

# The Not So Paid Vacation

By Gus Prouty | 6120 words

I'm trapped. Surrounded on all sides by dark bodies pressing into mine. My eyes frantically scan the room but find no routes of escape. I thought I could handle anything, but oh how wrong I was. However, just as I am resigning myself to the inevitable, I see a path begin to open up through the darkness. It's now or never; I make a break for the opening carrying myself as fast as my situation will allow. I've almost made it to freedom when I hear a slurred voice shout out to me.

"Heayyy monster man!"

There is no hope. I hang my head in defeat for a moment before straightening up and turning to face the deliverer of my fate. He is dressed like most of the other people in the large conference room, myself included unfortunately, in fine business wear. I give him the least forced grin I can muster which still comes off as pretty forced and nod in greeting.

"I was hoping to get to talk to ya. Your speech was great!" Now I know he's drunk.

"Well, you caught me," I exclaim only half joking. "What do you want to know?"

The man's smile broadens, obviously quite pleased with himself to be having this conversation. "Oh, I'm just happy to have a chance to talk to one of you guys face to face. Can you really do all that stuff they say you can?" I knew this was coming. Without much fanfare I hold up one hand as if to wave at the man. There between my fingers small blue arcs of electricity dance excitedly, jumping from one finger to another. The man's face lights up in amazement.

“Pretty much. I can make electrons sit up and roll over which gives me access to a good chunk of the electromagnetic spectrum to play around with. I can also heal super-fast and bench about ten tons, but those powers aren’t as showy.”

He nodded very vigorously at this “Wow man, that’s great! You got all that from that giant monster, right? What do you call it again? Kuratno?”

“Keravno. And yeah, when a giant monster, well kaiju is the technical term, bonds with a person we take on aspects of that monster. We can even change into a form that makes us start to look like them, too.”

“That must be a trip; better to beat up the bad guys, right?” As he speaks he starts shadow boxing around himself. I quickly reach out and turn the man so as to avoid any accidental assaults on the other attendants. I debate the merits of continuing to spin the man until he is to dizzy to impede my escape, but another voice from the crowd crushes that train of thought.

“Oh, Mr. Ambassador you look like you are enjoying yourself.” A woman in a flattering business skirt sashays over to us. She has sharp features and her blood red hair is drawn up into a messy bun on top of her head. “I hate to interrupt, but I heard the head of foreign policy was looking for you,” she says as she rests a perfectly manicured hand on my shoulder. The man takes a moment to process before mumbling a goodbye and lurching away with new purpose.

“I just thought I’d come save you. Mr. Clintwood is known to enjoy his drink a bit too much.”

“At least someone is getting some enjoyment out of this, eh Karen?”

“Yes. Don’t think I didn’t see you trying to escape earlier.” She lets out a laugh that sounds entirely rehearsed.

“That won’t be a problem, will it?”

“Not here, but don’t try it tonight. Can’t very well ask for sponsorship without the one being sponsored.”

“With observations like that I know why you charge so much.” She continues to laugh as I head for the door.

Finally, I make my way out onto the sidewalk. Pristine Mexican beachfront stretches out forever on both sides of me. First things first; I need out of this monkey suit. The jacket feels better tied around my waist, like an old sweatshirt. The tie follows and is tossed over one shoulder. Finally, the dress shirt comes unbuttoned to let the cool sea breeze hit my bare chest. That’s the best part about beach living; no one cares if you walk around with no shirt, as long as you have abs to show off. I glance down at my own now exposed chest; well, close enough. Shaking my head I begin my aimless wander down the busy sidewalk.

I’m not used to working all on my own like this. Usually I have somebody there to back me up, bounce ideas off of, talk to; but not now. My whole team is stateside waiting for me to bring back good news. I need to secure a new investor to bankroll us, or I don’t know how we are going to afford to run the world’s first giant monster control service. My eyes glance far out into the open water of the sea. Way out, I can just make out a vague shape, floating among the morning’s waves. If I didn’t know what I was looking for, he would be invisible that far out to sea. Still, knowing he’s out there brings a small smile to my face. At least the biggest member of

our team was able to follow me here, even if it was only because we didn't have to pay for his airfare.

