

OUTSTANDING ADVENTURES

**Featuring Livewire, Lady Flames, Gold Shocker, and
Dawn-Slayer**

A Prelude to *Pure Evil: When Cities Collide*

1

Framed

They called Megacity Delta the jewel of progress. Livewire called it a mask—neon varnish over rot and greed. From the rooftop observation deck, he watched the mayor’s convoy snake through the streetlights, a living parasite bleeding the city dry. Beside him, Lady Flames stood silent, golden hair damp with rain. Their son, Gold Shocker, trembled with adolescent impatience.

“Eyes sharp,” Livewire murmured, voice steady despite the tension in his gut. “Nothing here signals a hostage or weapons deal.”

Gold’s fingers sparked at subconsciously. “Then why are we even here?”

“Because they deserve the truth,” Lady Flames replied. “This convoy carries secret contracts—land grabs, privatized prisons.”

Livewire nodded. “Tonight, we collect proof.”

They moved as a unit: Livewire disabling cameras with electric pulses, Lady Flames dissolving locks, and Gold darting forward. None noticed until too late.

The explosion ripped everything apart. Coughing smoke, heat, and panic, Livewire braced his wife and son, pulling them from the blast. But even as alarms screamed, his first thought was the image of a hospital van struck by that bomb—proof now gone.

Within minutes, newsfeeds lit up: “Vigilante trio blamed for bomb attack that killed Mayor Voss.” Screens showed security camera footage manipulated to depict Livewire planting the device. The montage called them “The Outstanding Three.”

“Jesus,” Gold muttered. “That’s us on the screen.”

“Not us,” Livewire corrected softly. “Someone made it look like us.”

They melted into the sewer’s spine, mixing with the city’s underbelly. Lady Flames squeezed Gold’s arm. “Let’s get somewhere safe.”

But beneath that urgent mantra lay a deeper sting: those golden headlines wouldn’t just ruin them, they’d declare war.

Their hideout was a derelict train car deep within the network—rusted steel and flickering bulbs. Livewire snapped a flick beside Gold’s head, discovering his son stained with soot and pain.

“How bad?” Lady Flames asked, voice flat.

“—Bad,” he exhaled. “But alive.” Livewire pressed a homemade kit to the wound. “They blasted us. That wasn’t an accident.”

Gold shook his head, eyes damp. “We wanted justice. Now they think we’re terrorists.”

Lady Flames bent over a cracked terminal screen, uncovering a buried code. She leaned back. “Look at this: Frame _sequence _447.mp4—routed through city systems. Someone from inside Pure Evil.”

Livewire’s hand tightened around a frayed edge of his jacket. “So who betrayed us?”

Not long after, Dawn Slayer monitored the same fake “evidence” in his lair—a cathedral of shadows and steel. A lone Pure Evil agent hovered.

“They expect us to deny it?” the agent asked.

Dawn held the doctored video on a suspended screen. “Let them. Too many suspect us anyway.” He turned, voice low: “But not me. Not them.”

He dug out a faded photograph of Livewire, Lady Flames, and Gold Shocker smiling under sunshine. “I know who built this,” Dawn said, flicking his gaze from photo to screen. “And I know who can still live with it.”

Their confrontation came in a deserted parking structure, rain seeping through shattered skylights. Shadows moved as electricity, flame, and tension coalesced.

Dawn stepped from the gloom. “You should’ve stayed hidden, Livewire.”

Livewire’s reply dripped with loss: “We never left. You just stopped looking.”

Lady Flames leveled a fiery glare. “Did you set us up?”

Dawn’s lips thinned. “Does it matter? The city sees ‘terrorists.’”

Gold added, voice shaking: “We wanted to protect it, not destroy it.”

Dawn dismissed him: “You started Pure Evil under a different name. I finished it.”

Then they clashed sparks, flames, and steel. Livewire locked fists with Dawn, electricity crackling. Lady Flames unleashed a conflagration to take out robotic drones. Gold tackled a desk, shielding civilians from stray gunfire.

A moment of clarity: Dawn pinned Livewire chest-to-chest. “You walked away,” he hissed. “I didn’t,” Livewire fired back. “You turned it into my nightmare.”

He shot a bolt, knocking them both apart.

