joseph's hip holster. "You have a machine gun," he said as the buffalo started to protest. "I'm heading in to help our people." He looked at Wassa. "If you can help without revealing yourself I'm sure everyone would appreciate it."

She nodded and stepped into the woods away from them.

"You're an idiot for trusting her," Joseph said.

"We'll find out once this is over, won't we." He racked the handgun and started walking toward the fighting, again.

This was so in line with the stories he'd heard about his cousins.

He wouldn't be able to deny being an Orr after this.