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Vince stood inert on the stairway. Voices reverberated as all hell broke forth above. Firearms cracked their accustomed, deadly song. They waited, ready to spring the trap should any escape. Footsteps! He nodded to his companion across the hallway. Feet emerged, followed by legs, pattering swift and silent. His automatic sprang into action. Blood splattered the walls. Other feet followed. His hand froze on the trigger as the familiar face appeared.

“No!” he yelled turning to his companion in arms. In slow motion he saw the smile, the finger on the trigger, the bullets race, the face smashed, exploding to bloody pulp in a rain of bullets as he stood splattered by crimson rain.

“No! no!” he screamed, but the darkness did not hear.

Hands were shaking him. A face appeared, dim in the moonlight. “Wake up! Wake up!” it urged as he struggled against the darkness.

“I’m OK ... just a bad dream ...” he lied.

“Pretty awful dream to have you yelling like that! Wanna talk about it?”

“No, it’s nothing, nothing ...” More faces, young, concerned, glancing back and forth. What did they know? “I’m alright I tell you!” The edge to his voice made them wary. They withdrew.

Alone again in the darkness, Vince sought control. It was always like this, always, because it was no dream. Jase was dead, and nothing he could do would bring him back. He’d tried to warn him, but he hadn’t listened. Now the face was still and shattered, the body cremated or thrown into a mass grave, as were all anti-government rebels ...

It had been the catalyst for Vince’s own rebellion... He thought of Chad, of Rat and his former comrades, of life in the wilderness, of revenge ... Now they were all left behind save the two