Gasps, rain, and smoke blurred the chaos. Lady Flames roared, letting loose a fiery torrent that pushed Dawn back. “Run!” Livewire shouted to his son, who flinched but obeyed.

Dawn rose from the wreckage, landing on burning concrete. “This isn’t over.” His warning echoed through steel girders. “When I come again, no more games.”

They fled through crumbling exit ramps, across empty streets polished by rain. Muscle memory guided them to safety: the old Pure Evil safehouse, miles beneath the city. The rusted lock cracked under careful hands.

Inside, they surveyed damage—equipment trashed, data terminals dark, gear rotting. Gold slumped against a crate, blood and grime soaking through. Lady Flames knelt, tending him in silence. Livewire stared at a map etched onto the cracked wall—cities beyond their own marked in red.

Up above, in another chamber, Dawn delegated. He signed a contract under dim crimson lights, the hologram spelling out fingerprints and logos: DC SLAUGHTERHOUSE.

The new threat. Brutal, merciless. Not police—not heroes. They terminated.

Back in the safehouse, Livewire whispered, “First, they framed us. Then they came at our hearts with drones and lies. Now... mercenaries.” He looked at his family, ragged but alive. “Let them come.”

Gold, grief, and rage coiling in his eyes, asked, “Then what do we do?”

Livewire closed his eyes. “We hit back.”

The storm outside had subsided. City lights flickered on a battered world in need of reckoning.

Livewire rose, checking his gauntlet. Lady Flames reignited her internal flame—small embers at her fingertips. Gold stood, unsteady but determined, sparks dancing.

Livewire faced them both. “We save ourselves,” he said. “Then we save the city, the right way.”

Lady Flames rested her hand on Livewire’s arm. Gold stepped close. In the hush, their silhouettes formed one family, fighters, fugitives.

Livewire’s voice settled over them like steel: *“Outstanding. Let them chase us. Because tonight, we become the storm.”*

And as they braced, the city around them pulsed with electricity, primed to explode into a war none would walk away from.

2

The Offer

The sewers beneath Oldtown had forgotten what sunlight felt like. Roots broke through the brickwork. Rats scurried past broken pipelines. And the air reeked of rust and time.

Livewire moved through the tunnels like a ghost—silent, deliberate. Lady Flames followed close behind, hand on Gold Shocker’s shoulder. The boy’s face was pale, but the spark in his eyes hadn’t died.

They reached a safe chamber hidden behind a rusted vault door. Crates of gear. A half-working generator. A black-and-white photo of the original Pure Evil crew was stuck to the wall with a nail.

Livewire stared at it for a beat too long.

Then came the sound.

Footsteps. Calm. Controlled.

He knew them before he saw the man.

Dawn Slayer stepped out from the dark like he owned it. A leather trench coat soaked with sewer water. One hand free. The other was resting near the hilt of a folded-down power-blade.

“I’m not here to fight,” he said.

Lady Flames moved in front of Gold. “Then turn around.”

But Livewire raised a hand to stop her. His voice was calm.

“Talk.”

Dawn Slayer nodded. “They want you gone. Not just arrested—erased. You, her, and the kid.”

“No kidding,” Livewire muttered.

Dawn looked him in the eye. “You surrender. I’ll make the footage disappear. I’ll clear the names. All of them.”

Gold Shocker's voice cracked from behind his mother: "You serious?"

Dawn didn't flinch. "I'm offering you mercy. And peace."

Livewire didn't respond right away. He paced slowly, keeping his eyes on Dawn.

"You think peace is still on the table?" he asked. "You think the people running this city want redemption for us?"

"They want results," Dawn said. "Give them that. Give them a name, a face to blame."

Lady Flames' fists began to warm, a soft glow under her fingertips. "He wants you to take the fall, Marcus."

Livewire chuckled without humor. "He always did."

Dawn took a step forward. "You started this rebellion. You built Pure Evil. You turned kids into warriors."

Livewire's eyes flared with lightning.

"I gave them hope."

"You gave them chaos," Dawn fired back.

A heavy silence fell.

Livewire turned his back on Dawn, looking at the cracked wall. "You still think I walked away. But I didn't. I was *pushed* out."

Dawn shook his head. "You left us leaderless. Confused. I *had* to step up."

Livewire spun. "You turned our rebellion into a paramilitary cult. You used our name to take control. To build your army."

