

JOHN ROCKET No. 1

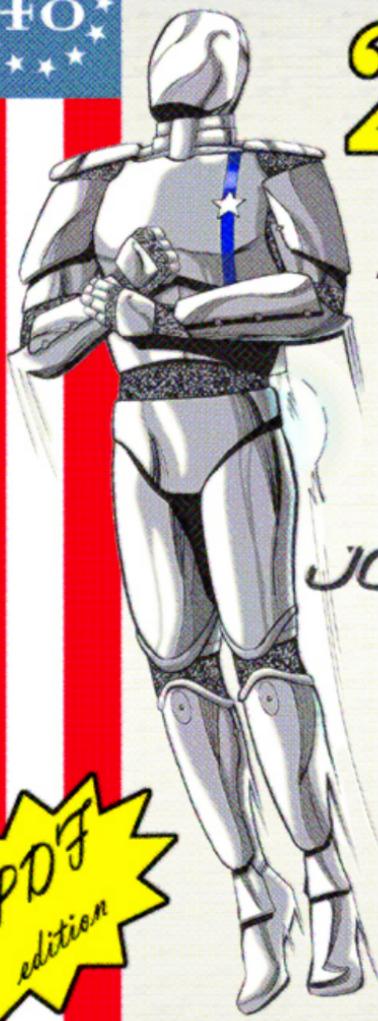
March 6 1953-April 15 1953  
bonus October 4-9 1952

48

268 BIG

PAGES NOVEL

*plus 3 bios  
& 1950s orientation*



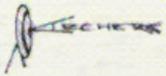
JOHN ROCKET

by  
Kevin  
Conner

volume 1

\*PDF  
edition

suit artwork:



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# *John Rocket*

Friday, March 6th, 1953  
through  
Wednesday, April 15th, 1953

bonus:  
Saturday, October 4th 1952  
through  
Thursday, October 9th 1952

A Historical Fantasy Science-Fiction Novel  
by  
Kevin Conner

This Story is Voluntarily Rated:

NEZUMI-16<sup>TM</sup>  
Ninja Nezumi 16

for depictions of intense violence (realistic/fantasy), racism and harsh language,  
all of which may be unsuitable for those under the age of 16.

Alternate Title: John Rocket vol. 1



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Since this novel is based in American history, and is  
considered to be a work of *Historical Fantasy*  
Science-Fiction, you will see names of companies and  
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## *Acknowledgments*

### *Victoria*

*A wonderful artist, and owner and operator of [www.artistsforhire.net](http://www.artistsforhire.net) - a great website which connects clients to independent artists.*

*She is responsible for creating the portraits of the three main characters without a model for reference!*

### *Font Diner*

*Font Diner is a great resource for unique fonts, and the source of the font *Rocket Script*, which is used in the title (and under license). Please visit [www.fontdiner.com](http://www.fontdiner.com) for further information.*

### *Kent Archer*

*For his wonderful interpretation of John Rocket's suit at the end of this book, based on the rough designs provided.*



*John Rocket*

Contents

1950s Orientation

Biographies

Shirley Artemis (Stillman) Fairbanks

Clarence Wabash Fairbanks

Mildred Anne Freeman

Chapters

John Rocket

**Hero**

pg. 1

John Rocket

**The Dragon's Reach**

pg. 32

John Rocket

**Danger is a Game of Martyrs** Part 1

pg. 71

John Rocket

**Danger is a Game of Martyrs** Part 2

pg. 109

John Rocket

**Danger is a Game of Martyrs** Part 3

pg. 155

John Rocket

**Going My Way?**

pg. 209



## 1950s Orientation

After some consideration and comments received, I did decide to include a quick Orientation to the 1950s. This orientation is so you can acclimate yourself to the mentality of the '50s in such a way that you will understand the characters within this book. We've come a long way since the 1950s, and many I've encountered don't quite understand how far we've come. I am not saying we should return to the 1950s. I'm simply stating how it was in a general context. So, please read this orientation if you need it, and adjust your perceptions accordingly.

A common misconception about the 1950s is that they were a time of pure innocence where nobody cursed, nobody sassed back, the worst crimes ever committed were in Los Angeles, Chicago or New York, while the rest of the world was happy go lucky, and (most of all) the communistic witch hunts were really harmless and overblown by the extreme liberal left. Probably the greatest reason for these misconceptions is that we're talking about a populace who's best described as being shell shocked for the first half of the previous decade, and the first half of the 1950s.

People swore, and (in some cases) very heavily. Not in public so much, as there was no Howard Stern, but it occurred (especially in private situations).

Domestic and other forms of abuse were almost always viewed as the woman's fault. In fact, this blame could be extended for a number of situations, after all, it was *the fault of Eve* - *NOT Adam* - that we got kicked out of Eden (yep, *religion*). The father was the king of the home, with the mother usually as a service provider, and the children easily punished. This isn't to say every family was the same, but it was a very common ideal for women to think that their highest accomplishment in the home was the Sunday dinner.

It's hard to say who society hated more - people with disabilities or people who weren't white. Obviously, this hatred varied from state

## 1950s orientation

to state. In some cases a deaf man or woman would have an easier time, in others, not so much. The circumstances and how this "hatred" was carried out might be different, but the results could easily be the same.

It's long been discussed in the law enforcement community that there were probably far, far more violent crimes committed during this period than we know right now. Part of this is because of post war and post depression trauma on society. No sooner did world war II end, than China immediately invaded both North Vietnam and North Korea. This accented the *Red Threat*. I will repeat this: China invaded North Korea and North Vietnam before the '40s came to an end.

While the Red Threat was being dealt with on an international scale, first with a containment policy, then with wartime action, a man named Joseph McCarthy fabricated massive evidence of domestic insurrection in order to secure political power. It took four years for the Republican Party to admit to the fabrication of the evidence. The Democratic Party rarely spoke out. This is why many people voted Ike for president, while voting Democrat for local and state elections.

During this period the populace was confused and bewildered between the actual threat and the fabricated threat. This confusion manifested itself in fear, hatred and violence - compounding the already shell shocked populace (both soldiers and civilians). You could almost compare it to the United States of America during the first part of the 21st century, only it was quite a bit more severe during the '50s.

Much of the populace simply ignored and pretended that none of this happened. Looking back at newspaper articles, it's clear that people did know what was going on, but that somehow, someway, in the decades following, it all became a petroleum jelly covered lens cap viewed through faded and heavily edited memory.

Television provided the great escapism, but it wasn't like today. If you owned one

## 1950s Orientation

television (that worked every time you turned it on), you were lucky. If you owned two, you were rich. Most cities had two television stations, and transmission tended to start around 3-4am. You could watch cooking shows in the afternoon, and shows like "Industry on Parade" (the '50s version of "Modern Marvels"). Superheroes were a staple of society, including the Lone Ranger, Zorro, etc..., but most of these superheroes didn't have super powers. Of course, in this "John Rocket" universe, you've got super powered humans.

Phones were owned by the telephone company, you rented them, and they could be taken away at a moment's notice. A household with two phones was a rarity, but it happened more often than two televisions.

