

## Chapter 5551

Aman Ramovich couldn't help but notice that by sparing his life, Charlie was showing a touch of benevolence in the midst of all this malevolence. He knew he needed to seize this opportunity without begging any further. The idea of Charlie having a change of heart was too disheartening to even consider; the alternative could be much worse.

In his desperation, Aman Ramovich felt compelled to speak to Charlie. "Rest assured, Mr. Wade, once we reach Syria, I'll work closely with Commander Hamid and give my all..."

Charlie acknowledged Aman Ramovich's words with an approving nod and a smile on his face. "You know, Mr. Aman Ramovich embodies the essence of Taoism, as we Chinese say. In this society, very few truly understand the principles of Taoism."

Charlie checked his watch and turned to Wesley. "Wesley, it's getting light outside, and people are starting to arrive. Contact the ship, then head upstairs and have a serious talk with our associates. After that, set sail and get them out of the United States."

Wesley nodded respectfully and asked Charlie, "Mr. Wade, any specific instructions for this 'talk'?"

Charlie raised a single finger and spoke earnestly, "I have just one request: make them feel fear. Let their encounter with you leave a lasting mark, whether they leave or stay."

Wesley understood the gravity of the situation and quickly reassured Charlie, "You can count on us to handle it."

Charlie then instructed Antonio to hold onto the railing as he swiftly ascended to the second floor, with Wesley following closely behind.

Meanwhile, the gang members upstairs were still upset with Antonio, unsure of what was happening. They knew Antonio had deceived and restrained them, raising doubts about his motives. Some thought about forming alliances against the Zano family, while others simply hoped to get out of this situation without harm.

The echoing footsteps on the staircase drew their collective attention, yet the identity of the intruder remained a mystery. Antonio's attempts to climb the stairs, hampered by his broken leg, seemed like a never-ending struggle.

After what felt like an eternity, Antonio's head finally emerged. The crowd's anger and suspicion deepened, wondering why he had seemingly turned against them.

Antonio's prolonged struggle to reach the upper floor only intensified the onlookers' curiosity. When he finally made it, it was clear that one of his legs was severely broken, and he had made no attempt to address the injury, which continued to bleed profusely.

The once-powerful mafia leader now appeared feeble and vulnerable. In an effort to quell the hostility, he removed his hat, revealing the shocking absence of both ears, leaving behind only bloody scars.

The conclusion was undeniable: Antonio had endured inhumane torture. The realization settled in that someone had manipulated them into this predicament, using Antonio as a pawn.

Charlie and Wesley proceeded up the stairs, introducing themselves to the gathered gang members. Even though they had seen Charlie downstairs, his purpose remained unclear.

Charlie chose to be straightforward, "I've brought you all here to discuss the future division of gang territories and profits in New York. With our numbers, individual opinions won't factor in. Let me be clear: from now on, all your gangs report to the Chinese Gang, and 75% of your earnings must go to the Chinese gang every week."

The room buzzed with surprise, despite some of them having their mouths covered. It was clear that anger simmered beneath the surface. Antonio had recently been helping the Burning Angels take over Chinatown, and the other gangs saw the Chinese Gang as weak.

However, these gangs were used to taking matters into their own hands. Their outward compliance was only temporary; they were determined to seek retribution when the opportunity presented itself.

Charlie continued firmly, "Starting tomorrow, each gang must appoint someone to keep meticulous records of revenue and expenditures. These records must be sent to the Chinese Gang weekly and subjected to our audit. Any discrepancies will result in limb amputations, with the penalties increasing for repeat offenses."

Charlie's stern warning left a deep impression, emphasizing the gravity of their situation. The gangs were fully aware of their relative strength and believed they could withstand this pressure.

Charlie went on, "You might have noticed that all the gang bosses brought their right-hand people today. Let me be honest: within the next few minutes, all current

gang leaders must leave for Syria by boat. The deputy leader will step up as the gang boss. Refusal to comply will result in intervention by Mr. Drake here."

Charlie gestured to Wesley, who stepped forward with a serious demeanor. "Allow me to introduce myself; I am Wesley Drake, the Master of Dragon Temple."

This revelation sent shockwaves through the room. Just mentioning Wesley's name sent a shiver down their spines. Wesley, the renowned mercenary king, commanded thousands of mercenaries and maintained a legitimate base in Syria, earning him mythical status among gangsters.

The news that the Dragon Temple was backing the Chinese Gang completely changed their understanding of the situation. These gangs might have been street-smart, but they recognized that Wesley was a formidable force, and this alliance significantly altered the balance of power.

Wesley stressed the consequences of defying Charlie, promising swift and severe retribution for anyone who dared to resist. The severity of the punishment and the involvement of Dragon Temple served as a somber reminder of the authority they faced.

Charlie's ultimatum left the gang members in silence. While they may have appeared compliant on the surface, they were resolved to seek revenge when the opportunity arose, regardless of the seemingly insurmountable forces arrayed against them.

## Chapter 5552

Wesley's words struck fear into the hearts of the enraged gangsters, causing them to huddle together, trembling in terror. The scene resembled a group of Emperor penguins, clustered together for warmth in the bitter Antarctic winter winds.

Charlie couldn't help but hide a secret grin as he observed their palpable fear. These gangsters, who once boasted of their fearlessness, now cowered like cornered animals.

Dealing with malevolent forces such as the United States required a ruthless approach. If they wielded a knife, you brandished a gun; if they raised a gun, you targeted their entire kin. Moralizing was futile, for the underworld seldom adhered to such principles. Morality was a stricter code of conduct than the law, while all illegal acts breached morality, not every moral breach was necessarily illegal.

Every ill-gotten penny the gangsters amassed was a product of their disregard for the law. If they held no reverence for the law, how could morality sway them?

Hence, the most effective method to confront such individuals was to be even more unyielding than they were. Yet, Charlie was aware that his intimidation alone wasn't sufficient for these gang members.

To instill bone-chilling fear, he needed to first make them acutely aware of their own vulnerability and the unwavering determination to dismantle them. The initial investment in this endeavor was steep. Allocating so many resources to subdue a group of New York gangsters hardly seemed worthwhile.

So, Charlie summoned Wesley and instructed him to take a stern approach with these people. It was a necessary step. After all, when it came to the number of allies, who could rival the Dragon Temple? In terms of violence, these gangsters were outmatched.

Furthermore, they were no match for the Dragon Temple. The Dragon Temple had knowledge of their identities and could track them down anywhere, eliminating their entire families if they so wished. There was no escape.