As I walk, various people catch my eye. A tall woman wearing a sun hat and not much else carrying a furry dog, a small boy with dark hair and no shoes selling homemade jewelry, a man with spiky red hair sitting with two other men in a parked convertible. My gaze lingers on this last man, and I can't figure out what it is about him that grabs me. Maybe it's his hair, which is clearly a bad dye job and is spiked up in such a way that it looks like he has a sea urchin on his head. Maybe it's his friends, who are both wearing jackets far too heavy for the weather and glancing around themselves warily. But, it wasn't until the three of them got out of the car and walked into the shop they were parked in front of that it hit me. Sea urchin head was going to kill somebody.

There was just something in the way he walked, the posture that was at once both relaxed and tense, and the smile on his face that looked so foreign to its soundings. It was so blatant that I didn't even need little details like how he turned the sign in the window from open to closed when he entered, or the way so many customers came power walking out of the store a second later. My mind was made up the second urchin head got out of his car. Without much thought as to the personal consequences of my actions, I followed him inside.

The interior was simple but well designed, with the sort of rustic beachfront charm found in a lot of seaside real estate. And that was my impression even though urchin head was lifting an older gentleman, who I assumed to be the owner, off the ground by his collar. The older man had thin graying hair and a thick bushy mustache. He was muttering fiercely with urchin head who seemed rather unimpressed, as a whole, with the situation. That is, at least, until the jingling

of the doorbell drew everyone's attention to me. To my credit I tried to look nonchalant, just an average guy looking to buy bait during an apparent extortion, nothing to see here. I needed to get closer, to put myself between urchin head and the owner before the situation escalated. With that purpose in mind, I made my way casually up to the counter, worms in hand, and shot my most oblivious smile toward urchin head.

"You mind hurrying it up over there? You're holding up the line." That worked, got him to drop the owner, at least, and focus his attention on me. He grinned.

"Sorry for the hold up. Miguel and I were just discussing some business arrangements, money owed that cannot be repaid and what to do for...compensation."

"I told you, Sebastian sir, I already paid all I had yesterday. If I give you what's left I can't afford to pay my bills. I'll lose the store!"

Urchin head rolled his eyes at the interruption. "Yes, yes, I was bored by your excuses already. But ah, I know, let's ask our new friend what to do about our dilemma." When he said this he clasped a hand down on my shoulder and squeezed hard. The bottom fell out of my stomach. It hurt. Normal people can't hurt me; only another acolyte like myself would be able to do that. But the implication was, where there's an acolyte, a kaiju is usually not far away. There was no monster tearing up the town and the KDF hadn't been informed of any sightings, at least as far as I knew. The problem on my hands had suddenly gotten a lot bigger than some punk strong-arming a bait shop. Urchin head's, or should I say Sebastian's, voice shook me from my thoughts.

"So, what do you think, amigo?" I had to switch up tactics, so I went with my plan B.

“I think you’re double parked outside.”

He blinked at me.

“All I’m saying is that I would hurry it up in here, the traffic cop out there was looking pretty bored.” That was a boldfaced lie; the cop actually looked quite interested in hitting on the cute shopkeeper across the street, but he didn’t need to know that. “In fact, why don’t I go get him? You can move your car and when we get back he can help you with your little disagreement.” I began to leave when I heard a gun cocking behind me.

“You’re not going anywhere, amigo,” Sebastian spoke, the mirth gone from his voice. I slowly turned to look at him before I replied.

“You really want to do that here, in the middle of the day with hundreds of people just outside? And if you shoot me, you’ll probably have to shoot him, too.” I gestured toward Miguel. “That won’t get you your money any faster.”

“And what if I said I didn’t care about any of that?”

I stared him dead in the eyes “Then I’d say you are even dumber than you look.” Which was saying something.

A grin cracked his face open again and he almost doubled over laughing. “Oh, I like that. Oh yes, that is good.” He took a moment to compose himself. “All right, I’ll leave. I had my fun, but I will be back soon for my money Miguel. And you amigo, I hope we can run into each other again soon.” And with that, he and his two flunkies left the store.

“Count on it,” I muttered as the tensions in the air went with them.

“Oh, this is bad. Sebastian Derevelo doesn’t just walk away like that. Something bad is coming, I can feel it,” Miguel fretted.

“Well, until then, mind filling me in on exactly who I just picked a fight with, since I did get him out of your store and all.” Miguel seemed to hesitate for a second before sighing in resignation and then leading me into the back room. I was surprised to find a small boy hiding back there. He looked no older than twelve and nearly cried out in terror when he saw me, before his father could reassure him that things were all right. He sent the boy out to lock up the store for the day before he sat me down to tell the story.

