

Arcadia:

The Wayward Hero

Kristina Garlick

**Dedicated to:
The unsung heroes...**

Chapter 1

March 20th, 4:40 p.m.

Seth: “I was beginning to think you weren’t going to show.”

Arcadia: “It is only 4:40 p.m., so no need to send out a watch party.”

Seth: “You are usually here every day a little after opening.”

Arcadia: “What can I say? I like to do a bit of day drinking on my own.”

Seth: “And night drinking? Don’t you have any friends or family members who you want to spend time with?”

Arcadia: “No. What about you? You are always here.

Why don’t you go hang out with your sister? I am sure she misses you.”

Seth: “I am here because I have to work.”

Arcadia: “Open to close every day, even when I am the only patron in the bar? You could easily hire someone part-time to handle the small flow of people that comes into a bar on days like today.”

Seth: “I wish, but unfortunately, I can’t. The only thing I can afford is occasional fill-ins. Between the expenses of owning a bar and trying to put my little sister through college, I can’t afford to hire anymore staff, full or part-time. At least Hailey has only one year left, even though she doesn’t need the schooling. The girl can hack almost any computer, which I keep telling her to be careful about. Otherwise, Lord Boundary’s thugs will cart her off. But that’s on Hailey. So the only thing I concern myself with is where I am going to vacation

when Hailey gets her degree. So far I have it narrowed down to Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, or the Great Smoky Mountains.”

Yellowstone is where I was supposed to have honeymooned. *Supposed to* doesn't mean a damn thing, when the man I was with back then was a liar. Rather than think about the past, I motion towards the beer tap. Seth will know by my actions to grab a glass and fill it with my usual poison. I don't mind talking about his problems, but I need a beer to distract me from mine.

Actually, I always need a drink these days, but not for the typical reasons. Alcohol doesn't affect me like normal people. And when I say that, I honestly mean that I can't get drunk. Not getting drunk is just one of the many feats that I am capable of.

So why do I bother drinking then? As mentioned previously, I do enjoy the distraction. Drinking has always been a part of the persona I have adapted. No one would suspect someone who is supposedly inebriated all the time of remarkable achievements like stopping street thugs and rescuing tiny kittens or, as I like to call it, proper hero shit. I know I shouldn't have to hide my powers or even who I am, but heroes aren't well-received anymore (not by choice). I am not even sure I could call myself a hero these days, or super, for that matter. Maybe *vigilante* is a better word, now that I have hung up my cape and suit.

Nowadays, I occasionally dispense a bit of street justice. But don't think my reasons are entirely saintly, as I also line my pocket in the process. And the last

time I checked, a superhero doesn't accept cash for saving the day.

What can I say? Dying... almost dying, kind of changed me. I am no longer Wayward Shift, *hero of the people*. I am simply Arcadia, a girl who people think lives in New Orleans and, by all accounts, a drunkard who doesn't work.

Joe: "Hey, Seth, turn on Channel 5."

Joe rarely talks, and hates leaving the kitchen as well. He hates most people. So something has to be going down for Joe to request that the television get turned on. My assumption is correct as it would appear that not one but two car bombs were set off on different sides of the city. The first car bomb went off in Uptown, while the second went off in the beloved Old French Quarter. From the television footage, it would appear that the intention wasn't to kill people, as the blast would have to have been in a more centralized location, rather than in cars parked near vacant buildings in each area.

The blast could have always been way more powerful, if these villains' goals' were to purposely destroy life. While it does appear that there are injured, my gut is saying that this is a diversion. As for what, I'm still unsure. All I know is that, from the nineteen years of experience I had in criminal deviancy, something just doesn't smell right about these two simultaneous attacks. Suddenly, I find myself needing more information. The good person that still exists within me can't let this go. I reason that, with my ability

to transform into anyone I have come into physical contact with, and my expertise in stealth, I can easily investigate the attack without being seen.

Arcadia: “Turn on the police scanner.”

Seth: “Why?”