On the contrary, what could these gangsters do if they were aware of the Dragon Temple's base in Syria? They couldn't simply confront Wesley, could they?

Wesley's threatening words had indeed sent shivers down the spines of everyone present, but Charlie had no intention of letting them off easily. He aimed to establish absolute authority in their minds.

Charlie glanced around and turned to Wesley. "Wesley, from now on, document the identity details of these people and swiftly investigate their family connections. If they disobey, no family member should be spared."

Wesley nodded in agreement. "I understand."

Charlie gestured towards Jordan beside him. "Furthermore, if anything happens to Jordan, whether it's a natural calamity or a man-made disaster, you must eliminate all of them, leaving no one alive."

The audience couldn't suppress their disdain and derision at this pronouncement, there was apparent resistance to the decision.

Observing this, Charlie suggested, "Since we're all involved in this discussion, let's give them a chance to speak. Bring out whatever is gagging them, and let's hear their thoughts."

Wesley promptly moved forward with his men, removing the gags from the captives' mouths.

At that moment, a gang leader quivered and burst out, "This... this isn't fair! If we didn't kill him and something happened to him, why should we be held accountable?"

Others nodded vigorously in agreement, voicing their dissent. "Exactly! This is unjust!"

Charlie smirked and inquired, "What's this? Is the New York underworld a haven of fairness, then?"

His words found an echo in the group. Encouraged, the man continued, "You ask us to travel to Syria and hand over 75% of our profits to the Chinese gang. Fine, we can do that, but linking our fate to his, making us pay the price for his actions, is too unjust!"

Charlie nodded, "You desire fairness, do you?"

The man affirmed, "Yes, I want fairness!"

Charlie chuckled and challenged, "Let's confirm then, are you rejecting my proposal and insisting on fairness?"

The man replied without hesitation, "I'm certain!"

Charlie grinned, "Very well, let's be fair. Tell me your name and the gang you represent."

The man identified himself, "I'm Todd. Todd Gilbert, the head of the Desperados."

Charlie smiled and commented, "Desperados... that's an interesting name."

Turning to Wesley, he instructed, "Since Mr. Fairness, Gilberto, is keen on justice, let's grant him his wish. Transport him to Syria and conduct a thorough investigation into his background. I want to know if he's wronged anyone throughout his life, no matter how trivial. If there are more than ten such instances, dig a hole in Syria and bury him alive."

Todd Gilberto was instantly horrified, but before he could protest, he silenced himself, realizing it would be 'unfair' to do so.

Angrily, he said, "Sir, this is terribly unjust!"

Before he could utter the word 'unjust', he reconsidered and swallowed it.

He knew that protesting at this point would be indeed unfair.

Hence, he uttered his frustration, "If this is your definition of fairness, I give up."

Charlie responded, "You don't want fairness? If you seek fairness from me, then I also want fairness from you for those you've wronged. Why have you given up?"

He then said to Wesley, "Oh and if you discover that this individual has harmed innocent family members of others while dealing with enemies and rivals, treat him the same way. If he killed someone's wife, we kill his wife, if he killed someone's son, we kill his son too. After all, he requested fairness, so we must ensure absolute fairness."

Wesley vowed, "Don't worry, Mr. Wade. My subordinates will investigate everything."

Todd Gilberto's face turned ashen, and visible tremors coursed through his facial and limb muscles.

One of the gang members, part of the 'Emperor Penguins' huddle for warmth, blurted out, "Sir, this scoundrel kidnapped a friend's son years ago to steal his merchandise. The friend complied but was double-crossed and his son was killed. Many here can testify to this!"

Charlie nodded and commended, "Well done. Are you the boss or the second-in-command of your gang?"

The man replied, "I'm the second."

Charlie instructed Jordan, "Jordan, once this is verified, you can give them a 5% reduction and only charge them 70%."

Jordan replied, "Understood, Mr. Wade."

The man was elated to have negotiated a 5% reduction, a substantial sum given the gang's monthly earnings in the millions.

Another voice in the crowd emerged, "Sir, I want to report Gilberto! Ten years ago, to force an Algerian prostitute into prostitution, he personally killed one of her children, a five-year-old!"

Charlie acknowledged, "Alright, I'll grant you a 4% discount after verification."

Others quickly joined in, each sharing their own accounts of Gilberto's wrongdoings. With each disclosure, the discount granted decreased.

Todd Gilberto now realized the diminishing leniency, but Charlie signaled for the reports to conclude. Turning to the pale-faced man, he asked, "Are their claims true?"

Todd Gilberto was utterly terrified. He cried out, "I was wrong, Mr. Wade, I was truly wrong! I don't want fairness, I'll accept anything you say. My son has just grown up, please, show mercy and spare him."

Charlie pondered, "This is quite a predicament for me. You proposed fairness, but now you want to backtrack in front of everyone. Is that fair?"

Todd Gilberto slapped himself several times and begged, "It's my fault, entirely my fault! From now on, I'll unconditionally accept anything you say."

Charlie waved his hand, "No, I'll give you two options. First, we follow your desire for fairness. But considering your many transgressions, will your family suffice to settle your debts? You've committed numerous crimes, a thorough investigation could reveal countless lives owed. Therefore, I'll offer a second choice, you die today as atonement and I'll forget your past actions."

#### Chapter 5553

Charlie's voice, firm as ice, carried a bone-chilling weight that sent shivers down everyone's spine. It even sent Todd Gilbert into a state of paralyzing fear.

Of course, Todd Gilbert had no desire to meet an untimely end, and he certainly didn't want his family to suffer the same fate as the families of those he had mercilessly taken from. He found himself in a moment of deep regret, pleading with Charlie for a sense of justice, a decision that would haunt him for the rest of his days.

Tears flowed down his cheeks as he sank to his knees, repeatedly bowing and kowtowing, hands clasped in desperate prayer for Charlie's mercy. But Charlie offered no respite.

Observing Todd's silence, Charlie coldly declared, "Since you can't make the choice, then I will make it for you."

He turned to Wesley, who stood nearby and ordered, "Begin with the first task I mentioned earlier, a thorough investigation. Remember to document every step,

capturing it on video. Let him witness firsthand the consequences of treating others in the manner he has. This man has taken countless lives, and unless he's prepared to make amends, we'll see him off once we've dealt with his family."

Wesley nodded immediately. "You can count on us, Mr. Wade. We'll handle it."

Todd Gilbert, upon hearing this, realized that even if his family faced the same fate, he had no way to escape death himself. Despair washed over him entirely.

While terrified and dreading his impending demise, he grit his teeth and muttered, "I... I choose the second option."