Dawn's jaw tightened. "It was never just about protest. It was about power. The only thing that stops them from killing people like us."

"No," Livewire said, voice rising. "It was about protecting people who couldn't protect themselves. And now they're scared of us."

Dawn stepped forward. "You built the match. I lit the fire."

Livewire took a step forward of his own.

"You *are* the cause now."

Neither moved first, but both moved fast.

Dawn's power-blade slid from its sheath with a metallic growl. Livewire surged forward, hands crackling with blue lightning.

The first collision was kinetic—blade against charged gauntlet—sparks lighting up the chamber like a strobe.

Dawn twisted, aiming a downward slash at Livewire's shoulder. Livewire caught it mid-swing, his gauntlet sparking furiously. The force shoved him back against a support beam, but he rolled and retaliated, sending a bolt of electricity into Dawn's ribs.

Dawn grunted but didn't fall. He was stronger than he looked. Cleaner in his movements. But Livewire fought like a brawler—dirty, unpredictable.

Lady Flames kept Gold back, flame rising in her palms. But she didn't step in.

This was personal.

Dawn grabbed Livewire by the throat and slammed him against the wall. "You were a symbol. Now you're a fugitive."

Livewire coughed but grinned through blood. "Still more honest than you."

He headbutted Dawn, then blasted him with a palm full of lightning.

Dawn hit the ground hard.

But he wasn't out.

Dawn rose, sword glowing white-hot, and slashed the air, cutting through a steel pipe. Water gushed down. Steam and electricity hissed through the room.

Livewire dodged left, planting a shock mine against the floor. It detonated a second later, stunning Dawn long enough for Livewire to land a punch square across his jaw.

"I trusted you!" Livewire shouted, fists hammering down.

"You *needed* me," Dawn hissed through gritted teeth.

"You ruined everything!"

They tumbled through the chamber, knocking over shelves, slamming into crates.

Every punch carried weight—years of betrayal, rage, heartbreak.

Blood ran down Dawn's mouth.

Livewire's left gauntlet shattered.

Neither cared.

Finally, Livewire landed a blow that sent Dawn flying into the wall. He collapsed, coughing, blade skidding across the floor.

Livewire stood over him, panting. Lightning arcing off him in short bursts.

Dawn's voice was hoarse.

"Run, Marcus. Run before the city finds you again."

Livewire looked down at him, almost pitying.

"No," he said. "You'll do that for them."

Lady Flames rushed to his side. "We need to move. The Slaughterhouse won't be far behind."

Gold nodded, shaken.

Livewire knelt beside Dawn. "You used to believe in something."

"I still do," Dawn muttered.

Livewire stared at him for a beat, then stood.

"I believe in protecting my family. You want a war? We'll give you one."

They vanished into the dark tunnels. Livewire used what juice he had left to seal the old base's entry points. Dawn didn't follow.

He sat on the floor, bleeding and alone.

Behind him, the old Pure Evil symbol peeled off the wall.

Elsewhere, Lady Flames kept pace beside Livewire. Her expression was unreadable.

"You, okay?" she asked.

He shook his head. "No. But I know who we are again."

Gold Shocker looked between them. "And who's he now?"

Livewire didn't answer.

But in his mind, he saw the first night he and Dawn had stood shoulder to shoulder under a broken neon sign. Their dream was pure then. It wasn't anymore.

They stopped in a flooded tunnel mouth beneath the docks.

Lady Flames stared across the water.

"We can't keep running."

Livewire nodded. "We're not. We're moving. Planning. Fighting back the right way."

He turned to his son. "You still in this, Gold?"

The kid's eyes sparked. "I never left."

High above, sirens pierced the sky. Patrols were scanning deeper now. The city wanted blood.

But beneath it all, three fugitives moved like lightning, like fire, like ghosts.

Livewire kept his voice low but certain.

"No more offers. No more lies. We find the truth—and burn everything that stands in its way."

The tunnels under Oldtown groaned like the throat of a dying beast.

Moisture dripped from overhead pipes. The air was heavy with mold and metallic grit. Somewhere far off, a rat screamed—caught in a rusted grate or something worse. Lady Flames hated this part of the city. She'd once threatened to burn it clean, but Livewire reminded her: "The rot's where they hide the truth."

That was why they were here.