No matter what your grandparents might say, people bought into crazy, nutty fads just as easily back then as they do today. "Made with Chlorophyll!" and "Think Pink!" were two such short lived, but very popular fads.

The average income of any family was between \$3-5,000, but again, that's average. That's not "middle class". Still, Clarence's income of about \$8-12,000 was very good, especially considering he's a black man in the 1950s (his paycheck varied depending on the business that year). A nice sized grocery bill was \$20, and a \$50 dinner, well, that was a bank breaker!

Credit cards were rare. They existed, but were rare. Most credit cards were department store cards, so you bought your car with checks or cash, not on a loan which begins with "no money down". The cars were powerful, they had to be, carrying all that solid union steel, steel which built the country's infrastructure from the mid '30s through to the '60s.

The 1950s was also a time where the populace dealt with immigrants, especially from the Orient. For the great majority of the Pacific-Asian seaboard, World War II began in the early 1900s, and continued on through to the end of the Vietnam War. A great many more Japanese, Korean,

## 1950s orientation

Chinese, etc..., communities popped up during this period, especially since the communities formed in the 19th century became rather closed by the '50s.

Also, keep in consideration the words 'Colored', 'of Color', 'Negro' and 'Black' are the accepted terminology (although if you said either with a nasty tone behind it- that's really bad). The word "spade" was often a 'nice way' for a bigot to speak about a 'man of color' (but it still wasn't a good term to use). Cripple is in the bible, and a 'good man (or woman) of God' will probably use that term. The words 'disabled' and 'disadvantaged' aren't, so it was pretty rare to find that kind of term used back then (although I have, it was not common). You never wanted to be a 'Clyde' or a 'square'. Finally, some descriptive and scientific terms are used within the narrative that may not be known by Clarence or had been around in the 1950s. Their use is constrained to the narrative to keep the story flowing.

While sexual promiscuity was promoted for the boys, especially jocks, it was frowned upon for the girls. That created a rather large rift on the subject of teenage pregnancy. A married woman could be 'expecting', and while a woman or teenage girl who was pregnant out of wedlock could be 'in trouble' it was still better than being 'knocked up'. The latter was reserved for 'sluts' (yes, 'slut' was used- albeit very sparingly). It was expected from both girls and boys that you played the field; but, once you officially went steady (ring and all), you'd have to give back that ring and lose your love if you were caught with another!

A soldier returning from a very bad experience at war would probably be 'shell-shocked', they were never considered to be 'suffering from post traumatic stress disorder'.

Finally, every good - God fearing - Atomic Family in this country looked forward to scheduled weekly dinners: an easy casserole could be Monday and Tuesday, chicken and dumplings could be Wednesday, meatloaf was an easy one to

## 1950s Orientation

fix throughout the week, with the staple pot roast after church on Sunday. Chicken and dumplings was an especially favorite dish in the Denver area (still is actually). Why? Well, Denver is an area surrounded by farms, and chicken is a good cheap dinner for the Atomic Family. In fact, broiled/baked/roasted chicken was far more common than fabled steak or roast due to cost.

For the morning, you'd have orange juice, toast, eggs and bacon (I still do - hellooooo, cardiologist!). Few people liked the sugared cereals, since they were a relatively new concept (and had yet to be perfected). Eating out wasn't as common as today, but it wasn't uncommon. Still, if you had to get a project done, you'd bring a scrambled egg sandwich to work with a thermos of java to keep up your strength. When you ate out, you had locally owned Woolworth's or any other soda jerk fountain, pizzerias started popping up, too, a cafeteria, a Holiday Inn, or a restaurant if it's a dinner (I mean a real restaurant, not "fast food"). Also, school lunch was bagged, though some schools did have Hot Lunch Fridays.

I hope you keep all this in mind as an attempt of historical accuracy when you read passages that use strong language, represent otherwise sympathetic characters as sexist or racist, or when you see someone dropping \$2 to eat at Woolworth's.

Since this is a superhero universe, you will see some things that are different than our history: such as slight population increases, or slight increases in inflation rates. I've also included quite a bit of *science* in the series to match the *fantasy* aspects. Therefore, JR is Historical Fantasy Science-Fiction.

\*

Union City itself is fictional, but if it were to exist, it'd be north west of Denver, probably nearing the Longmont area. Regardless

## 1950s Orientation

of where it is located, please keep this in mind: **NATIVE COLORADANS DO NOT SPEAK WITH SOUTHERN ACCENTS!** I have no idea how this idiotic myth got started in Hollywood, but Californians apparently seem to think that people who live in Colorado have a southern drawl. We don't even have an 'Idahoan drawl'. We sound like ward or June Cleaver (not literally, but you get the idea).

Like Denver, Union City is surrounded by farming communities. Where Chicago is a train/transport hub for the 'Mid-west' and North Atlantic states, Denver (and subsequently Union), is the travel hub for the 'Real Mid-west' and Pacific states. Get used to that, because the Continental Divide goes through Colorado, not Illinois.

Prior to the Great Depression, Denver was known as the 'City of Lights' - due to its prosperous theater district and bright white light bulbs. As a result of the depression, and television reaching into the homes, the theater district never fully recovered. Families chose less expensive means of entertainment: board games, bowling, matinees, not to mention the great Coloradan traditions of camping and hiking. Why not? After all, the deep purples and blues of the Rockies make them a legend of both the USA and Canada.

\*

Regarding segregation in Colorado: Even after consulting official census logs on school systems and legal records, the information I received was very contradictory. Segregation in the schools was a reality - but not in all schools. In fact, according to the official state census logs, there seemed to be no regional connection to the application of segregation. Most segregated schools seemed to be in richer communities, or private schools, but you could have a segregated school sandwiched between two integrated schools in the same income level.

Interracial marriages were "officially

## 1950s Orientation

outlawed" in Colorado, but they still happened. I found little evidence of active prosecution (although there may have been far more cases than I've discovered, I just can't find that many references to these cases). In fact, in a census evaluation Colorado was mentioned as one of the states in a list of states which apparently practiced selective prosecution, or otherwise ignored interracial marriage laws (depending on the prosecutor). On the official record - Clarence avoided the issue and married Shirley in New Mexico. Again, I'm speaking from a position of having checked federal and state census reports. If this information is wrong, then the reports are wrong.

\*

Finally: You will see names of companies and products that were a major founding part of the United States' post war culture. Some of these names exist today, many don't. They are being used within a social and historical context. None of these companies or products endorses 'John Rocket', nor am I stating that I endorse these products. Their use falls under the 'fair use application' of intellectual property law, nothing more. Let me repeat - it's used within a historical context, not within a commercial context.