In his mind, it was better for one life to be sacrificed than the collective annihilation of his entire family. Todd Gilbert understood the distinction between one and many.

Charlie had never intended to end Todd's life, for he wasn't Zayne or Xion, blindly loyal to the Banks family. Todd's choice of the second option changed Charlie's perspective. He decided to aid him and, in the process, offer a stark lesson on the price of betrayal and defiance.

Pointing at the ceiling fan above, Charlie said to Todd, "I'll have someone prepare a rope for you. You can take care of the rest."

With a nod, he signaled to Jordan, who promptly descended the stairs to the kitchen in search of a sturdy nylon rope.

The room was gripped by a chilling silence. No one anticipated that Charlie would have Todd Gilbert take his own life right there and then, turning the event into a gruesome spectacle.

Indeed, Charlie saw it this way. If Todd was resolved to meet his fate, why not have these ruthless New York gang members witness it with their own eyes? It was essential to leave an indelible scar on their hearts.

Within moments, Jordan returned with a robust nylon rope and fashioned a noose beneath the ceiling fan. Placing a chair beneath it, he presented the scene to Todd Gilbert, saying, "Everything is ready. It's time for your journey."

At this point, Todd was entirely limp, lacking the strength to stand. Charlie ordered several gang members nearby, "You, help him onto the chair."

Obediently, the chosen men lifted Todd Gilbert onto the chair, positioning the noose right before his face.



One of them took the initiative to slip the noose around Todd's neck. He instinctively recoiled, but the alternative Charlie had offered made him abandon any resistance.

The noose was secured around his neck. Charlie gazed at him and asked, "Will you kick the chair yourself, or someone lend a hand?"

Todd Gilbert, knowing he faced an inevitable end, wept and beseeched, "Mr. Wade, please, help me..."

Charlie shook his head, his sarcasm undisguised, and remarked with disdain, "A man like you is unworthy of me ending you with my own hands."

Turning his attention to the man who had just spoken to Todd, Charlie asked calmly, "You must be the second-in-command of this outlaw gang, am I right?"

The man swiftly nodded, responding with utmost respect and attentiveness, "Greetings, Mr. Wade. My name is Angele Blunt, and I serve as the gang's second-in-command. Mr. Wade, please understand that Todd and I are not the same. He has no sense of morality or restraint. I've subtly tried to counsel him numerous times, but he's grown increasingly ruthless. I've worked under his leadership, but there's been no changing him..."

Todd Gilbert hadn't expected his second-in-command to betray him at this crucial moment, and he angrily scolded, "Angele, you ungrateful traitor! Don't forget, I've elevated you to your current position step by step!"

Angele nodded and declared, "Yes, you promoted me, but that doesn't change the fact that you've recklessly taken innocent lives and violated the gang's code. The entire gang has had enough of your actions, but you never understood. You should have anticipated that one day, those you've wronged would seek vengeance, even within their own families."

Charlie turned to Angele and calmly stated, "From now on, you're in charge of the outlaws. It's your responsibility to send Todd on his way."

Angele Blunt hesitated for a moment, then respectfully replied, "As you command, Mr. Wade."

Looking at Todd Gilbert, trembling atop the chair, Angele addressed him calmly, "Todd, may you find peace on your journey. I hope that, after you pass, God may grant you forgiveness."

With that, Angele raised his right leg and kicked the chair from under Todd Gilbert's feet.

The chair plummeted, and Todd's body followed suit, hanging helplessly from the rope. The sudden acceleration of gravity tightened the noose around his neck. Desperately, he grasped at the collar, attempting to free himself, but his struggles only served to tighten the grip.

Suffocation took hold, and Todd Gilbert's awareness waned. He could feel his airway constricting, leaving him unable to breathe. His body grew hotter and more numb with each passing moment.

Spectators watched in horror as Todd Gilbert hung right before their eyes. Although they had all witnessed violence before, this method of execution felt archaic and horrifying.

For several minutes, Todd struggled violently, but his movements gradually weakened. Five minutes later, all that remained was sporadic muscle twitches, as consciousness slipped away and vital signs ceased.

After a few seconds, even the involuntary twitches ceased. Todd Gilbert's lifeless body swayed in the air, a grim spectacle etched into everyone's memory.

Charlie turned to Angele at that moment. "Remove the body and deal with it."

Angele assured him, "Rest assured, Mr. Wade. My team will handle it properly."

Charlie nodded and surveyed the room once more. "It's time. you're heading to Syria. Prepare for immediate departure. Those of you continuing in the gang can return to managing the finances. Profits will be handed in weekly and work reports provided every two weeks. Remember my expectations. Violators will face death, as will those who conceal earnings or enrich themselves and those who collude with the enemy in secret."

#### Chapter 5554

In the early morning light, amidst the gritty backdrop of New York City, Wesley and his crew whisked Aman Ramovich, Antonio, and the Zano family's gang bosses away from Chinatown, en route to the harbor.

All the interim second-in-commands had been reinstated to their regular positions.

Jordan still felt a sense of unreality gripping him. Witnessing Charlie dismantle the Zano family overnight left him with a surreal feeling.

Charlie noticed Jordan's bewilderment as the curtain fell and decided to inquire, "Jordan, how are you feeling now?"

Jordan snapped back to reality, scratching his head as he mumbled, "Mr. Wade... I feel... I can't quite believe it..."

With a smile, Charlie responded, "Then you must adapt quickly because, starting today, you'll need to restructure the Chinese gang promptly. While the Zano family is the largest mafia in New York, it's not the only one. You'll encounter numerous challenges ahead. Since you've chosen this path, you must find a way to forge ahead."

Jordan nodded earnestly and replied, "Mr. Wade, from now on, the Chinese gang will work on self-sustainability, and I'll deliver the profits collected from these gangs to you monthly!"

Charlie waved his hand dismissively, saying, "Most of their money was earned by preying on ordinary folks. I'll acquire it from them the same way and pass it on to you. Once the money is in my hands, there's essentially no difference between me and them."

Charlie continued, smiling, "Uncle Hogan regards you as his own, and you and I are considered acquaintances. If you've chosen this path, then safeguard this money wisely. If you have grand ambitions, use it to grow the Chinese Gang and pave your path in advance. You could become a renowned entrepreneur or even run for Congress when the time is right. If you're not aiming that high, save it for a comfortable life."

During that time, North America was like a sponge, soaking up immigrants and illegal entrants from all corners of the globe. Gangs, formed by various ethnic groups, sprouted like mushrooms after a rainstorm. In New York City alone, there were no less than a thousand gangs of varying sizes. Across the United States, there were tens of thousands of them.