Livewire crouched beside a cracked steel beam, fiddling with a transmitter held together by tape and memory. Sparks crawled along his fingers as he rewired the device's pulse emitter. He was exhausted—eyes red, bruises blooming across his collarbone—but he moved with calm focus. Repairing things, however broken, had always steadied him.

Behind him, Gold Shocker lay wrapped in old coats. The boy twitched in his sleep, his body subconsciously charging and discharging electricity in quiet pulses.

Lady Flames stood watch.

"How long before he finds us?" she asked softly.

Livewire didn't look up. "He's already close."

And like an answer from the dark

"You're right."

Dawn Slayer emerged from the tunnel shadows like he belonged there. His coat was soaked, his boots splashed in sewage, but his presence was impossibly clean. Polished. Controlled. He looked like a general stepping onto a battlefield he'd already won.

Lady Flames ignited a flame in her palm. "You better say something smart, Dawn."

He raised his hands. "No fight. Not here. Just me."

Livewire stood slowly, his eyes never leaving the man. "You found us. Go ahead. Say what you came to say."

Dawn's voice was lower than usual. Measured.

"They want you gone. Not captured. Gone. Vanished. Your name's scrubbed. Your face is forgotten. They already rewrote the narrative."

"No shock there," Livewire muttered.

Dawn took a step closer, his gaze hard to read. "I can fix it. I've got people who owe me favors. Surveillance threads. Internal contacts. We plant a counter-story. Make it all disappear."

Gold stirred, blinking awake. His voice was rough from sleep and smoke. "What is this?"

Lady Flames didn't look back at him. "An offer. A bad one."

Livewire studied Dawn's expression like it was a crime scene.

"You want us to turn ourselves in."

"I want to end this clean."

"By making us the sacrifice?"

Dawn's jaw flexed. "You and your family surrender. Quietly. I make sure the charges fall apart. You do time in a safe facility, long enough for the heat to die down. Then we work out the next step."

Lady Flames barked a laugh. "You're selling exile like it's salvation."

Dawn didn't blink. "It's better than being hunted. You know who's coming next."

Livewire's face darkened. "The Slaughterhouse."

Dawn hesitated. That was answer enough.

"You think hiding in the gutters will protect you?" Dawn asked. "You think bouncing between city shadows will keep the kid safe?"

Gold stood now. "I can handle myself."

"No, you can't," Dawn said. "Not against what's coming. You don't know what they've built."

The silence that followed was heavy. It sat like smoke in their lungs.

Livewire leaned against a rusted pipe. "Tell me something, Dawn. Do you actually believe this ends with us getting justice?"

Dawn crossed his arms. "I believe you'll live."

"Alive in a cage isn't the same thing."

"It is when your wife and son are in the cage with you."

That line crossed something. Lady Flames stepped forward, fire licking up her arm.

Livewire raised a hand. "No."

He turned his eyes back to Dawn.

"You want the truth? I didn't walk away from Pure Evil. I walked away from *you*."

Dawn's eyes flashed. "You walked away from everyone. You left us scrambling. No vision. No command. No purpose."

"No," Livewire snapped. "You had purpose. You just didn't like mine. So you made your own."

Dawn stepped closer. "You made the spark. I made the fire."

Livewire's voice dropped an octave.

"You are the cause now."

And with that, the offer died.

There were no drawn weapons. No shouted threats.

They moved like rivals trained in the same rhythm—mirror images with blood between them.

Dawn swung first. Livewire blocked, electricity rippling across his arms. They crashed against the chamber wall, cracking old concrete. Lady Flames shoved Gold behind cover, but didn't move. She knew this wasn't her fight.

Livewire countered with a blast that staggered Dawn into a support pillar. Dawn regained balance and slammed a knee into Livewire's chest, followed by an elbow across his face. Blood sprayed.

Livewire grunted and delivered a heavy punch to Dawn's ribs, overloading the armor with a jolt. The plates sparked and hissed.

They didn't fight like heroes.

They fought like survivors.

Every movement carried weight. Not just from muscle, but from memory. From betrayal. From lost nights planning revolution under flickering lights and idealistic hopes.

Dawn shouted as he struck: "We were supposed to change the world!"

Livewire roared back: "You changed the target!"