## 1950s Orientation

### Some Average Prices of 1953 Denver, Colorado

Men's Socks	\$1.49-2.50 pr	Capri shirt	\$2.98
Cotton Pinafore	\$3.98	Outdoor Rose Plants	\$1.00 to \$3.00 per
women's Classic Suits	\$44.00 to \$55.00 pr	Portable typewriter	\$51.50 to \$74.50
Alligator Picnic Kit	\$7.95	Plaid Picnic Kit	\$13.95
Lunch Kit	\$2.98	Sketch Bucket	\$5.95
Lawn Stickers	\$1.98	Typing Table	\$6.95
4 Drawer File Cabinet	\$29.95	Jumbo Personal File	\$5.98
Porto-File	\$2.98	Magic Memopad	\$1.00
Ash Trays	6 for \$1.00	Card Table	1.59
Stationary	\$1.00 set	Desk Pen Set	\$3.98
A+1 Casuals	\$9.95	Gas 20-23c	Stamp 3c
Pure Silk Sportator Dresses	\$25.00	5 piece Fine China place settings	\$3.95 to \$4.95
Televisions Table Models 17" - 20"	\$149.95 \$189.95 \$129.95 (20")	Deluxe / Console 21" \$299.95	\$319/325/349/ 359/379/389/ 405/409/429
Refrigerators	10ft 374-509	8ft \$269	trade in aval
Tires	\$11.95-17 ea	Beef 1/4	32c 1b
Beef Side	42c 1b	Hind/Round	53/55c 1b
Link Sausage	49c 1b	Strawberries	25c 12oz
Margarine	29c 1b	wieners	55c 1b
Peaches	25c 1b	Cake Icing	39c 11b
Tea Bags 15c	Milk 74-94c	Fruit Coctail	29c
Orange Juice	12c	Pot Pies 29c	Bread 12-16c
Butter	59c 1b	Pears 29c	12Eggs 18-24c
Plant Food	\$2.29	Pink Salmon	39c per can
Sweet Corn	6 for 33c	Pork n Beans	7.5 cents
Syrup	12 oz 25-79c	Grapefruit	6 for 49c
Slacks \$8.99	Pistols\$32-43	Pickles 12oz	22-25c



*Shirley Artemis (Stillman) Fairbanks*

*Born 10:10:10am Saturday, May 15, 1926*

## Biography – Shirley Artemis (Stillman) Fairbanks

Shirley Artemis (Stillman) Fairbanks was born deaf to an unforgiving father. She found herself facing the possibility of adoption at the age of 2, only to be taken in by her uncle, (who did so in spite of his brother's attitude). That was the last prolonged contact either had with her family for years, with the rare exceptions of unpleasant phone calls between her biological father to her uncle, and the calls from her mother on her birthday or the rare holiday (communicated to each through sign by her uncle).

In late of 1941, Shirley applied for and worked at the Remington Arms Plant in Lakewood after school to support the war effort. She was hired as a welder and heavy machinery operator due to deafness over other "healthy" people.

She left the arms plant in Late 1942 to work at Rocky Mountain Arsenal, filling a similar position. Upon discovering the full impact of incendiary bombs (some of the primary ammunition with which she worked), Shirley became uneasy.

She then left to work for the Remington Arms Plant in 1943 until late October 1944. She continued to contribute to the war effort afterwards, but was easily convinced by her uncle/guardian to work afternoon waitressing at his bar and grille. Though she had periodically assisted in the operation of the bar prior to 1944, neither Uncle nor Ward considered it as a working position until after her previous employments.

She first met Clarence Wabash Fairbanks in November 1944 while waitressing at the bar, as her brother Ben would frequent the bar just to see if he could work up the courage to introduce himself to his sister.

She and Clarence soon fell in love. While it remained illegal for them to marry in the state of Colorado, they, along with Ben, her uncle and Clarence's mother, traveled to New Mexico where the couple was married on Tuesday, June 15, 1948, in a small ceremony. It was just before this that she discovered Clarence's best man was her brother. With the drama aside, the group had an enjoyable vacation before they separated on their return to Union City. While the rest had to return home on short order, the newly weds traced various archaeological sites of Indian nations long past on their honeymoon trip back home.



*Clarence Wabash Fairbanks*

*Born 2:20:22pm Monday, September 22, 1924*

## Biography – Clarence Wabash Fairbanks

Clarence Wabash Fairbanks was born to a loving family on September 22, 1924. This unfortunately, or rather fortunately, meant his inability to be registered for school until a year later than the average age. This didn't stop his parents from imparting the fundamentals of knowledge to the young and eager mind.

Clarence's life was far from easy, from the tight financial constraints before and through the depression, onto the color of his skin. This may be one of the many reasons he was attracted to Shirley.

He wasn't entirely sure if it was the fact she was deaf, ostracized by society, or if it was how she held herself and others to a higher standard. Whatever it was, he devoted his free time outside of his schooling to learning sign language.

His first signed words to Shirley were like magic for them both. Despite obvious differences, and barriers in both communication and social, their relationship only grew throughout the years. Shirley's caring, drive, fire, and unbridled desire to continue bettering herself matched Clarence point for point, bringing them even closer than before.

It wasn't until late of 1947 that Shirley brought up the subject of marriage. This was soon followed by plans to take a trip down to New Mexico for a small ceremony in 1948.

Clarence's relationship with his long time and solid friend, Ben Stillman, didn't just yield a marriage to Shirley, but a long term investment into their engineering desires, and a resulting partnership and ownership of their own engineering firm. While both are skilled in engineering, and their skill is accompanied by a solid yet small family of engineers, it's clear Ben's is the head for business and Clarence's is the head for engineering and design.

While racism still plays a large role in how Clarence and Ben have to deal with clients and how he and Shirley deal with the general population, it plays little in Clarence's own concept of self-worth. With his head concentrated and firm on his and his family's quality of life and future, he has little time and patience left to play the race game. Though it's been far from easy, his calm demeanor and concentrated efforts of pressing ever on have granted him a solid financial and moral foundation, allowing both him and Shirley to live well.



*Mildred Anne Freeman*

*Born 5:45:37am Thursday, April 1, 1937*

## Biography – Mildred Anne Freeman

It would be wonderful to say that Mildred was born to a loving family, but the only one in her family who ever seemed to show her love on a consistent basis was her mother.

Where Clarence and Shirley lived through the 30s, Mildred was born in the 30s. Both Shirley's adoptive uncle, and Clarence's loving family, learned to live and adjust through the depression. Mildred's father, Hank (a very common name), felt imposed upon through the 'failing of her mother' when it was discovered that she was pregnant.

'Little piggy' and 'piglet' were two nick names quickly attributed to the young Mildred, as she was the 'extra mouth to feed'. Hank didn't hate Mildred, and he did love her at times, but his harsh attitude seemed ever present. At risk of spoiling his child, he would never spare the rod. This may be one of the reasons why Mildred has such a great age difference to her younger brothers (ages six and seven at the time of her 16th birthday).

It was in this household that Mildred was raised to understand violence, misogyny and racism. Though it would be impossible to stay untouched, it was much to Hank's disappointment that Mildred grew out of the 'family ideals'.

Despite her father's vulgarity and abuse (towards his own family, and other human beings), Mildred's school life and friendships seemed relatively healthy. While she clearly had the relatively thin and eventual 'busty' frame that defined the 'popular crowd', her firecracker attitude against all forms of abuse tended to separate her from the 'popular crowd'. This drove her more than anything to the friendships of Opal Fletcher and Allison Gomez.