Charlie stated, "You're Chinese, a member of the Chinese gang, and you reside in Chinatown. Here, you represent all the Chinese people trying to make a living. Hence, you can't afford to be a coward in the future. Experience has shown that in this line of work, cowardice won't guarantee your safety. The more timid you are, the more people will want to take advantage of you."

Back in the day, his father had taken part in the Southwest Round, and his former superior had arrived in North America first, amassing wealth and inviting him to join. It was during this period that they, middle-aged individuals riddled with bullet scars,

founded a Chinese gang in Chinatown, making their mark in the United States and Canada.

Charlie nodded, his expression serious. "As a child, I heard tales of the overseas expansion of Chinese gangs. In those days, Chinese gang members dared to confront adversity and achieved great success in Canada, the United States, and even Europe. It was a modest beginning, but I never anticipated that in the 21st century, Chinese gangs in various locations would experience a rapid decline. Many have disappeared, while others can barely survive in their respective Chinese enclaves. Do you know why?"

Casey Vigo admitted hesitantly, "Over the years, Europe and the United States have indeed intensified their crackdown on gangs, and the unity among overseas compatriots isn't as strong as that among Koreans and Vietnamese. The overall situation has become significantly more challenging."

Jordan declared firmly, "Don't worry, Mr. Wade. I've chosen this path, and I'll give it my all."

Jordan repeated solemnly, "Don't worry, Mr. Wade. I understand."

Casey Vigo trembled and respectfully asked, "Mr. Wade, what are your orders..."

Charlie continued, "Many of the Chinese gang members from the last century hailed from battlefields. They left the military, some yearning to explore the world, and thus ventured across the ocean to make a living. They had narrowly escaped death on flimsy sampans, so they had no fear. They weren't afraid of Americans, Italians, Mexicans, or Algerians in the United States. To them, the Mafia meant nothing. What were Mexican drug lords to them? When they had faced near-death experiences and set foot on this land, they lived by the words, treat life and death lightly, and defy anything that challenges you!"

Charlie waved his hands, emphasizing, "All those excuses are just that—excuses. In my opinion, the rapid decline of overseas Chinese gangs stems from their loss of the fierce spirit that once defined them."

He knew that Charlie was speaking the truth.

The Chinese gangs of that era, fresh off the boat, had managed to rise above tens of thousands of rival gangs, driven by the blood coursing through their veins.

Charlie pointed at Casey Vigo, remarking, "Now look at you, the so-called second and third-generation Chinese. You've long shed the blood of your forebears! Many of you were born in the United States and didn't have to traverse the ocean. You simply

obtained a U.S. passport and grew up on milk, cola, hamburgers, and cereal. Even if you were descended from wolves, you've been living like domesticated dogs. Forget about inheriting your fathers' blood, if I were to put you on the same sampan your fathers used to come here, you'd probably collapse before even boarding!"

However, in Casey Vigo's generation, that fiery spirit had nearly faded away, causing Chinese gangs to continuously lose ground, withdraw, and contract. He had once naively believed that they still had the sanctuary of Chinatown, but little did he know that their adversaries had grown too powerful, leading to several ill-fated attempts that left them defeated.

Recalling his father, who had never bowed to anyone, Casey Vigo felt immense shame.

Charlie nodded and concluded, "But remember, Jordan, while the Zano family's subordinates won't dare to harm you, it doesn't mean there won't be other adversaries in New York and the United States. I've only helped you this once. If a more formidable foe arises in New York and seeks to end you, you'll have to fend for yourself. Do you understand?"

Casey Vigo buried his head even deeper.

Charlie turned to Casey Vigo, the former head of the Chinese Gang, and stated, "Mr. Vigo."

Casey Vigo, full of remorse, hung his head low, saying, "Mr. Wade is telling me... from now on, I will fully cooperate with Brother Jordan. I won't bring shame to the Chinese anymore."

With teary eyes, he promised Charlie, "Mr. Wade, I, Casey Vigo, pledge to you that I'll resurrect the spirit of the Chinese gang!"

Charlie nodded slightly, rising to his feet. He stretched and said, "I've said all that needed to be said. I won't delay here any longer. From now on, you must take care of yourselves. If you encounter trouble in the future, you'll have to rely on your own strengths." Both men nodded.

Charlie added, "By the way, even though gangs are common in the United States, you should still adhere to the world's moral principles. Always compete with the strong to make a living, but don't oppress the weak or monopolize the market. Don't go too far. If, one day, the two of you become as ruthless as those people, I'll return to the United States to deal with you myself!"

## Chapter 5555

As Charlie and Hogan exited the roast goose shop together, Hogan cast a wistful glance back at the humble facade. He let out a soft sigh and remarked, "From this point forward, my father's exceptional roast goose craft will fade into obscurity." Charlie responded with a smile, posing a question, "Uncle Hogan, do you have any reservations or objections about my decision today?"

Hogan fell into contemplative silence for a brief moment before responding earnestly, "Master, Jordan is not a pet I've tamed but an orphan I took under my wing. I never planned for him to follow in my culinary footsteps when I adopted him. His childhood was marked by vagrancy, with little education and even less ambition. His status as an undocumented immigrant left him trapped in Chinatown. I taught him the art of making roast goose simply so he could eke out a living."

With conviction, Hogan added, "As for whether he chooses to sell roast goose or abandons the trade altogether, that decision rests with him. However, the opportunity presented by the Young Master today is truly remarkable. I worry that he may lack the experience to seize it."

Charlie responded earnestly, "Uncle Hogan, perhaps we can view this matter from a different perspective."

Respectfully, Hogan inquired, "Please, Young Master, share your perspective."

Charlie elucidated, "Before our arrival, those individuals had already targeted Jordan and subjected him to violence. If we hadn't intervened, what fate would have befallen him today? At best, he would have endured a more savage beating. Given the ruthlessness of those gang members, it's highly likely that Jordan would have been left with lifelong consequences, ranging from severe disability to paralysis in the worst cases. And that, my friend, would be a relatively fortunate outcome."

Pausing for emphasis, Charlie continued, "Consider the worst-case scenario, these individuals have already committed murder in Chinatown, and it's not just one or two lives they've taken. What if they intended to use Jordan to set an example today? It's possible that Jordan would have put up a fierce resistance, leading to a tragic outcome. If they had resorted to firearms, Jordan would almost certainly have perished today. In this situation, it ranges from severe injury to death. In light of these circumstances, Jordan has nothing to lose. He has everything to gain from this point forward."