They tumbled across the ground. Dawn's power-blade clattered out of reach. Livewire drove a knee into his stomach, but Dawn rolled and struck his jaw with the back of his armored fist.

They broke apart, breathing hard, chests heaving, sweat and blood mixing.

Livewire's gauntlet flickered, short-circuiting. He ripped it off and threw it aside.

"No powers," he spat. "Let's finish this right."

Dawn smirked through a split lip. "You never knew when to quit."

They charged again.

Fist met fist. Bone cracked. Dawn caught Livewire in a grapple and slammed him into the ground. He went for a chokehold, but Livewire headbutted him twice and surged up.

Back on their feet, both men swayed slightly.

Then Livewire saw it Dawn was slowing. Wounded deeper than he let on. The ribs. The left leg. There was a window.

He took it.

Livewire tackled him through a wall of crates, sparks and dust flying. He raised his fist—electricity dancing once again—and paused.

Dawn lay still, groaning, barely conscious.

“You built an army,” Livewire said, voice shaking. “But you lost the cause.”

Dawn coughed, blood in his teeth. “Then kill me.”

Livewire stood up.

“No,” he said. “That’s what you’d do.”

Lady Flames moved to his side. Gold joined her.

“We need to go,” she said, wrapping an arm under Livewire’s shoulder.

He looked down at Dawn, who didn’t even try to rise.

“They’ll come for you too,” Livewire said quietly.

Dawn stared at the ceiling. “I know.”

Livewire turned away.

They left through a maintenance shaft, moving slowly through ancient drainage lines and forgotten service routes. When they reached the surface, dawn had broken—ironic, Lady Flames thought. A new day above ground, and the man who named himself after the sunrise was bleeding underground.

Gold kept pace behind them, unusually quiet.

Livewire limped, his shoulder bruised, jaw throbbing.

“You are sure you’re not dying?” Lady Flames asked.

“Not yet,” he said with a faint grin.

They paused inside a half-collapsed warehouse near the industrial district. Rain seeped through holes in the roof. It wasn’t much, but it was enough for now.

Gold finally spoke.

“What happens next?”

Livewire leaned against a support beam. “We regroup. We find allies we can trust. We dig out the truth.”

Gold looked uncertain. “Why not just do what he said? Surrender. Let it pass.”

Lady Flames crouched beside him. “Because truth buried under fear isn’t truth. It’s propaganda. We don’t hand them our lives and expect them to tell our story right.”

Gold nodded slowly, absorbing it.

“We have to fight,” he said.

Livewire met his eyes. “Yeah. We do.”

Across the city, deep in the ruins of the sewer chamber, Dawn Slayer finally stood again.

He wiped blood from his mouth and retrieved his blade. His soldiers arrived moments later—late, but ready.

One of them asked, “What do you want us to do?”

Dawn’s eyes narrowed.

“Contact the Slaughterhouse. Tell them the Outstanding Three just declared war.”

Back at the warehouse, Livewire spread a map across a table. Cities circled. Names underlined. Corrupt officials, black market tech dealers, rogue factions.

“All roads lead to the same network,” he said. “And whoever planted that bomb? They’re embedded deep.”

Lady Flames folded her arms. “Then we dig them out.”

Gold cracked his knuckles, sparks dancing from his skin.

“Let’s make some noise.”

Livewire smirked. “Outstanding.”

Outside, the wind howled over the sleeping city. But down here, the storm was just beginning.

Outside the warehouse, the sky over Brooklyn was bleeding into gray. Clouds threatened rain, but the streets remained eerily quiet. This part of the borough had been evacuated months ago during the Rezoning Riots. No cops. No cameras. No curious civilians. Just silence and the occasional drone hum overhead.

Lady Flames was on lookout duty while Gold Shocker fiddled with the EMP trap he'd rigged from a busted generator core. Livewire sat nearby, testing the current in his ruined gauntlet, his fingers twitching from fatigue and adrenaline.

He knew Dawn wouldn't stop. Not now. Not ever.

Then came the voice.

“What the *hell* is going on?”

All three turned at once.

Standing at the corner of the warehouse's broken entryway was **DNA**—battered flak jacket, dreadlocks pulled back, shock written all over his face.

DNA, one of the original Pure Evil lieutenants. A codebreaker, empath, and Livewire's former recon partner. Last they heard, he'd gone off-grid after the movement splintered. But now he was here, unarmed but wide-eyed, staring at them like he'd just found ghosts.