Turns out, about three months ago ships began sinking all along the coast. The military was stumped as to the cause, but about a month later the attacks suddenly stopped. People figured that was the end of things and life returned to normal, until he showed up, Sebastian Derevelo, the only son of a local cartel head. It would seem he was on one of those sunken ships, but instead of drowning like the rest of the people, the monster took a shine to him and he became an acolyte. Now he and daddy have a pretty sweet gig going. Junior uses his monster to sink rival cartel ships, hijack merchandise, and generally terrorize anyone who doesn’t pay their protection money on time. Meanwhile, Derevelo senior uses his business and political connections to keep the army from becoming involved, so long as the monster stays away from populated areas. Through this business model their cartel has come to dominate the area.

“If you can’t pay them, then Sebastian comes and takes whatever he wants from you, cars, jewels, and sometimes even family members.” Miguel’s face darkens at this and it suddenly clicks as to why his son was so afraid when I walked in. I lay my hand on his shoulder.

“I think I can help with your problem, but you have to tell me everything you know about this monster.”

He looks at me skeptically and shakes his head. “No one knows anything. Nobody’s ever seen it.”

“Well, when was the last ship sunk?”

“Last night, just to the east of here.”

“All right then. I’ll start there. I have to figure out what I’m dealing with first. Oh, do you know any place I can borrow a boat?”

“I have one you can use, but do you really think you can do anything to help?”

“Sure. I’m free for the afternoon and besides, Derevelo isn’t the only one with big friends.”

\*\*\*

About thirty minutes later I am in open waters. Miguel’s boat is in less than premium condition, but it floats and it is free so I can’t complain too much. He was even nice enough to show me a place where I could rent a wetsuit, even if it did eat through most of my spending money for this trip. As I fall off the boat backwards into the warm tropical waters the advice from the rental place echoes in my head. “Don’t dive in unknown waters, never around any wildlife that could be dangerous, and always dive with a buddy.” I am well aware that I am breaking pretty much all of those rules and the final one in particular has me more than a bit



nervous. I don't like working alone. But, I take solace in the fact that, once I am down there, my diving buddy will be along soon enough.

The water isn't as deep as I thought, only about four hundred feet and sandy at the bottom with the occasional outcropping of rock or reef. Anything the size of a kaiju would be visible for miles around here. But I have a theory. Whatever is attacking ships is remaining totally unseen. That means it doesn't need to come up for air, which rules out marine mammals. But even something like a shark or fish would make some kind of commotion as it is swimming around out here. So, I am thinking the culprit is something more sedentary, maybe some kind of invertebrate, like a crab or anemone.

I notice that the sea floor drops off a few kilometers away. That drop-off would be the perfect place for something big to hide during the day. Just as I am deciding to head for the drop-off, a movement catches the corner of my eye. I turn in the water, bringing the shark into view. It is about fifteen feet long and getting closer. It is likely just curious, nothing too dangerous. But as I prepare to give it a disapproving bop on the nose, something large blocks out the light from up above. The shark darts off and I slowly turn once again. I smile, then wave; took him long enough. My kaiju diving buddy has finally arrived.

People have called Keravno a cross between a crocodile and a terror bird. His crocodile side is never more apparent than when you see him from under the water. His arms and legs fold back against his body, the deep crimson of his hand and foot armor contrasting with the gray blue of his body scales. I reach out and press my bare hand against his great beak and we begin to communicate. As far as I know, this is unique to us. While some other kaiju acolyte pairs have their own versions, no two work the same. For us it is all done with electrical signals, pulses and

currents. Don't ask me exactly how it works, but through it we can convey our basic thoughts and emotions to one another.

There is the standard happiness at our meeting, a great general positivity. Keravno is a glass half full kind of kaiju. I quickly lay out the situation in the broadest way I can. Find bad kaiju. Beat up bad kaiju. Profit. Keravno seems to get the gist of it and soon breaks our connection to start scanning our surroundings with his massive head. He is looking with more than just his eyes; using electro reception he can detect the bioelectric field of almost any organism around. He stays like that for a little while, just quietly probing until he suddenly stops, head angled toward a section of the drop-off, and growls.