Mildred's life wouldn't be completely turned around until February, when she was abducted and molested by a serial killing vagrant. The fragility of her self worth would be nearly shattered by that incident, leaving her in the emotional state that would directly led up to her actions on Friday, March 6th, 1953.

Mildred had learned in a very hard way the only two true friends she had were Opal and Allison, and it wasn't until late February that she had even considered Allison to be that close. She also learned an even harder lesson as to how vile and contemptuous her father could be.





# John Rocket

## Hero

There are three types of heroes in this world: the heroes who want to bring forth justice, following the laws of society; the heroes who want to enforce justice, even if it means crossing some of the *less deadly laws*; then there are the punks who do it just for kicks. This story begins ten months after the 1952 inception of Union's first greatest hero, a hero whose only motivation is to see justice done.

Johnny Rocket (as the kids call him), John Rocket (as the press calls him), or Clarence Fairbanks (as his wife calls him), didn't have a clue why he made the suit, or why he wore it, not until he ignited his fuel cell boosters that night.

It was through a dark tunnel where he found himself speeding late that night. It was while one of his worst fears began to eat away at the back of his mind that he heard echoing screams. It tore at the psyche and worked its way to the forefront of his mind as he sped on, completely opening the fuel line, as he put the welfare of his niece before his own. The tunnel was tight, but straight, an old shaft or culvert, he didn't know or care. Nothing would slow him, not until he came to the scene did he come to a sudden, wrenching stop. All thoughts in his mind froze, slowing with time, until he could almost feel the Earth rotate beneath his chrome feet.

"Oh .... no ...." He exhaled the remark through a slacked jaw, as he stood in shock.

The silver polished steel of his suit glinted in the light. His chest glinted the single white star of freedom on his left breast, with the inch wide blue stripe extending from the tip of the star to the base of the star, over and under the breastplate. The separator plates protecting his lower rib cage and along his sides lay unpainted, but polished. The chainmail which protected the few tension wires over his stomach chinked with movement, while the overlapping guards of his arms barely concealed the sound of watch-gears, pulleys and hydraulics which gave his suit exceptional strength. The figure at whom he stared didn't notice these sounds or lights between her gasping cries.

"Answer me!" she shouted. Her fists appeared to be holding bloody cloth. She screamed some more, her head light, her eyes unable to focus, her voice hoarse. "Answer me! Why did you do it?"

Goddamnit, answer me!” The slush of her fists pounding the body startled John with a violent shiver up his spine. “Answer me! Stop laughing! Just answer me!”

John moved forward. Cautiously. Though his niece had been just twenty feet away, he could barely take more than three steps in what felt like an hour. “Mildre—,” he cleared his throat between the wet slosh of her fists pounding into soft flesh, “Mildred. Mildred, I, I have to take you home now. Please.” By now, it was clear in the dim light that the bloodstained shirt which wrapped her hands was really skin torn from her target’s body.

“Goddamnit! What is so funny? What is so funny? Answer me you stupid som’ bitch! Answer me!” She noticed John’s approach only after he placed his hand on her shoulder. “No!” she screamed, “No! He has to tell me why before I let him go! He has to tell me why! The stupid som’ bitch isn’t talking!”

“Millie, w—,”

“No!” She turned around with her right arm, belting John in the chest, just where the two protective plates met under his breastplate, denting it and sending him hard against the cavern wall twenty feet behind. “No, goddamnit! No! You can’t do this to me!” her voice rose, while her eyes darted around the corpse. “I’m not going to let you go!” her voice escalated, breath quickened and small drops of tears formed at her already swollen eyes. “I’m not letting you get away! You have to answer me!” She threw another wet punch into the already caved in rib cage. “You’re not allowed to leave! Stop it!” she screamed, her lips tight around her wide, open mouth while her blows became more and more violent. “Stop it!” she screamed as his bones cracked under her blows. The more snaps she heard, the angrier she got. “Stop leaving me! You have to answer me! Stop it!”

Clarence took his helmet off, and winced as he unsnapped the edges of his breast plate in order to give his caved in metal enough room outwards that it might not press inwards. After two deep breaths, he pulled the chainmail coif from his black hair, and brought himself to his feet. “Millie,” his smooth voice called out to the girl. No longer altered by the small, static filled microphone in his mask, Mildred turned her head slowly. Not quite sure what she’d find, she only saw the young black face of her uncle. “Millie, it’s time to go home.”

“He’s sad?” Her face was instantly filled with confusion. Her

eyes still not focusing on much, she tried to glance around the room and back to the body. “I, I have to make him tell..”

“Millie, it’s ok, we have to go now.”

“I, where, I think ... John Rocket was..... here..”

“Millie,” two tears shot down his cheeks, and he was forced to clench his jaw for a moment before he could speak, “I am, John Rocket. Can you see my suit?” Several moments of silence passed. Moments he used to cautiously walk forward, while Millie’s face flashed seconds of anger and confusion as it darted wildly around the ground. “Millie?”

“I–, I do– n’t think,” her voice began to quicken, and her eyes focused on the body and her blood stained hands.

“Millie, look at me, now, please,” Clarence’s smooth voice brought her attention away from the corpse. He could see her memories begin to attack the young psyche from behind her eyes. “Millie..”

“I don’t thi–thi–...” her anger slowly subsided to tears of fear.

“Listen to me. It’s, ok.” He watched as she lowered her sight to the ground, before placing his left hand on her right shoulder for a second time.

“I–, he, he wouldn’t answer me!” Her fear, suddenly gave way to another rush of confused anger, but her tears remained unbroken. “He won’t answer! He–,”

“He can’t, Millie, but it’s ok.”

“No...”

“Look at me, please.” Again, she looked up, only this time was surprised to find John Rocket and Clarence, the same man, staring down at her. “It’s ok, but we need to leave. Can you follow me?”

“I.. No, it’s not, I–,”

“Can you stand?”

“I,” Millie shook and grimaced as she looked down at her hands. The hands which flung powerful clenched fists moments ago were now almost shriveled, shaking and curled up as if she could will them to fall off her body. She felt a small pat on her shoulders, prompting her to look up. “I think ...I want to walk.” Her voice, so powerful moments ago, was shaking and shriveled like her hands. She knew he could tell, but all Clarence did was smile and nod. Any evidence that there were tears at the side of his face was gone. She couldn’t tell if he had wiped them away or what, she couldn’t even tell how much time passed. All she knew was he waited, with a smile, as she struggled to put the events of

the night in order.

John led the two of them out the tunnel, gently grabbing Millie's attention whenever her eyesight strayed to her bloodied hands. After what he figured was fifteen minutes, bright red and blue lights could be seen flashing against the tunnel walls. They were close to the exit, and it was clear what would be waiting for them.

"Millie."

"Wh-what?" she half snorted wildly. Her eyes still filled with confusion, and her face made periodic, almost random gestures demonstrating the flow of emotions through her mind.