“DNA?” Livewire said, slowly rising.

“What happened to you?” DNA asked. “Why's the city saying you *killed* Voss?”

Lady Flames stepped forward cautiously. “It's a setup.”

“Yeah, sure it is,” DNA replied, not unkindly—just numb. “I've got eyes on the networks. They're spinning stories like wildfire. Your faces are on every underground bounty board from here to Jersey.”

He pointed at Gold.

“They're offering *ten million* for the kid.”

Gold froze.

DNA looked at Livewire. “You blew up the mayor?”

“No,” Livewire said flatly.

“You sure?”

That hit hard. Too hard.

Gold Shocker's hands suddenly lit with crackling gold energy. His pupils flared with that same glow. The EMP rig behind him started whining.

“Gold,” Livewire warned.

But the boy was already raising his hand.

DNA’s eyes widened.

“Gold, don’t!” Lady Flames shouted.

Too late.

A burst of magic—chaotic, raw—shot from Gold’s palm. A flash of blinding light exploded through the warehouse.

DNA staggered back, clutching his head. “What the hell—what *was* that?”

His memories scrambled, only for a few seconds. Just enough to disorient him. He fell to one knee, trying to re-center.

Livewire stepped between them. “What did you do?”

Gold’s voice shook. “I didn’t want him to call anyone.”

“He wasn’t going to,” Livewire snapped.

“We don’t *know* that.”

“Doesn’t matter. You made us look guilty again.”

A high-pitched whine sliced the moment in half.

Drones.

Two of Dawn Slayer’s aerial scouts dropped into view through the shattered roof. Matte black, needle-like designs. Armed. Targeting.

Lady Flames stepped forward and raised both arms high.

“BACK,” she shouted.

A wall of fire erupted, fifteen feet tall, hot enough to warp the steel beams above. The drones retracted slightly, unable to see through the blaze.

The fire filled the warehouse like a second sunrise.

Livewire ran to her and grabbed her arm.

“Stop! Both of you. You’re just making this worse.”

Lady Flames didn’t turn, eyes focused on maintaining the barrier. “They’re closing in, Marcus.”

“I know,” he growled. “But right now you’re lighting us up like a goddamn signal flare.”

He turned to Gold. “And you—no more magic unless I say so. Understand?”

Gold looked down, shame crawling across his face. “...Yeah.”

Livewire stepped back, breathing hard. His whole body buzzed from tension and half-burned current.

“Both of you are powerful as hell,” he said. “But power isn’t the same as control. And if we lose control, they win.”

The fire dimmed.

The drones vanished into the smoke, retreating—for now.

DNA coughed, still dazed, leaning against a support column. “I don’t know what the hell you’re mixed up in, man... but you better get out of Brooklyn. Fast.”

Livewire nodded. “We will.”

As the last embers faded and the shadows returned, the three fugitives stood together again, surrounded by scorched floorboards and silent regret.

Lady Flames looked at her husband. “Where to next?”

Livewire stared into the blackened street beyond.

“Wherever the next lie is hiding.”

3

Family Over Everything”

They found shelter in a boarded-up parking deck on the edge of the **Brooklyn Navy Yard**, surrounded by rusted cargo containers, fog, and silence.

It wasn’t much. A power-dead rooftop, half-collapsed support beams, scorched rebar.

But they’d slept in worse.

Lady Flames ran a slow, trembling hand through Gold Shocker’s tangled hair. He sat on the concrete, legs crossed, hoodie pulled up, eyes locked on nothing.

Livewire knelt by an open bag, rewiring a stolen city drone to scavenge heat signatures.

They hadn’t spoken in two hours.

Gold finally broke the silence.

“Was Pure Evil ever the right fight?”

Livewire paused. Lady Flames glanced over but said nothing.

“Because I’m starting to think it wasn’t,” Gold said. “Maybe it never was. Maybe we were just a front. A flashy distraction while guys like Dawn made power moves.”

His voice cracked.

“I mean, back in the early days... you guys wore masks. Saved people. Burned dirty money. You hit back at the system. I believed that. But now?”

He looked up.

“Now we’re just names on a kill list.”

Livewire sat down slowly.

“We were never saints,” he said. “But we weren’t liars either. Pure Evil meant something—once.”

