

## Honduran Sunrise

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Gunfire echoed in the distance like new years fireworks. Plumes of thick, gray-smoke rose in elegant wisps from smoldering, leveled buildings. The sky was tainted brown, and orange streaked across the Honduran skyline like the stroke of a paintbrush. The stars did not pierce through the chaos below.

Mira had watched and trembled as her brother was overcome, struck down, trampled. She pulled Henry from the street once the mob had cleared. It had taken all of her energy, all of her strength. He was large, in comparison to her.

She found him, recumbent, sprawled out like a deflated, discarded scarecrow. His eyelids fluttered when she fell to her knees beside him. His arms, smeared in blood, reached up to her. Fresh tears cleared streaks of dirt away from her cheeks. He moaned as she dragged him across the debris strewn streets. He moaned and sobbed. Cheering men and women ran by; some with guns, others with makeshift weapons. They paid Mira no mind. She was no threat. She was nothing.

She pulled him into an alleyway. A sharp explosion ruptured down the block and she fell backwards, stunned. Henry didn't flinch. Mira scrambled back to her feet, slipped her arms under Henry's armpits and gripped tightly around his bloody chest. She heaved, lifting him from the ground, inching backwards, shuffling her feet. Once, twice. The blood vessels bulged from her forehead. Dancing lights formed and flickered in her vision.

Another explosion boomed, this time farther away. It lit up the night sky. This time she stayed afoot, until her ankle painfully caught against a rusted pipe. It jutted from the ground like a gnarled finger and sliced her skin. She quickly felt the warm trickle of blood pool into her shoe. She collapsed, bringing Henry down upon her. She tried to cry out but Henry's weight pushed all the oxygen from her lungs, and when she gasped for air it tasted smoky, and stale.

Mira kicked against the cobblestones, still gripping Henry. Her back hit the brick buildings which rose to form the alley. Her chest rose and fell in giant gulps of air. In the dull

streetlights she saw the streak of blood which Henry left behind him. She brushed his hair with her fingers, wiping away the dirt and grime from his dented forehead.

“I got you Henry. I got you.”

She placed her hand against his pale cheek. He was cold. She looked over his shoulder and felt around his chest, looking for the wounds that flowed like streams. She found one, a deep laceration that ran the line of his left shoulder. She prodded it with her finger, it went up to her mid knuckle. She pressed hard against it, applying pressure, praying to god that the bleeding would stop. But it didn't. The blood seeped and bubbled between her thin fingers.

“Help!,” she cried, her voice drowned out by a fresh batch of crackling gunfire. She called out again, and again. She screamed until her vocal chords burned and she tasted blood in her throat. She screamed until the only sound she could muster was a hoarse, pathetic gurgling. She rocked Henry, clutching his head against her bosom. Tears fell from her chin, landing onto the ragged shoulder of his torn jacket.

Mira didn't know that the blood which flowed from his wounds was arterial blood - life blood. It was sweeter, redder. Had she known, she would have held him closer, tighter. She would have pulled him in until they were one, so he wouldn't be alone.

She didn't know he'd died before they reached the alleyway.