Arcadia: “You will hear more.”

Seth: “Good point.”

Seth flips on the police scanner just in time to catch a robbery in progress in the Warehouse Arts District. Instantly, I know that the bank was the bad guys’ target. The criminals were doing a bit of misdirection to tie up the police. Lord Boundary, the dictator of my beloved country, or as I used to know him, Broderick Baron Boucher, should put an end to these miscreants’ crimes. But he won’t. The name Broderick Baron Boucher is evidence alone of what a big douche he is, and his personality only seals that fate further.

I think Broderick’s chief problem has always been that he looks at the big picture, which often gets the little guy hurt. Case in point, the fact that all major police departments nation-wide faced staff cuts courtesy of Broderick’s budget proposal. Broderick knows nothing about budgets, political affairs, or anything that doesn’t involve him.

What happened to Broderick’s parents, and his ill-fated childhood, has made the narcissist think he can do a better job of running the country than the government can. The thing is though, we, who have powers like him, attended that same damn show 19

years ago and lost a lot as well.

My fellow kind and I didn't turn into psychopaths as Broderick did. What Broderick has never been able to grasp is that life is painful, messy, and has no reason. But that doesn't mean Broderick can fix that. As a matter of a fact, New Orleans suffers today because of Broderick's lack of understanding... at least it's not as bad as what he did to New York City.

Arcadia: "Fuck me."

Seth: "What?"

I stand up.

Arcadia: "How much is my bar tab at?"

Seth: "I believe it is around \$240 as of Sunday night."

Arcadia: "We will call it \$250 then."

Seth: "Where are you going?"

Arcadia: "To go get you your money."

Seth: "You're not staying? You always stay."

Arcadia: "Didn't you just say I should spend time with friends or family?"

Seth: "But you just-"

Arcadia: "Shh. Just have a beer on me and, if anyone asks, I got sick from drinking and went home early."

Seth: "I would argue, but there is no point. Just be careful. There seem to be a lot of crazies out there."

Arcadia: "Don't you worry. I have my flask to keep me safe."

I quietly exit the bar with no further delays. Then, casually, I make a turn into the nearby alleyway. It isn't

as dark as I wish it would be, but I know from prior experience that there are no cameras here. Even if by chance there is a camera, I've activated the watch I wear that scrambles all cameras and recording devices within viewing range of me. This watch has a lot of different functions, but its technology scrambler is my favorite. Nifty watch or not, it's not like anyone or their cameras could see me take flight. I don't mean to brag, but I am pretty fast. It literally takes me a matter of a few seconds before I reach the roof of the bank.

My initial assessment of the scene is rather disappointing, but not surprising. There are only two police cars outside of the bank. From what I see, four cops in total are tasked to take on a hostage situation.

Pitiful criminals who could set off two explosions, plan a robbery, and yet didn't execute the entire mission before a limited number of police officers arrived.

If the bad guys keep up this standoff, Broderick's goons will arrive via private jet. What I am about to do to these scoundrels is far more merciful than what the henchman would do.

Ever since Broderick made himself leader of the United States and more or less the entire world, he has barred flights domestically and internationally. As with everything, there is an exception to the rule. Broderick's exception is that his cronies and bullshit puppet government officials can still fly in planes and operate any weapons he deems essential. Broderick is able to control technology because he has Vegas on his side. Vegas is like Broderick and me. She has powers, but obviously hers are of the tech sort. She has the ability

to control computer systems, so most people in modern society are at her mercy.

As to why Broderick had Vegas limit transportation, I guess he was afraid of someone using a fighter plane or a plane in general to take him down. Broderick may be as close to invincible as anyone can be, but everyone has a weakness. Unfortunately, the way things currently are, killing Broderick would be a ridiculously difficult task. One would have to start out by killing all of Broderick's top living weapons, such as Vegas, for example.