Lady Flames added quietly, “We tried to build something real. But it got away from us.”

Gold shook his head. “Dawn didn’t hijack a cause. He *was* the cause. He just let it rot.”

Gold reached into his bag and pulled out a cracked data slate.

“Found something.”

Livewire raised an eyebrow. “When?”

“While you were scouting. I boosted it off DNA’s pocket.”

Lady Flames raised a brow. “You pickpocketed a mind-hacker?”

“Had to know if he was still loyal,” Gold muttered.

The screen flickered to life. Dozens of fragments flashed by—encrypted logs, intercepted transmissions, video loops, old Pure Evil command orders.

Gold scrolled past most of it.

Then stopped.

File: Delta Event_0047

Location: Megacity Warehouse (Brooklyn Navy Yard)

Timestamp: 3 days before bombing

Livewire leaned in. “Play it.”

The video was grainy, surveillance-grade. It showed three figures in Pure Evil armor entering the warehouse.

But the logos were off. The tech is too sleek. The colors were muted.

Not their unit.

“Private division?” Lady Flames asked.

“Rogue,” Livewire corrected. “They went dark after the break.”

The video ended with the crew planting charge nodes. One turned toward the camera. Their mask slid for a second.

Not Dawn Slayer.

But someone they recognized.

“*Riverpoint*,” Gold whispered. “Didn’t he vanish after the Furies’ fight?”

The word hung in the air: **Furies**.

Three enhanced assassins were once used by Pure Evil’s founders. They didn’t speak. They didn’t feel. Just killed. They’d been designed to eliminate “lost causes.”

Gold stared into space.

“You remember the fight?”

Lady Flames sat beside him. “I remember the fire. The screams. You were just a kid back then.”

Gold nodded. “But I remember what Dr. Wave said, right before they killed him.”

Livewire’s expression darkened. “Dr. Wave...”

“He said, ‘*Hope is buried in Pandora’s Box. And I’m digging through the dark to find it.*’”

Gold looked up at them.

“He believed in resurrection. Not revolution. He thought bringing his family back could fix everything. But Pure Evil used him.”

Lady Flames inhaled sharply. “He was trying to use the box’s tech to reverse cellular degradation. They promised him funding—then ghosted him.”

“And then the Furies showed up,” Gold said.

They all went quiet.

That was the night they truly saw what Pure Evil had become.

Livewire stood. “We need to confirm this. If Riverpoint’s alive and he planted the bombs, then we can trace who sent him.”

Gold packed the tablet. “There’s a node repeater hidden in the old Naval archive vault. It should have the full transmission chain.”

“We’ll need to move,” Lady Flames said. “Fast.”

But before they could exit the stairwell

A spotlight blazed through the broken walls.

“NYPD! On your knees, hands up!”

Floodlights swept the deck.

Dozens of officers in riot gear surrounded the building, guns trained. Some wore federal armor. Others had private Corp patches merc police. The mix meant only one thing:

Joint Task Force Strike Team.

Brought in for “high-risk metahuman targets.”

Gold raised his hands halfway, electricity crackling at his fingertips. “They’re going to shoot.”

Livewire grabbed his wrist. “Not yet.”

Lady Flames turned, raising her arms. The fire surged instantly, forming a solid **wall of flame** across the south side of the parking deck. Screams erupted below as the police fell back.

Livewire cursed. “We just made it worse!”

He yanked Lady Flames backward. “Come on!”

“Let me hold it just another second.”

“We don’t have another second!”

Gold turned and launched a pulse grenade made of condensed plasma magic into the stairwell, buying them breathing room. The device exploded with a high-pitched hum, knocking a pair of advancing drones out of the sky.

The trio darted across the deck and dropped into the loading shaft. Livewire used his electricity to short the security grate.

“Down the shaft. No lights. No powers unless I say.”

“Copy,” Gold said.

They slid into the darkness just as tear gas started flooding the upper levels.

Ten minutes later, they emerged into the cold rain of the Navy Yard’s north terminal, running full speed into the maze of shipping containers.

Behind them, the sirens blurred with thunder.

Gold’s lungs burned. Lady Flames coughed up smoke. LiveWire clutched his bleeding ribs.

But they were alive.

Just barely.

And the truth was closer than ever.