"Millie, I have to put my mask on again. But, I don't want to do it unless you're ok with it."

"Yeah, yeah it's ok."

"What is?"

"You, you can put your mask back on and be Johnny. Ok?"

"Alright," Clarence tipped Millie's strong, porcelain chin, making sure she watched as he attached the silvery face plate. "Now," his voice suddenly different, a blast of fear could be seen pass across her face. He stopped, wondering if she still knew he was her uncle. "Millie?"

"Yeah, yeah it's ok." She took several deep breaths. She wasn't sure if it was Clarence behind the mask anymore, but she remembered collecting news bulletins of John Rocket. He was 'ok'. He had to be.

"Ok, Millie. There is a rock just outside the entrance. I will walk out first. You walk behind me. Sit on the rock. There will be lots of men out there, and it will be very confusing for me. I need you to help me by sitting on the rock, so I know where you are at all times. Ok?"

"Yeah, I can help you!" She struggled a smile, though her brow still furrowed with confusion.

"That's good." Clarence led the pony-tailed girl to the rock, as he saw nearly an entire police force standing outside of the tunnel. Many had their weapons drawn, which made Clarence even more thankful Millie couldn't seem to focus on anything more than two feet away. She had always had keen eyesight, which made Clarence feel even more worried that he was thankful for her sudden ailment.

"Hold it, men!" the Lieutenant called out to the cops at the sight of the silver clad hero. Though many held their weapons aloft, they weren't quite sure what to do with them.

John watched as many of the men came to realize what had happened. It wasn't hard to guess. All they knew was there was blood covering the girl, blood on her fists, staining her white top and covering her red swirl dress.

"Go in and look-,"

"No," John raised his arm at the E.M.T.s, after the Lieutenant had waved them onto the girl. "She's not injured. Neither am I."

What guns remained aloft were holstered, all but three. Many of the policemen turned away, trying to push the situation out of their minds as John approached the Lieutenant.

"Did you..."

"No," John answered succinctly. It was clear the Lieutenant knew what had happened, as he kept glancing between the girl and John Rocket.

"Then how? He was a super-,"

"Rape," his words were bitter, biting into the Lieutenant, as the two men stood still.

"I'm going to have-,"

"No, *you're not!*"

"We can't just let her go! We have to process her, then I can release her-,"

"You're not touching her," John stepped forward, his frame wasn't that tall or large, but its cold steel was imposing enough to make the Lieutenant take notice. "You had your chance to arrest that prick!"

"Her family refused to let her press charges-,"

"You had four dead bodies, of girls, laying in *your* morgue! *You had evidence!*"

"I didn't see you stopping him!" a young uniform overlapped the last of John's words.

"It's *not my job* to police the entire city!" his cold, quiet, deathly tone struck the uniform back three steps.

"We couldn't connect them to him!" the Lieutenant immediately screamed, before taking a sudden jerk of his hand to wipe the back of his head. The two took several breaths before he continued. "How could she..."

"She knocked me into a wall." John sucked in a breath through his teeth. "I don't know how, for sure, but she wasn't like this three weeks ago."

“You’re saying he passed it on like some kind of VD?”

John just shrugged. “Could be in the blood.”

“Great.” The Lieutenant brought his hand down over his face, wiping the bridge of his nose and pulling his hand down to his chin. “Call hazardous materials.”

“Yessir.” The uniformed Officer was happy to leave the conversation behind as he went to call dispatch.

“I can’t just allow her to walk away.”

“What are you going to do with her, *test* her? Toss her in *lockup*?”

“She killed a man, John,” the Lieutenant sneered. “Even in self-defense, she has to be processed!”

“She is coming home with me!”

“Don’t make me remind you that your little ‘Citizen’s Arrests’ are borderline vigilantism! Or are you just like your wife? Don’t care about what bones you crack to—,”

“Don’t talk to me about cracking bones while half your squad locks up half-beaten *niggers* for walking down the wrong side of the street!”

“I’ve never used that word. Don’t put the entire squad in the same category as a handful of men!” the Lieutenant snapped, “I don’t care if you’re white, yellow, black or red, I have a duty to the law. That girl killed, and she doesn’t look all that together from where I stand!” The two took alternating glances at the young girl between their exchanges. “I can’t just sweep this under the carpet, there are too many men here. I think a reporter hitched a ride on that ambulance.”

“What about a mayoral pardon?”

“Mayors don’t give pardons.”

“What if I got a pardon from the Mayor?”

The Lieutenant wiped his face, rubbing his forehead, before turning back to John Rocket. “Clancy.” A rather portly uniform stepped up to the Lieutenant. “Tank that reporter from the paper. Tell him, I’ll give him an interview in an hour.”

“Yes, sir.”

“An hour?”

“No, John,” the Lieutenant sneered, “You have twenty minutes to convince the Mayor that girl isn’t a danger to you, herself, or anyone else. She killed a fucking psycho tonight, John, but if her marbles are

loose, you can't guarantee she won't pop her teacher or the reverend out of some delusion! You convince him, and you can be her parole officer."

"Alright," John glanced back at the girl, avoiding the unmistakable look from the Lieutenant that would demand a favor. Had it been any other man, or any other girl, John might have thought twice about that look. But, he didn't. "I'll take those certification courses--,"

"Monday."

"You want my face?"

"Right now, I don't give a shit if you're a Russian! Nineteen minutes."

That was when Johnny Rocket ignited the blue flamed jet pack. In one small jump he glided to Mildred. With just two words, he had her arms wrapped around his neck before flying off into the night sky.

"Hey, hey! You're just letting them!"

"In the car, Bertowisk!" The uniform shoved the reporter into the back seat of the '50s black and white.

"Freedom of the Press--,"

"You'll get your damn interview in my office!" The Lieutenant turned toward his car, while the still protesting reporter reluctantly put up a feeble fight. The rest of the stunned audience waited well past the point when the Lieutenant left. Each one slowly taking their leave of the odd night. Although each car left for the same destination, even the ambulances were escorted to the precinct.

\* \* **Tuesday** \* \*

It was four days, and Millie had barely been able to keep herself from crying. The few classes she took at school were enough to keep her studies from completely failing, but it would only be three hours before she was unable to continue with the school day. If it caused Shirley to worry, Millie couldn't see it. All she saw when she came to the car was a beaming smile.

Millie still didn't understand sign language, but that didn't prevent quickly scrawled notes from passing between herself and her aunt; though they were mainly notes passed from Shirley to Millie, as Millie's hand would start shaking before despair would consume her

mind in a torrent of tears. That would be when she felt Shirley's hand pat her on her back. She was glad her aunt and uncle insisted on her staying with them, she didn't want to go back home. She wasn't sure if her parents' lack of a fight for her made her feel worse or better. She tried not to think about it, as there were far too many thoughts tearing up the quiet of her mind. The car ride seemed too short. Before long she was on her bed sobbing.

\*

It was that afternoon that Clarence knocked on her door for the first time since she had stayed. At first she thought he must have come home early, before noticing it was already five-thirty.