"Furthermore, when Jordan contemplated using lethal force against those gangsters, his resolve was unwavering. The fact that he was willing to take a life when confronted by oppressive adversaries suggests that he possesses the spirit to fight

back. He has a fighter's blood in him, and taking this path is likely better for him than not taking it at all."

Hogan nodded in agreement and posed a question, "By the way, Young Master, why did Jordan refrain from using deadly force against those individuals?"

Charlie responded, "He will inevitably cross that line in the future, but now is not the right time. Committing multiple homicides so abruptly could easily desensitize him and make him bloodthirsty. It's better to ease him into it gradually." Turning his attention to Hogan, Charlie inquired, "Uncle Hogan, you've been up all night. Would you like to catch some sleep at the hotel?"

Hogan declined with a quick wave of his hand, stating, "I came along with the Young Master for business purposes. We can rest after our business is concluded. Let's head to Queens now and find a place to enjoy a cup of coffee. I suspect Peter's antique shop should be open."

Charlie agreed, "Alright then, let's head straight to Queens."

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In New York, Queens, a vast area lay before them. Though not as bustling as Manhattan, Queens served as a smaller yet thriving hub. The borough boasted a diverse population and was a melting pot of immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds, with Flushing being a particularly renowned neighborhood known for its concentration of Chinese residents and businesses.

Located centrally in Queens, Peter Cole's antique shop may not have been expansive, but its location was undoubtedly prime. As Charlie and Hogan parked their vehicle across from the antique shop, they observed that the store was not open.

Initially, Hogan didn't discern anything amiss. After all, it was still morning, and few antique shops opened early in the day. However, Charlie, blessed with keener observation, detected something out of the ordinary.

He noticed the weathered rust on the iron door and the doorknob of the antique shop, indicating a lack of maintenance over an extended period. Originally intending to grab a cup of coffee from across the street, Charlie drove the car to the opposite side and stopped. Upon closer inspection, it became evident that the antique shop had been shuttered for quite some time, with spiderwebs adorning the folding iron door.

Peering through the window, Charlie observed that the displays inside were neglected and hadn't been tended to in a while.

Hogan, standing beside him, furrowed his brow and commented, "It seems this place has been closed for at least several months."

Charlie concurred, saying, "Didn't you mention that the Cole family operates numerous antique shops across Europe and the United States? It's possible this location has been abandoned."

Hogan glanced at the adjacent second-hand store and noticed that, although the store still bore a closed sign, people were already inside. He approached, knocked on the door, and engaged in a conversation with the individuals within.

After their exchange, he turned back to Charlie and said, "Master, let's return to the car and discuss this."

Charlie realized that Hogan might have uncovered some pertinent information. They re-entered the vehicle, and Hogan disclosed, "Master, I just inquired with the neighboring store owner. It appears that Peter Cole was arrested in this establishment approximately four months ago, leading to the shop's closure."

"Arrested?" Charlie asked with curiosity. "Why was he arrested?"

Hogan explained, "It's said to be related to fraud, but the circumstances were quite unique and distinct from ordinary cases of fraud. When he was apprehended, it was the FBI who conducted the arrest, and it was quite a major operation."

"FBI..." Charlie mused, inquiring further, "Uncle Hogan, aren't cases of fraud typically handled by the police?"

Hogan clarified, "Not necessarily. If the situation is deemed severe, poses a threat to national security, or involves prominent figures and sensitive items, the FBI may assume jurisdiction. The fact that Peter Cole was suspected of fraud and arrested by the FBI suggests that the case was quite serious."

Charlie then asked, "Did the store owner next door have any information about Peter Cole's current status?"

Shaking his head, Hogan replied, "The individual didn't have much information. All they knew was that the Cole family's antique stores in the United States appear to have closed down. As for Peter Cole's current whereabouts, they had no information to offer." He sighed in frustration, adding, "During the years I've spent in New York,



I've mostly remained confined to Chinatown and seldom ventured outside. My network is limited, and I haven't found a suitable channel for gathering information."

Taking a sip of his drink, Charlie reassured him, "That's alright. When it comes to matters in New York, we can likely rely on Miss Joules for assistance. Her connections and information sources are likely far more extensive than ours." With that, he retrieved his mobile phone and dialed Michaela's number.

The phone rang several times before Michaela finally answered. She immediately asked, "Mr. Balard, how's the situation in Atlanta?"

Charlie realized that Michaela might not be in a convenient location to speak and was likely with his wife, Claire. He considered the title she used, "Mr. Balard," to be a cover, perhaps to prevent any misunderstandings with his wife.

Sensing this, Charlie offered, "If it's not convenient for you, we can chat later."

Michaela responded, "I'm currently working on a project in New York. Please hold on for five minutes, and I'll get back to you."

Charlie agreed, "Certainly, take your time." He then ended the call.

Five minutes later, Michaela called back as promised. As soon as the call connected, she spoke with respect, "Mr. Wade, I discussed our plan with Claire. I was concerned about any potential misunderstandings, so I refrained from contacting you directly. Please provide your guidance. I apologize for any inconvenience."

Charlie smiled and replied, "No need to apologize. Your thoughtfulness is appreciated. How has Claire been doing with you lately?"

Michaela spoke, "Claire has been caught up in the project lately. Since I couldn't predict how long you'd need my assistance, I decided to play it safe and entrusted her with full responsibility for the project here. It might have taken a toll on her energy, but she remains incredibly dedicated."

Charlie smiled and replied, "My wife's always been enterprising, far more than I am."

Michaela returned the smile, saying, "Mr. Wade must possess quite a bit of drive yourself, otherwise, you wouldn't have allowed me to invite your wife to New York."

Quickly shifting gears, Michaela inquired, "By the way, Mr. Wade, is there something specific you need from me?"

Charlie nodded and said, "I'd appreciate your help in looking into someone."

Without hesitation, Michaela responded, "Please share the details, and I'll start right away."

Charlie explained, "I'm seeking information on an antique dealer named Peter Cole. The Cole family is known for its involvement in Chinese antiques across Europe and the United States, with a few notable pieces in their collection. Have you heard of them?"

Michaela smiled and said, "Peter Cole. His family has quite a reputation in the Chinese antique community. They've primarily focused on recovering Chinese antiques from overseas since the Opium War, through to the end of the Anti-Japanese War. Many valuable cultural relics that were taken abroad during that period were repatriated by the Cole family. They even donated some precious cultural relics to China. My grandfather used to purchase toys from them often, but as the years passed, he became less interested."