So we are off, gripping myself tightly to one of the many osterderms that protect Keravno's head and neck as he propels us through the water with quick strokes of his powerful tail. As we reach the drop-off it doesn't take long for me to spot our culprit. It looks like a thing out of H.P. Lovecraft's nightmares. The central body is roughly the shape of a stop sign, only made of teeth. From this main part a dozen massive tentacles have sprouted. Each one has branched out into hundreds, if not thousands, of smaller tentacles. But smaller may be a misnomer, as even the smallest appendages look to be as big around as a telephone pole. All told it has to be five times the size of Keravno, easily fifteen hundred feet from arm tip to arm tip. With a reach like that, it isn't hard to see how the thing could reach up from its resting place and pluck unsuspecting ships from the surface.

Keravno rumbles in aggression and suddenly I'm second-guessing my current residence. But it's too late to do much about it as he bum rushes the thing. I do my best to hold tight as the two titanic bodies collide. While Keravno fails to knock the thing loose from its hold, he does

seem to get its attention. As a couple of the tentacles quickly entangle him, I only avoid being crushed by bracing against one of the large spikes running down Keravno's spine. Up close like this, I can see now that the tentacles are actually lined with tiny hook-like spikes that rip into Keravno's flesh. The water darkens with his blood before filling with the crackling of current as millions of volts surge through my kaiju's body and into his opponent. That shock seems to do the trick as the tentacles are soon retracted in pain.

Then come the rocks; great boulders ripped from the seabed and hurled at us. This evidently is to cover the thing's retreat as it begins scuttling away. Keravno nimbly weaves through them in pursuit, a little too nimbly as I lose my tenuous hold on his neck and go hurling off into open water. Keravno has to break his pursuit to come to my rescue and seems to come to a decision in the process. A moment after I am secure in his armored hands, we are speeding toward land.

He emerges into the surf to the shock of the nearby beach goers. Bending down he gently deposits me onto the warm sand. Grunting in satisfaction at my current safety, he spins and returns to the sea to continue his pursuit. For my part, I wasn't doing so hot. Getting the bends will do that to you. The sand is so warm and everything hurts, so I curl into a ball and pass out.

\*\*\*

When I come to, the sun is setting and most of the people have left the beach, evidently not too concerned with the diver who was dropped by the giant reptile. When I feel up to walking again I return to Miguel's shop only to find the door ajar. It looks like someone did a number on the place. Most of the racks are broken or overturned and Miguel himself is sitting in a crumpled heap in the corner. His expression doesn't change much when he sees me.

“I thought you had died. Sebastian came back a couple hours after you left.” He seemed to indicate the damage that sounded him. “He took my son.”

It occurs to me now that, for no particular reason, I am going to miss my fundraiser. The event is starting within the hour and there is no way I am going to be done with this mess by then. Karen is going to kill me, regardless of how things turn out with the cartel. But then, my thoughts drift to my teammates. What am I going to tell them when I come home a failure? But really, I already sort of know. I am doing what we started this business to do, help people. So what if we have to live on instant Ramen for the next few months, better that than forgetting about our goals in life. That’s why I am sure that if any of them were here, they would agree with what I say next.

“Let’s go get your son back.”

\*\*\*

I don’t have a plan going into this. The half-mile uphill walk gives me plenty of time to think on that fact. Miguel had dropped me off a while back and pointed me in the direction of the manor sitting at the cliff top on the hill above me. It is a nice house, even if it belongs to a drug lord. An adobe single story affair that seems almost quaint, and empty. That puzzles me; no guards to greet me, not even a big angry dog. To my credit I knock. When no one answers I still kick the door in, but it’s the thought that counts.

I wander through the place, which is just as empty inside as out, until I come to the kitchen. Through the glass doors to the backyard I can see what is keeping everyone occupied. From the sounds and what little I can make out from my position, it looks like Keravno has

found that tentacled thing and the Derevelos are enjoying a front row seat to the fight. And for some reason that will forever escape me, Sebastian had dragged the hostages outside to watch along with him. As I am in the middle of taking stock of the number of hostages and guards I have to deal with, what I can only assume is a maid walks in on me.

“Hey, what are you doing there?” She sounds like she can’t decide whether to be scared or annoyed at my presence.

“Leave,” I tell her plainly. The implications of my presence there seem to finally click with her and she hurriedly makes for the front door. Well, no time like the present. I finally push open the sliding glass doors and step out into the backyard.

It is a really nice yard. There are high walls decorated in tribal patterns on all sides except for the back, which is taken up mostly by one of those pools that tries to look like it goes on forever. Amazingly I am still unnoticed by the cartel so I am able to catch bits of their conversation as I carefully make my way closer to the hostages.