"Can I come in?" Clarence left the door wide open. Noticing the sudden sense of discomfort exuded by his niece, he gave a reassuring smile. "I can come back."

"No! No, it's ok." She tried to stop crying, taking several steady breaths, while holding herself in a tight upright position as if she were at school.

"You know, I just wanted to make sure you liked it here. We can all go do some shopping this weekend for new clothes and whatever else you want."

"Thank you," though still shaking, she gave a smile as wide as she could. She hadn't had a chance to get more than the few clothes Clarence brought from her house, but clock, lamp and posters he had bought for her were already more than what she had asked.

"We're having roast beef tonight, I think. That, or meatloaf. Shirley said she'd have to check the butcher's first."

"Thank you."

"Well, I should be going, just wanted you to know I'm here to help on your math tonight. Just closed that amusement park ride, deal, thing, so we're not into the design phase yet..."

"How?" She shook her head, then sighed, "You're real smart, Uncle Clarence. I wanted you to know. I like it here. I know it's hard for you to be an engineer, especially with how people talk to you and--"

"I got lucky," Clarence half snorted, "I got lucky."

"No," she grimaced, "No you didn't, you're s-s-mart! You worked hard and I'm sorry for all the things my dad said, I'm--," her tears

started rushing out in a swell of blubbering that made absolutely no sense to Clarence. “Y-you-, you’re my h-hero, y---ou’re a he-he-he-ro to e-eh-every-one an-d ... not-f-f-f-fair..”

Unable to do much, he just rubbed his face, then something seemed to light up. “Hey, hey. How about a story about John Rocket no one’s ever heard?” This was enough to cause the young niece enough curiosity that she stopped crying. “I ever tell you about what happened a few months ago?”

“N-n-no,” Millie blew her nose.

“I ever tell you when I was gone? Your dad ever tell you that?”

“I, I just thought you and Shirley were on vacation?”

“You’re cold, Daddy-o! Freezin’! Frigid like a square cube in a round glass. As if we’d leave on vacation without telling our niece.”

“That doesn’t make any sense,” Millie burst out in a series of giggles, bringing an instant smile to Clarence’s face.

“Nope, I was suckin’ air from a tube in ol’ St. Mary’s General.” The giggles stopped but Clarence held his smile. “Wanna know what happened?”

“But, how?”

“Don’t worry too much about it, I’m here, I was only unconscious for a couple of days.” Clarence gave a wink. “I can tell you what I remember and what Shirley and Ben told me.”

\* \* **October of 1952** \* \*

Saturday, October 4th, 1952, was the day which led to his hospital visit. Clarence and Shirley entered Tim’s Hardware late in the day. Both had been tired from signing. Shirley was a little disappointed that ‘The World in His Arms’ was starting on Wednesday, if it was shipped to the theater on time. It wasn’t a total loss, though, as she got a few good laughs as Clarence stumbled around, trying to sign the lyrics for the songs in ‘Singing in the Rain’. He had gotten some practice over the past few months and performed much better than the last time.

Despite this, she still rolled her eyes as they entered the hardware store. It was the curse of marrying an engineer. He was always in the hardware store. She had just wished that Tim’s prices weren’t so high,

especially considering it was the only store that Clarence cared to enter.

“Hi, Tim!” Clarence gave a beaming hello to the older, paunch man. “I need to grab a pound of two and a quarter screws, and some of those two by one by quarter bars I’ve been picking up.”

“Alright, I’ll ring you up in a minute.” Tim glanced back with his own smile, while Shirley milled around to the electrical wall.

The light tin bell seemed innocuous when it rang, as all three were glancing around at the tool kits, wires and steel cords, among other things which made up the small shop. It was only when they heard the voices that prompted Clarence and Tim to turn around.

“Hey, looky here, a coon!” They were teenagers. White t-shirts and denim pants bore their only markings, two had blonde hair, the other was oil slicked black. “Jungle baby.”

Clarence just looked up at them and turned away with disgust. Tim just stared.

“Can I help you with anything?”

“Just wanted to say hello to our chocolate baby. Thought you could need some help!” The group laughed, while one tossed a spinner filled with nails clockwise on its stand. “How you-,”

“I said, boys, can I help you with anything?” Tim slapped his hand down on the counter.

“Hey, whoa, pops!” one of the taller boys held up his hands, “We’re not causing any problems. We just want to find out what such a tall, *black* man is doing in our store!”

“I can take care of my own business. Now, if you aren’t going to buy anything, I suggest you leave *my* store.”

“We w-,” before the boy could finish, the store keeper placed his shotgun on the counter, raising the hairs on the back of Clarence’s neck. It wasn’t until then that Shirley noticed the problem. “Hey, we’re leaving. Enjoy that nigger’s money.”

Clarence watched as Tim’s eyes shot after the boys with deadly intent. As courteous as Tim appeared to be, it was painfully clear the boys were walking a thin line.

“Neighborhood has been going down since the war.” Tim’s only response was a grunting nod, “Gettin’ a bunch of movers from back east, think they own the place when they walk in.”

“Thanks, Tim!”

“Thanks nothing,” he shot back, though taking no notice

Clarence was referring to his bag, and not the shotgun. “Have to take a shotgun out on the counter just to get respect in my own store. Did you hear them? They called it *their* store!”

“Yep,” Clarence took out his cash and proceeded to pay. “Just don’t want those kinds of situations to escalate. They can get pretty bad.”

“I know. But, I’ll tell you something,” Tim shook his finger at the door, while giving Clarence a clearly defined look of intent. “I wouldn’t mind taking away their license to walk, if you know what I mean. I’ll only let a cripple get away with that kind of disrespect in my store.”

Clarence gave a nervous chuckle. If there was anything he knew about the man, it was that Tim didn’t give idle threats. His grandad had been a marshal up in Wyoming for several years in his day, and his dad had stockpiled quite an arsenal after WWI. Taking the two bags, Clarence gave another smile and a nod, before waving over the concerned Shirley. “Thanks again, Tim!”

“Oh! Clarence, I almost forgot. I’ve got that bundle of steel sheets coming in for you. Think you can pick them up in two weeks?”

“Uh, sure!” Clarence and Shirley stopped at the half-opened door, “How many did I order again?”

“Says here, thirty two, but there’s also an order for your work for eighteen more. I’m getting those in Wednesday, but if your work can hold off picking those eighteen up on Friday I can cut in a discount on the lot. Juggle the order numbers.”

“Well, sure,” Clarence scratched his head in thought. “I’ll have to speak with Ben, see our schedule, but I think he’ll go for it!”

“Great! Just to let you know, I can put out a discount on fifty count sheets from now on!”

“Thanks! I’ll let him know. Say ‘Hi’ to the Misses!”

“Sure thing!”

Clarence left with a tug on his shoulder. The tone of Shirley’s demeanor was that of agitation. As they left for their car, she couldn’t help but notice the three adolescents toking from across the street. It wasn’t much of a happy afternoon from then on. Although Clarence ignored the adolescents, Shirley couldn’t help but stare at them, as she walked to the driver’s seat.

