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BR?ND?N - May 14, 2017, 1:29 am

Growing up in a place you don't belong in seemed normal for us. For our people, home was found in history books. It was always a rush to open those dusty books filled with various world maps. Any map pre-1990's has been banned by our government. Most adults don't see why, as it isn't like the 90's was all too long ago. Most people remember it like it was yesterday.

It never felt odd as a child to be told that where you were from only existed on old maps. The name of it always felt funny though, coming off my lips. Megantus, was it's name. It always felt like the name of a mythical jungle land in some old timer's adventure novel. It always felt like some kind of myth.

Megantus was formerly the largest kingdom in the continent of Originland. The continent was often referred to as "The Land of the five Kings". To the north lied the two small nations of Lancaster and Dunn, both named for their first Kings. Despite being two of the smallest countries in not just the continent, but the world, they hold a high amount of significance. They're both incredibly rich, and Lancaster was the seat of the Originland Committee. It functioned almost like a shadow government, which oversaw almost all aspects of the Origin people and their lands. To the south of the two, was Megantus. My supposed home. To the south east lied Empyrus, and further south, nestled between both Empyrus and Megantus is Awesomenia or simply Awesomen.

Throughout our vast history, four of the five kingdoms were united. Empyrus, Megantus, Lancaster, and Dunn were all one great unified nation known as Originland. Named after the continent of course. Awesomen opted out, fearing the different cultures would fight and lead to conflict. They were right.

In 1991, Megantus began encroaching into Empyrian land. Slowly but surely capturing small villages. The King of Originland sat in Empyrus, more specifically it's capital of Pyro. Megantus and Empyrus declared war. Now considering both regions were a part of one unified nation, they essentially declared a civil war. The war split the nation into parts. Empyrus became it's own country, Megantus became it's own country, and Lancaster and Dunn joined to become their own short lived country. Only out of fear they'd be annexed.

Empyrus, being the better equipped nation, easily wiped out countless Megantian cities. Killed multiple people. Then on top of that, set up extermination camps where they massacred anybody who denied Empyrian rule.

Fast forward to the current year of 2017, I reside in Empyrus. The camps are still operating under cover due to threats by various global organizations. The Empyrian Government denies that Megantus ever existed. Any and all things related to Megantus are banned. Speaking of the war, or Megantus, can result in execution. I was born in a land I was told never existed. I'am not a citizen of the only country I have ever lived in. I'am poor, and my only means of survival is from robbing people, selling what I steal, and using the money to afford a one bedroom apartment in the ghetto of Pyro.

My name is Jack Zalen, and this is my story.

PART 1

Deep sleep. The images of warfare, bullets flying past. I hang on to someone, not sure who. They're hit, I scream for help but they fall lifelessly into my-

"WOULD YOU WAKE THE FUCK UP ALREADY!"

Nothing better than waking up to Iris screaming in my face. Something I've grown accustomed to.

"Aren't you a bowl of sunshine Iris"

"We were supposed to leave two hours ago"

"What difference does it make, the house isn't gonna move"

"Timing Jack, it's always about timing, you're such a dumbass"

"Five more minutes of sl-"

"JACK GET THE FUCK UP!"

"God dammit"

I roll myself out of bed, still in my boxers and without a shirt.

"Do you fucking mind"

"I'll be outside, hurry up"

As she slams the door in front of me, I slip on the same pants I've worn for the past two weeks. It's hard to describe the smell but it's less than pleasant. I slip on a shirt I found laying on the ground. It says "Proud Empyrian". Oh the joy.

I walk out to find everyone else is already up. My two other roommates, Klaus and Irvin. Klaus is a muscular man. Blonde, and noticeably good looking. He uses that to his advantage when we pull off robberies. Irvin is shy, doesn't speak much. He's more of a geek, always been great at handling that kind of stuff.

Then there is Iris. We grew up together, both our parents were killed during the war and we decided to live together and figure this life thing out together. Despite being a royal pain in my ass, I do love her. I'll just never admit it to her.

"Alright" Iris holds out a piece of paper.

"This is where the house is, they just upped and left. They left dressers, cabinets, all kinds of goodies. We go in, and we take only what we can fetch good money for. They likely took their big bucks with them, but we can pick what's left"

"Picking through trash again Iris? When are we going to get serious?" Klaus remarks.

Iris snickers and continues laying out her plan.

"Alright, the house isn't that far from here. We can walk and make it in an hour or so. Maybe rob a gas station for some chips on the way there, lady gotta eat"

Everyone nods, and we start walking to the destination. This has been my life ever since I was eight. Both Iris and myself lost our parents. My father was a General and my mother a Medic. They died defending the Megantian city of Freeton, also my hometown. I don't know much about her

story, she doesn't like talking about her parents. All I know for certain is they didn't die in battle, but rather as prisoners. Empyrus is famous for their brutality against prisoners of war. Supposedly Megantian troops would be given cyanide capsules in their survival kits in the event they faced capture, so they wouldn't have to face the horrors of an Empyrian camp. I didn't want to imagine the thought process prior to having to make that choice.

Iris has always been our group's leader. She enjoys feeling like she has power, but I know as well as she does that she is just as weak as we are. The war took everything from her. Her home was destroyed, her family executed, the only way she remains happy is by insulting people and feeling like she is better. She knows no other way to survive, and while I may get tired of her attitude, I know what it's like to have it all then have it taken from you. Maybe that's why we're friends, life has a weird way of connecting people.

Half an hour passes, no gas stations along the way. Hopefully they left their refrigerator full.

"You ever think, what if we pretended to be Empyrians and just lived a fake life" I ask jokingly.

Nobody responds. I figure they're all too tired or depressed to think about it. Everyone gets sad right before we do a job. We all may have been young, but we have vague memories of life before the war. Very vague. One that still haunts me is my father playing catch with me. It is such an innocent and simple memory but I have never forgotten it.

Finally we reach the house, the door has been kicked down.

"What the hell happened here" Iris checks over the kicked down door.

We're all a little hesitant to go inside. When we were scouting the house everything was intact. Did other robbers get in first?