“Sir, you and Mr. Sebastian really need to get out of here. It’s dangerous!” A man, who I presume to be a bodyguard, warns an older man in a wheelchair. The man, who it appears, can only be Derevelo senior speaks next.

“We are quite fine where we are, aren’t we son? Your...pet there is more than capable of handling this, correct?” Senior seems to have aged well, despite his advanced years, and must have taken excellent care of himself. He has prominent Latin features and long silver hair drawn back into a ponytail.

“Of course father, Charybdis is invincible. But even knowing that, this is still more entertaining than those fools I picked up in town today.” Without looking, he gestures toward the hostages, whom I am now standing among, answering their wide-eyed stares with the universal sign for, “shhh.”

I admit I almost want to wait and see how long I can last undetected, but I figure better to make my move now while I still have surprise on my side. With a little inward focus I unleash an EMP that shorts out all electronics within a hundred square feet. While everyone is busy wondering why their cell phone just exploded I tap the nearest guard on the shoulder. When he turns, I deck him. I know, not the flashiest entrance, but it works. I gesture for the hostages to run for the house as I steal all the attention in the yard.

“So, has betting closed on this fight yet? Cause I want to put a hundred on the big blue lizard; he’s got Moxie.”

“And who exactly would we be making this bet out under?”

“Oh, father this is the man I told you about earlier, the one I met today, who is like me.”

I try to keep my skin from crawling off at that comparison. “So you actually are smarter than you look. You figured me out.”

“Yes! I knew anyone who could stand up to me like you did just had to be chosen like myself.”

“You sure have a high opinion of yourself.”

“And you don’t? We were chosen by these greater beings to be bearers of their gifts.”

“Well, let’s see if you know how to use those gifts.” I give him the come and get some gesture and assume my fighting posture. He laughs.

“Just remember when you are bleeding out that you asked for this.” And then he lunges. A quick right jab, I side step, then another, and another, and another, all as obvious and easily avoidable as the last. At his latest, I step in close and kick his footing out from under him. Now, standing over him, I put my heel to his throat.

“Come on man, at least try; your dad is watching. Even I’m embarrassed for you and I’m the one kicking your ass!” My pity party is cut short when he wraps his hands around my ankle and twists, shooting pain up my leg. I quickly kick his hands away, stepping back as he returns to his feet.

“Not so confident once I actually start using my gifts, are you?” Said gifts appear to be spikes on the palms of his hands. I respond with the first thing that pops into my head.

“I bet those complicate personal gratification.”

“Wha?” While he is puzzling through my innuendo I shoot my hand out a grab him by the wrist. Yanking him towards me, I put everything I have into an elbow strike to his throat. The force of the blow actually lifts him off his feet and sends him sprawling on the floor again, clutching at his neck.

“As fun as this is, can we speed things along a bit? That hit partly collapsed your windpipe, so let’s just turn into our kaijin forms and get this over with. I’m late for a social event.” But the cry he lets out in response unnerves me a bit.

“You have turned into your kaijin form before, right?” I ask to no one in particular.

“This is the first I have heard of such a form, but please continue. This is getting most interesting,” Derevelo senior says from the sidelines. An earsplitting cry erupts from Sebastian as he convulses on the ground

“Just my luck.” I mutter.

\*

Keravno has finally found his too-many armed opponent. It had escaped him before because he had to protect his human, but this time it wouldn't have such luck. Still, he is at an impasse. No matter how hard Keravno pulls on its arms or body, he just can't get enough purchase in the water to dislodge it from its hold. And Keravno needs to get it free so he can take the fight to the land where he will have the advantage; in the water Keravno's abilities are too limited to put an end to this thing. Then it hits him, he does have one ability that only works better underwater. He will need a run up.

Now in position, he summons up that force, the same one that surrounds this planet. He can use it to push himself away from the ground or, in this case, to push away from the water. With this, he shoots forward at lubricous speed, past the many arms, his current battering it in his stead, then again in the other direction. Again and again, each time in a different direction, he beats at the arms with his wake until finally the bits of earth it's holding purchase on give way and the arms are swept up into the current. Now is his moment. Keravno begins to swing round and round, the arms turning over and over, funneling them towards the surface in a great



whirlpool. Finally, as the many arms flail around in the open sea, Keravno lines up one final charge and slams into the thing at full force, propelling the both of them out of the water.

\*

The kaijin form is a defensive reflex, sort of puts the “fight” in fight or flight. Which is why the first time changing is so scary a lot of people totally lose themselves in the battle, and they forget why they are even fighting in the first place. It also hurts like a son of a gun.