Charlie grinned and remarked, "Miss Joules, you're exactly the person I need. To be honest, I'm searching for him because I have something very important to discuss. However, upon arriving in New York, I discovered that their store had been shut down, and there were rumors of Peter Cole being arrested by the FBI on suspicion of fraud. Can you help me locate his whereabouts?"

Surprised, Michaela asked, "Mr. Wade, you're in New York? Does your wife know?"

Charlie replied, "I rushed here on short notice, and the nature of my investigation is sensitive. I didn't inform Claire. Miss, please keep this confidential."

Michaela assured him quickly, "Rest assured, Mr. Wade. I won't divulge anything to her."

Adding to her assurance, she said, "Regarding Peter Cole's situation, I truly have no prior knowledge of it. However, don't worry, I'll gather information and keep you informed once I've obtained any insights."

Charlie thanked her, saying, "Thank you, Miss Joules."

After ending the call, Charlie turned to Hogan and suggested, "Uncle Hogan, Miss Joules is helping with the investigation, which might take some time. Let's head to a nearby breakfast spot, perhaps Shangri-La in New York, and then take a break."

Hogan agreed, "Sounds good. Although Shangri-La isn't far, the wait there can be quite lengthy. If Miss Joules makes quick progress, we might receive news in less

than half an hour. We can have a meal across the street for now. A cup of coffee is all I need to stay awake."

Charlie concurred, and they made their way to the restaurant across the street. They ordered food and sipped coffee. Before they could finish a cup, Michaela called back.

As soon as Charlie answered, Michaela relayed, "Mr. Wade, I've gathered the information you requested. Indeed, Peter Cole was arrested by the FBI four months ago. The arrest was related to provoking individuals from the Rothschild family, and they're the ones who requested the FBI to take him into custody."

Charlie furrowed his brow and inquired, "The Rothschild family? Are they from the main line or a branch?"

"Direct line," Michaela confirmed. "It's believed that the individual is of considerable rank, likely a core member of the entire Rothschild family."

Charlie pressed further, "Do you know why they took offense? Any specific details?"

"No," Michaela admitted. "Word has it that although the arrest was carried out by the FBI, it was the Rothschilds who conducted the interrogation personally. During the interrogation, the FBI wasn't allowed to remain on the premises. However, it's been said that after the questioning, the Rothschild family was incensed and used their influence to imprison Peter Cole in Brooklyn Prison without a trial. For months, Peter Cole's family and lawyers have been denied access to him."

Charlie wasn't entirely surprised. After all, the Rothschild family wielded immense wealth and had deep-seated connections within the American elite. In the United States, they held sway over numerous affairs. Their ability to apprehend and detain individuals wasn't something to be taken lightly. Charlie probed further, "In such a situation, if someone's thrown into jail without a trial and no visitation rights, does that mean they might never get out?"

Michaela confirmed, "It's highly likely. The Rothschild family probably intends to extract specific information or results from Peter Cole. Until they achieve their objective, he won't be released, even if the most prominent lawyers in the United States are called upon. In such cases, they can easily label Peter Cole as a threat to national security at any time. It's akin to holding the Sword of Damocles over his head—nearly impossible to escape."

Charlie then asked, "Miss Joules, is there any way to secure his release?"

Michaela appeared conflicted as she replied, "Mr. Wade, I can be frank with you. In New York, there's practically nothing that the Joules family can't accomplish, provided the Rothschild family doesn't oppose it. In New York and across the entire United States, when the Rothschild family decides something, no one can challenge it. If I attempt to intervene, every individual I approach will likely inform me that it's an impossible endeavor."

Charlie sighed, feeling the weight of the situation.

His primary reason for seeking out Peter Cole had been to uncover the connection between him and his father—why he had adopted the alias Felix Cole and worked at the Aurous Hill Vintage Deluxe, and how he had come into possession of the "Apocalyptic Book." All of this hinged on being able to meet him face-to-face.

Now, Peter Cole had been incarcerated by the Rothschild family, and even Michaela couldn't secure his release. It posed a truly daunting challenge.

In a last-ditch effort, Charlie asked, "Miss Joules, if you wanted, would you be able to send someone in to Brooklyn Prison, would that be feasible?"

Chapter 5556

"Send someone in?" Michaela inquired, her curiosity piqued. "Mr. Wade, you... you don't want me to facilitate your entry, do you?"

"That's correct," Charlie affirmed, leaning in with intent. "Could you please assist me in obtaining a forged identity and then arrange my entrance to Brooklyn Prison? I need to see Peter Cole."

Michaela paused, contemplating the proposition. "Mr. Wade, it's feasible to get you inside, but can you guarantee that you'll meet him once you're in? Peter Cole's circumstances are highly unusual, deserving the undivided attention of the Rothschild family's core members. Whatever transpired to provoke such a reaction from them must be extraordinary. Consequently, he's bound to have received special attention in Brooklyn Prison. If you intend to see him, it will likely require some considerable effort."

Charlie replied, undeterred. "No matter, we must secure our entry first."

Michaela probed further, "When do you intend to proceed?"

Charlie replied with unwavering resolve, "The sooner, the better. Can you get me in before noon?"

Michaela nodded decisively. "Not a problem. I'll make the arrangements. Stay tuned for my updates."

Charlie momentarily hung up, stepping aside. Hogan inquired, "Master, are you truly heading to see Peter Cole in prison?"

Charlie confirmed, "Indeed. He has crossed the Rothschild family, and he's a core member. It's beyond Michaela's reach. Visiting the prison is currently our best option."

Hogan wore a puzzled expression. "Peter Cole's antique business, although thriving, is a far cry from the Rothschilds. It's a relatively minor matter, not even a drop in the bucket. How could he have offended the Rothschild family's core members?"

Charlie shook his head. "I'm not sure. Until now, I've never had dealings with the Rothschild family, especially their German core members."

He added thoughtfully, "I must meet him to uncover the answers I seek and understand why he antagonized the Rothschild family. He was a friend of my father during his lifetime, and he may have shown kindness to me as well. If he's truly in trouble, I can't simply stand by."

Hogan initially intended to advise Charlie against entangling himself with the Rothschild family, but the words stuck in his throat. Recalling Charlie's unwavering support when they first met, even to the detriment of Mr. Lombardo, he knew that if Peter Cole had been kind to Charlie, he would undoubtedly stand by him, regardless of the risks.

With no other recourse, he remarked, "American prisons are treacherous places. Now that the Young Master has made up his mind, please exercise caution and avoid revealing your true identity when initially engaging with the Rothschild family."

Charlie nodded, assuring him, "Uncle Hogan, don't worry. I understand the stakes. I've asked Miss Joules to arrange a new identity for me."