Clarence sighed, standing at the passenger end where he had

planned to open the door for Shirley. He watched her as she stared at the boys, completely oblivious to him, unlock the door and sit in the seat. Wiping his hand across his face with a grunt, he decided discretion was the better part of valor.

Clarence dropped the brown bags between them as he sat on the seat. He couldn't say he was too annoyed. He really didn't feel like driving, but Shirley's lack of hearing caused a few concerns to surface when the streets were busy. Slipping back into his seat, he just gave a sigh. It wasn't until he felt several slaps against his tweed jacket that he noticed Shirley had been signing to him.

"Pay attention!" Her right hand was enraged, while her left kept control of the wheel.

"You!" he signed and mouthed back.

Shirley grunted and shifted gears for the stop sign before continuing, "You listen to me! I don't like this! Tim brought out his gun!"

"Yeah, well, they deserved a little shock."

"Those *punks*," she punched the word hard with her hand, the sound itself was enough to make Clarence take notice, "...were doing something, now tell me what it was! What's to stop them from coming in next time with guns of their own!"

"Shirley, if I ran away from every damn--," he got a quick slap on the shoulder as soon as he signed 'damn', "If I ran away scared from every *punk* that – eyes on the road – called me 'nigger' or 'coon baby', I wouldn't have married you!"

"I am watching the road!" she slapped Clarence again.

"Stop it!"

"And, I have you know, you're not the only one here with problems!" Shirley took the corner into the butcher's surprisingly fast, before slamming on the brakes. She then drove around slowly for a parking spot, while signing to Clarence. "Tim pulled a gun! That's what I don't like! You both should've called the police."

"And do what? Tell them Tim pulled a gun because they called me 'nigger'? Or because they refused to buy anything in his store!" Clarence snorted. "That's a fine police report! 'Three punks tossed in the clink for refusing to buy nails from Tim's Hardware!'"

Shirley slammed the brakes as hard as she could in response, but was disappointed when not much of a jolt came due to her having been

parking at the time. “Clarence Wabash Fairbanks, you idiot men and your stupid pride! You’ll get yourself killed if you don’t watch out for yourself! The least you and Tim could’ve done was let the police know about the problem!”

“Tim’s not like that, Shirl, and it’s not like the police could’ve done anything,” Clarence smiled with a laughing snort, “What would you want them to do, call their parents?”

“I don’t think it’s funny,” Shirley tried to ignore whatever responses Clarence was about to give by turning her head in her purse and looking for the grocery money.

“I don’t think it’s funny either! My poin—,” Clarence just gave up. Shirley left the car and headed into the store, while he just sighed in relief. There were more than a few times he counted Shirley’s disability as a blessing, and though rarely, he still wondered if that was what had attracted him to her. Of course, the answer was always a flat no, but, the thought was easy to entertain.

\*

“—the question is not whether or not we are doing the right thing, the question is: why haven’t we done it sooner!” The room was full of just fifty members, as Reinhard brought his palm down on the podium with a slap. Some claps echoed against the wooden walls, but most were silent as he continued his speech. “Do you know why? Tolerance,” he said with a near sigh, as he stepped back a foot. The bright red flags portraying the Nazi Swastika under the black and gold eagle seemed to flap with each punctuation. “Tolerance. This country has become weak... with a sickness... that believes all men are created equal. We know this is not true! They teach us this in simple biology, why can we not understand it applies to us today?”

“We have sat by, while our nation claims to defend the Jews over a conflict entered more on economics than on ideology! We sat by while the party crumbled. Have we learned from our mistakes?” Murmurs ran through the crowd, but Reinhard couldn’t make out the words. “I said, have we learned from our mistakes? No. No, we have not!”

“We have some good news. We will soon be able to relaunch our efforts. We will liberate free Germans from the oppressive yoke of the Russians, while we stage our entrance here in Colorado Springs, to

prevent any military counter measures. America will not enter a war of liberation! We will bring about the revolution to free German citizens from their condemned state of purgatory, just as America did with King George! But until then, we need to open the eyes of our patriots, and help them to see the reason.”

A handful of people left as the speech came to a close, while others clapped. It was late, but the congregation held. Reinhard backed away from the podium and directed his attention to one of the younger members. “Everyone,” he said, after the member passed by the NSDAP sign, “Welcome Jonathan Stripp to the podium.” Another round of soft claps filled the smoke choked room, as the blonde haired brown eyed youth took the stand.

“Sieg Heil!” The room responded with a ‘Sieg Heil’ of their own. The teenager shifted in his black boots as he stood before the group, rereading his note card one more time before speaking. “Today. Today I tracked a black down. I heard that there was a *black man* who shared a bed with a white woman. Everyone’s heard of this boy. Now, in the southern states, there are at least standards. Here? I don’t know where I’m living anymore when a white woman, a blonde haired blue eyed white woman, marries a *black*.”

“Hear!”

“Hear, hear!”

“Well I wanted to be sure I had the right man, and so, my friends and I tracked him down to Tim’s Hardware store.” Jon let out a sarcastic snort. “We were trying to speak with the black, tell him plainly, what he was doing was against God’s will. *Tim* lays a shotgun down on the table.” Murmurs filled the room, while Jon gently bobbed his head to their raptures. “Senior Hölten is talking about tolerance. Today I met not just tolerance, but ignorance. Pulling a weapon on teenagers . . . for a *black*.”

“Tim is eccentric.”

“Yes, yes,” Reinhard stepped forward at the audience member’s outburst. “We need to educate our neighbors. Don’t take any rash actions! People like Tim have been taught wrong growing up in this decadent society, and they shouldn’t be punished. We need to teach them, let them know what they are doing is flawed!” He then gestured back to Jonathan as he stepped back.

“My friends and I followed them, asked people around the

neighborhood, watched them. We know where this *black* works, and we know that his wife usually has the car while he usually hitches a ride to work with one of his *friends*. Now we don't want to hurt anyone, we're not planning on it, but my friends and I believe it's time that we confront his wife and let her know what she is doing." The audience was quiet. He had expected some kind of reaction, instead he pressed on. "What she is doing is polluting the human race. Now, black doesn't wipe off when you shake hands, but they're not just shaking hands." Low murmurs and growls came back from the cloud of smoke. "Maybe she'll listen, maybe she won't, but it's high time someone teaches her why blacks were kept in the cotton fields! Thank you." Jonathan gave a slight bow to the audience as he stepped down the podium to the applause. His friends gave him a solid strike against the back while they waited off to the side.

"Thank you, Jonathan. With alert, vigilant members of our organization, we will be able to bring a solid foundation to the founding of the Nationalsozialistische Amerikaner Arbeiterpartei! The NSDAP foundations will see us as the corner stone to the rise of a Fourth Germany." The applause increased, many people stood, as Reinhard cleared his throat for a glass of water. "Now I would like to say before we continue, the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei does not condone open violence, vulgarity in support of our goals. Such events as lynchings diminish our stance, they make us look weak, disorganized. We have discussed this in great detail. We are eager to show our cousins, our brothers, our sisters how tolerance is a facade used by the weak to wield power over the strong. Random violence is not the answer. However, when we come to a point when we have to defend ourselves, against the encroaching menace, swift actions must be taken.