As Sebastian changes violently before me, I decide it’s my time to slip over the edge as well. With practice, one can call on the transformation at will, allowing the power to course through you as your body restructures itself for the sole purpose of combat. Some people have it easier than others. I, for example, have the same number of limbs as Keravno so the cosmetic changes aren’t great. Armored limbs here, a scaly hide there, and I’m basically done.

Sebastian doesn’t have it so lucky. There really is no easy way to cross a starfish and a man, so what he ends up as is far from pretty. His face is basically all mouth with eyes and teeth in places they really shouldn’t be. And his arms split into the same branching tendrils as his kaiju. He also gets a significant height boost, up to twelve feet tall, due to the sheer size of his monster counterpart.

I’m not wasting any time. As soon as he’s up, I kick off the ground and land a knee in the general region I think his head still is. It keels him over, but before I can even touch the ground, his arms have me and are whipping me around. I’m slamming into more things than I care to count and finally end up embedded into one of the walls surrounding the yard. Before I even

manage to peel out of the me-shaped hole I'm in, he's on me again and has me suspended by the arms trying to pull me apart. I need to step it up a notch.

Through careful manipulation of magnetic fields and utilizing the special heat resistant armor surrounding my limbs, I can use my current to super-heat gasses into plasma, and hold them suspended around all four of my limbs. That's a lot of big words meaning I can turn my hands and feet into light sabers. I lash out with my newly ignited foot catching him right across the face. The pain sends him screaming to the ground. I follow up with a punch, he tries to block the impact with his arms, but I just burn through them. I keep up the assault raining molten blow after blow.

This is always the hardest part. Stopping. The kaijin form is designed for kill or be killed situations and damn if it doesn't make them feel good. I have to constantly watch myself so as to not step past that edge and become the kind of person I'm fighting against, a killer, a psychopath, a monster. Stopping never feels good.

But I do it. After one final hit that sends his head spiking against the ground, I relent and watch as his form slowly dries up and crumbles to dust leaving only an unconscious man in its place. I barely have time to breathe before a massive impact rocks the earth.

\*

Keravno's aim is true and he and his foe crash down onto dry land, Keravno landing on top of the arm's main body. It is truly distressed now, writhing and squirming and trying with absolutely everything to pull Keravno off of itself. But his footing is firm and his newly ignited arms burn through any tendrils he touches as he prepares his finishing blow.

\*

We're all lucky not to be crushed by Charybdis when it lands. I glance around at the mostly destroyed backyard. All of the guards hightailed it once Sebastian lost control and thankfully they took the injured and unconscious with them. It's just the Derevelos and me now. I heft junior over my shoulder and approach senior.

"You are an interesting man. First you beat us to a pulp, and then you drag us from the fire. Why?"

I shrug, "I don't like people to die, even bad people."

Senior shakes his head at me. "Such a...complicated reason."

"Don't worry; even I don't know what I'm doing half the time." Then I heft him out of his wheelchair and begin to sprint toward the partly collapsed house. Behind me I can hear Keravno charging up for the big finish.

\*

Keravno can feel the air in his lungs changing as the particles are stripped of their electrons, can sense the fields forming that will focus the soon to be beam. The arms make one last attempt to stop him, but it is too late, as the arms reaching for his beak are the first to be atomized by the charged particle beam spilling forth from his maw. It lances outward, strait up the center mass of the creature searing it in half. Soon all movement in the arms stops and it is dead. Keravno tosses half of his newly bifurcated foe aside and let's loose a thundering roar that splits the sky in victory.

\*

Once we make it out of the manor, I drop senior.

“Wait, at least give me your name,” he calls after me as I leave.

“And expedite the process of putting a hit out on myself? No thanks. Just look him up.” I gesture to the kaiju currently roaring in victory. “You’ll find me soon enough.” And with that I’m off with Sebastian still over my shoulder. He’s looking at a nice quiet jail cell until the KDF come along to toss him in a hole and throw away the key. At some point on my way down the hill the adrenalin from the fight finally wears off and I return to normal, or at least as close as I can get, being me.

At the bottom of the hill I see Miguel and his son waiting by their truck. Later, I’ll find out that all of the hostages made it out ok, but Miguel and his son insisted on waiting for me while the others took his truck. One of them was at least nice enough to bring the truck back when they were done with it. But I couldn’t care less about any of that stuff at the moment, not when I have a perfectly good truck bed to pass out in.