Hogan hesitated briefly before suggesting, "Master, what if I accompany you? We could watch out for each other."

Charlie declined with a shake of his head. "Uncle Hogan, you should remain outside. For matters like this, it's more expedient for me to go alone. If you come along, I'd

have to divert my attention to your well-being. After all, the American prison environment is far more dangerous for you."

Hogan reluctantly nodded, acknowledging the wisdom of Charlie's decision. He knew that, despite being able to offer counsel, his presence would likely complicate matters for Charlie. Prisons were a harsh and unforgiving world, and he lacked the means to protect himself in such an environment.

Resigned to his role, he assured Charlie, "Young Master, U.S. prisons allow communication with the outside world via phone. If you require any assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me."

"Very well," Charlie acknowledged. After breakfast, they set out, with Charlie driving to the Shangri-La Hotel in New York.

Aware of his impending visit to Brooklyn Prison, Charlie had secured a luxurious suite for Hogan. After a brief rest, Charlie received a call from Michaela.

Over the phone, Michaela inquired, "Mr. Wade, where are you now? I've nearly finalized the arrangements. If it's convenient, I can meet you in person to provide you with the specifics."

Charlie responded, "I'm currently at the Shangri-La. Come directly here."

Ten minutes later, Michaela arrived in haste.

Upon their meeting, she respectfully addressed Charlie, "Mr. Wade, I've prepared the identity you requested."

With that, she produced a passport, handed it to Charlie, and explained, "This is a Malaysian identity. You can pose as a Malaysian Chinese, and there's no record of your entry into the United States. This added layer of security will help prevent any prying eyes from uncovering your true identity."

Charlie inspected the passport, his expression thoughtful. "Is this passport legitimate?"

Michaela nodded firmly. "It was acquired through the Malaysian Embassy, thanks to some influential connections. It's a bona fide passport."

Charlie commended her, saying, "The Joules family in New York certainly possesses remarkable resources."

Michaela smiled graciously. "If it's your requirement, Mr. Wade, I will go to great lengths to fulfill it."

She continued, "Additionally, I've arranged for informants within the Immigration Bureau. Once you're ready, they'll apprehend you on charges of illegal immigration and suspicion of multiple thefts, expedite you through the internal fast track, and transport you to Brooklyn Prison. In such cases, illegal immigrants are promptly incarcerated in the United States, owing to the sheer volume of undocumented individuals that exceed the capacity of standard procedures. Afterward, the authorities will determine whether to deport them, release them, or keep them incarcerated. Going in with this background should ensure that no one questions your presence."

Charlie nodded, pondering. "So, can I proceed to Brooklyn Prison today?"

Michaela confirmed, "Yes. Within the Joules family, I've made inquiries and found someone within Brooklyn Prison who can cooperate. He's in charge of the First Ward, which will expedite your incarceration process. However, keep in mind that Brooklyn Prison is predominantly under the control of the Rothschild family, and many of its personnel are their informants. I refrained from consulting anyone regarding Peter to avoid raising suspicion. If you decide otherwise, I can attempt to discreetly inquire."

Charlie shook his head, declining the offer. "It's best not to inquire, to avoid tipping them off."

Michaela persisted, "How long do you anticipate staying there this time? If you plan to leave once your business is concluded, just give me a call, and I'll arrange for the Immigration Bureau to facilitate your release. We can tell the prison that you're being deported to Malaysia, ensuring that no one becomes suspicious."

Charlie responded, "We haven't set a definite timeframe yet. We'll determine that once we've completed our mission. It's not too early now, and there are procedural matters to address with the Immigration Bureau. Miss Joules, if you could arrange for them to be ready, I'll head to Chinatown and await their 'capture.'"

## Chapter 5557

Around noon, Charlie found himself alone in a bustling Sterling restaurant nestled within the heart of Chinatown. He savored each bite of his meal, the flavors of home bringing a semblance of comfort to his day. But as he ate, the tranquility was

shattered by the sudden arrival of two Immigration Bureau police cars. Their flashing lights silently screamed trouble.

Charlie kept his head down, seemingly indifferent to the commotion unfolding outside the restaurant's window.

Several police officers rushed in with haste, snapping photos of the patrons. Abruptly, they approached Charlie, their voices raised in unison, "Are you Charlie, the one who smuggled into the United States from Malaysia?"

Charlie raised his head, feigning innocence as he shook it, "No."

The officers reviewed the photo again and shared a knowing sneer. One of them turned to his colleagues, whispering, "That's him, let's take him in!"

Before Charlie could react, they pounced, twisting his arms behind his back and handcuffing him.

He pretended to resist for a moment, but when the threat of a drawn weapon loomed, he wisely ceased struggling.

The officers bundled him into one of their cars, sirens blaring as they raced toward the immigration office.

At this juncture, the officers were ignorant of Charlie's background. All they knew was that their superiors had tipped them off about a Malaysian illegal immigrant suspected of multiple thefts lurking in a Chinatown eatery, instructing them to seize the opportunity and apprehend him.

Once at the immigration office, they confiscated Charlie's Malaysian passport, a decrepit old mobile phone, and a little over two hundred dollars in cash. Verification of his passport's identity information confirmed his status as an illegal immigrant from Malaysia.

Charlie was temporarily confined in the immigration office's detention room, awaiting his uncertain fate.

Upon arrival, Charlie found himself surrounded by at least twenty others who shared the same predicament. These detainees spanned various skin tones, their expressions marked by despair and fear.

Spotting Charlie, an Asian man with a scruffy beard approached him, struggling with his English accent as he asked, "Are you Japanese?"



Charlie shook his head, replying, "I'm Malaysian, but my parents are Chinese."

Another Asian-faced man with short hair perked up upon hearing this. He exclaimed, "Brother, I'm Chinese too! We share common roots!"

Charlie nodded and inquired, "How did you end up here?"

The short-haired man chuckled wryly, "Well, there's no glamorous story. I walked the wire, had no identity, no cash – I was even robbed on my journey here. I arrived with nothing, set up a makeshift tent in the park, only for it to be stolen by an old guy. I thought about pilfering a bicycle for food deliveries, but the police caught me, and here I am."

Charlie furrowed his brows, asking, "Why'd you head to New York instead of Los Angeles? It's closer to Mexico, isn't it?"

The short-haired man slapped his thigh, exclaiming, "You know your stuff, Brother! You didn't come through the wire, did you?"

Charlie shook his head, revealing, "I arrived by boat."