"These actions must be concise, with method, with pride. We cannot allow our race to become extinct after we have come so far to grow strong under God's will!" Reinhard finished as the applause grew to their crescendo. The somewhat short man stood still with his paunch, and thin rimmed glasses, as he waited for the room to quiet down. "We have been granted five medals in our work to supply funds and information to the Aufseher of ODESSA, aiding their continued work with the Argentine, Brazilian and Cuban governments while circumventing the German betrayers who assist the Jewish assassins in extinguishing the heroes of the Third Reich! We also have here one

certificate of commendation for assisting the Thule's continued efforts in the *Übersoldat* and *Superman* projects."

Reinhard stepped away from the podium, taking out one of the medals, he looked toward one of the teenagers and called the name. "Timothy Rawlings. Your Aryan heritage to our Nordic ancestors has been proven in both body," he paused, allowing everyone to acknowledge the blonde hair and blue eyes, "... and undaunting support of our cause. Step forward and receive your commendation as the first member of our branch's very own Schutzstaffel." The young man of the three stepped forward, while his friends congratulated him. Still surprised, it seemed a blur when Senior Hölten placed the medal on his chest.

Reinhard then stepped back so everyone could see the young man turn and face the crowd, "Sieg Heil!" With a gesture of his right arm, the young man followed suit, first to Reinhard, then to the congress what answered in turn.

"Sieg Heil!"

"Sieg Heil!"

"Sieg Heil!"

\*

Shirley had almost forgotten about Saturday. It wasn't as if that kind of confrontation had happened before, though she was still irritated that Tim brought out his shotgun. She never really liked Tim; but, it was in the past, and she didn't care about bringing it up to the forefront of her memory. There were other things to do, like *sew*.

Shirley sighed.

She welded bombs and cleaned military bound gun barrels from fifteen and on; but, now the only time she was allowed to touch a tool was if it was to fix Clarence's worn out, torn or burnt sleeves on her Singer. Unless, of course, Clarence needed to fix the weld on a prototype for work but instead decided to run around the city in that idiotic suit.

She could always cook, too, and vacuum, or read. Shirley sighed. Marriage. She hated it sometimes. Looking around the grocery, she filled her bag with the regular Monday purchase of a quart of milk, cream and cereal. Steaks were already thawing out at home. It wasn't until she headed for the counter that one of the punks from the hardware

store bumped into her. Shirley stepped back with a start, grabbing her light blue hat. She blinked her eyes several times as the *young man* spoke.

“...*black* ..... *Negro* ..... *white* ..... *you* ..... *know*,” she knew the word ‘know’. In fact, after thinking about it, she cocked her head with a venomous glare. It wasn’t just ‘know’, it was ‘know better’. It didn’t take much for her to realize what the boy had been saying. With a grunt, she pushed past the boy, staring at him for only a brief moment before heading to the checkout counter. ‘What were these kids thinking?’ her mind boggled at the stalker. Then she felt him grab her arm. With a jerk, she pulled her elbow away and tried stepping again toward the counter. That’s when she saw that the grocer and Tilly had taken notice. She felt another yank on her arm and turned to see the young boy making faces at her. She was positive he was saying “*What are you, deaf and dumb?*” His left hand flailed about, while his right made cranking motions before knocking the side of his head right above his ear. She saw those comments spew from people’s lips before, including her father’s. She had also seen the hand movements, vulgar actions as if she had any power over her ability to hear and speak.

“No!” Shirley’s voice sounded odd, and it nearly caused the youth to laugh, as she signed while trying desperately to make speech. “I am deaf! You are *dumb!*” though slow, deep and slurred, her words struck a chord.

The punk pushed Shirley’s shoulder, before he was chased out by the grocer. The balding Hank, not to be confused with Millie’s father, shook his head at Shirley when he passed, before smiling and nodding at her groceries. As Shirley went to the checkout, she was moderately relieved to have Tilly come up beside her.

“Some boys,” she spoke with clear, wide movements, easy for Shirley to read. They both gave a sigh and shook their heads.

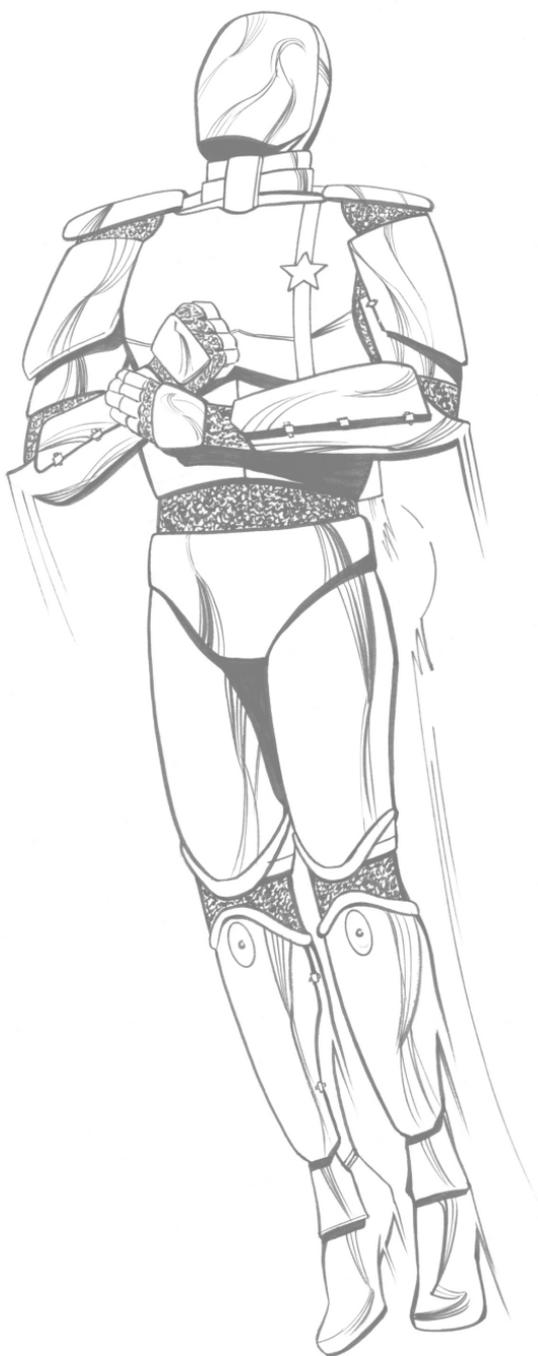
“I know!” she signed and spoke back. It had been a nice day; and, in fact, she relished her return to the quiet house. Maybe Clarence was right. It wasn’t something to get worked up about. There were psychos in the world, and it wasn’t like she made it any easier on herself, especially marrying *outside her race* (as others put it). Then again, whoever said love was easy?



That's the end of this preview file.

No, Shirley doesn't let the Nazis win.

To find out what happens, you'll need to buy the book.



ARTIST'S SIGNATURE