The short-haired man's enthusiasm dwindled, and he sighed, "You had it easier. A few months on a boat from your hometown – not like us, enduring a grueling journey. I've been through hell, it's as if I'd have to skin myself alive to survive."

Someone in the group chimed in, "Hell, even riding a boat is no picnic. Imagine standing the whole time, sometimes having to swim for kilometers. Over sixty of us boarded, but only half made it ashore, the rest were swept away."

The short-haired man shrank back, adding, "My mother deeply regrets sending me here. This place isn't a paradise, it's a purgatory. The swindler agent told me I could make seven to eight grand washing dishes in a month. But when I got here, eight of us fought over a single dish to wash in a Chinese restaurant."

He continued, turning to Charlie, "Brother, you asked why I didn't go to Los Angeles. Well, initially, I did. After arriving from Mexico, a bunch of us made our way to Los Angeles, only to realize those high-paying jobs were a lie. I spent over ten days sleeping on the streets, surviving on meager handouts. Then I thought, 'Maybe I'll try my luck in New York.'"

Curiosity piqued, Charlie asked, "How did you make it from the west coast to the east coast? It's quite a journey."

The short-haired man chuckled, "I took a train, of course. It's a long haul, so we followed a few seasoned hobos, the ones who ride trains all day long. We trailed them to New York, and our hands got blistered."

"Upon arriving in New York," he continued, "I thought, 'This city's bustling, there must be a place for me here.' I contemplated finding work in Chinatown, settled on a job delivering food for a Chinese restaurant, but without a vehicle, I resorted to stealing a bicycle – that's how I ended up in cuffs."

Charlie offered a faint smile, inquiring, "What's your plan now?"

The short-haired man sighed, "Who knows? It's not worth being locked up for what I've done. American prisons are overcrowded. Petty crimes by illegal immigrants often result in mere days behind bars. After release, I assumed they'd deport me, but they couldn't care less. Now, I'll be back on the streets... If I'd known the U.S. was like this, I'd never have come."

Charlie nodded and suggested, "If you find a way, maybe consider going back to China."

The short-haired man shook his head, despondent. "I want to, but I lack a passport and funds. The Americans won't deport me, and retracing my steps is impossible. This trip cost over ten thousand dollars – where would I find that kind of cash in U.S. dollars?"

Charlie shrugged, offering, "Then focus on saving money to return."

The short-haired man's face contorted with despair. "Brother, I spent ages saving for this journey. Along the way, I indulged in foods I'd never tasted before. Saving up again only to return – is that fair?"

Charlie couldn't help but chuckle, asking, "What did you do before coming here?"

"Me?" The man laughed bitterly, "Construction, food delivery, odd jobs, even a bit of extra work in films – I've done it all."

Charlie nodded, understanding the dire circumstances faced by these illegal immigrants. The life they led was unforgiving. Only the jobs that the locals shunned were available to them. Hogan had been a financial luminary back in Hong Kong, but in the United States, he eked out a living running a roast goose shop. For those without specialized skills, the path was even more arduous.

In a moment of quiet reflection, the short-haired man muttered, "I'm just speaking from the heart. If I could, I'd return... This place is nothing like I imagined."

In the midst of this, several more illegal immigrants were escorted in by the police and placed into a detention room. Among them was a yellow-skinned officer who fixed his gaze on Charlie and beckoned, "Charlie, come with me."

The short-haired man, curious about the exchange, piped up, "Hey, buddy, what did he just call you?"

Charlie nodded and exchanged greetings with the short-haired man. "He's taking me."

The short-haired man appeared slightly disappointed, querying, "Why'd they whisk you away so quickly?"

The yellow-skinned officer cast an expressionless glance at the short-haired man and declared, "He's being transferred to Brooklyn Prison!"

The short-haired man couldn't hide his surprise as he gazed at Charlie's departing figure. "Hey, did you murder someone or set a fire? I've heard American prisons are an absolute mess, so you better watch your back!" Charlie, without turning around, waved dismissively. "Don't worry, goodbye."

The yellow-skinned policeman led Charlie to the office area, finding a secluded corner to share confidential information. He whispered to Charlie, "Sir, our chief left in a hurry, so I'll escort you to Brooklyn Prison right away. We have an informant there – Lucas, a Brazilian known as the Brooklyn Prison Know-It-All. Seek him out upon arrival, he'll fill you in on the prison's situation. Just mention that Andrew sent you, and he'll be more than willing to assist."

"Alright, I'll remember that," Charlie acknowledged with a nod. He suspected that this officer was part of the Joules family's intelligence network. For a powerful family like the Joules, building their own intelligence network in the United States was a given. It likely extended its tendrils to Congress, police stations, and major government agencies. Such networks were carefully structured, with information isolated in layers to ensure security.

At times, only the highest echelons knew they served the Joules family. Lower-level members might remain unaware of their connection to the family's intelligence network, thus ensuring its safety.

Shortly thereafter, Charlie completed the prison transfer process at the Immigration Bureau and was transported directly to Brooklyn Prison by the police.

Though not expansive, Brooklyn Prison was situated in the heart of Brooklyn, New York's most chaotic and crime-ridden neighborhood. Consequently, most of its inmates were serious offenders, primarily gang members involved in murder, arson, robbery, and drug trafficking.

Within the New York prison system, Brooklyn Prison boasted the grimmest and most unpleasant environment. Most prison guards dreaded assignments there.

Upon his arrival at Brooklyn Prison, Charlie underwent a swift admission procedure and was swiftly assigned to the prison's first ward.

Due to its urban location, Brooklyn Prison consisted of a multi-story, self-contained building entirely enclosed. There were no open-air yards, so communal spaces and indoor recreation areas were centralized.

The first and second wards flanked either side of the common area. Prisoners from both wards could only interact during meal times and recreation periods.

After Charlie completed the formalities and donned his prison attire, he gathered his toiletries and followed the prison guards into the first ward.

Only once inside did he realize that the prison was even filthier than a refugee camp.

Here, the cramped cells held no resemblance to the two-person units with private toilets depicted in American movies and TV shows. Dozens of inmates were crammed into each cell, representing a diverse array of races. Beds filled the rooms, leaving little space for movement.

As Charlie walked through, the cells buzzed with activity. Many inmates noticed the arrival of newcomers and shouted through the iron grates, whistling and banging the fences with makeshift objects. Obscene words and derogatory remarks were hurled, some accompanied by lewd gestures.

Charlie walked on with a stoic expression, taking mental note of those who jeered at him, especially those with sinister intentions that made his skin crawl. He couldn't help but mutter under his breath, "This godforsaken place could use a makeover."