The average person would not be able to destroy the minions or the man with the god complex, Broderick. Ordinary folk can't even get a hold of weapons such as guns, grenades, and other such things I was playing with at the age of twelve. (Don't ask.) Only those who buy on the black markets, which there are plenty of, can get a hold of a gun. So basically, the good guys are rather screwed. Even the cops are only armed with tear gas and stun guns, which isn't going to do anything for whatever the robbers are packing inside. Again, I have to figure out why the robbers have not fled with the knowledge that they could defeat the cops.

I would seriously bet money though, that the robbers will make some sort of move soon. The robbers really have to, unless they want to be caught by Boundary's peons and tortured. However, I think I will make it a wasted flight for whomever Boundary is sending to New Orleans. I'm going to do a bit of intervening before any cops or civilians are killed.

After a few moments of thought, I change into a

male guard. The uniform is, luckily, very generic, and not one that Boundary or any of the ex-heroes have seen. Not only do I have the ability to fly and to transform into anyone I have touched, but I also have a few other tricks that have kept me alive. For instance, I can heal myself if I take someone's youth, but typically, individuals are not too keen on that. Usually I will just allow myself to heal on my own, but compared to stealing youth, that process is much slower.

So, getting back to the bank robbery and me, positioned on the roof. There is a door not so very far from where I landed, but it is sealed shut with a rusty deadbolt. Normally, a deadbolt would deter most people from getting in, and yet no lock would ever dismay me. With just my hands, I snap the lock and toss it to the side. Oh, did I forget to mention I have super strength as well?

I can't help but smirk as now will come the fun part... kicking some bad guy ass. So as to not ruin my fun, quickly, quietly, I descend the stairs and make my way through the hallway. It doesn't take long to spot a lone gunman patrolling the area. I easily jump the man, knock him out, and move his body to an empty room without anyone noticing. Quickly, I tie up bad guy number one and leave him in the corner to attend to later. When I'm done murdering Jackass's friends, this dipshit might be spared if he gives me the information that I seek later on. Most likely I will kill the jackass though, as his type are often not willing to cooperate easily.

As I have said before, I used to be in the hero business, which allowed me to develop specific skills

that only come from years of training. I performed countless rescue missions, along with many other classified tasks. The major difference between then and now is that now I make sure the scoundrels don't make it to arch-nemesis status. Nothing worse than a villain who keeps coming back. So now I make sure most of the bad guys I face end up dead. I also try to minimize witnesses, as I don't need people talking, or a trail leading back to me.

It takes only a matter of moments for me to transform into the man I just knocked out. I am a bit surprised by the man's level of stupid. He brought his wallet and ID to a bank robbery. The fellow's name is John Hurder. Shaking my head, I tuck his ID into my pocket before shoving his wallet back into his own pocket.

Next, I pick off three of the four remaining baddies using their own weapons. Sure, I could have destroyed them all with my bare hands, but that's not something a normal person would do. I also want to make it look like the bad guys fought and killed each other. So, in John's voice, I scream that the other guys were trying to rip me off and take my share. As most of the hostages have escaped at this point, I am sure the other robber is convinced that John has gone rogue and decided to turn on them.

Then I am face-to-face with the last remaining bank robber. I have to give this criminal credit. He catches on that something isn't right. He also manages to dodge my bullets, which, in all fairness, I'm really aiming. I have nothing else going on, so I sort of want to drag this out a bit longer.

Unfortunately, in the chaos of people fleeing the bank, the remaining bank robber grabs a lone hostage and drags her into a vault. I am not sure why the robber thought trapping himself in a bank vault is a good idea, as there is no place for him to go.

Robber: "You're not John."

Arcadia: "No, I am not."

Robber: "How is this possible?"

I ignore the bank robber's question.

Robber: "Take one step closer and I -"

Arcadia: "You're not going to hurt her."

Robber: "Why not?"

Arcadia: "If you do, I will rip off all of your major limbs, including your favorite one. If you are still alive, I will make you watch me toss the parts to the alligators down in the swamps. Now, I think that is reason enough to let her go."

Robber: "You are fucking kidding."

Arcadia: "I took out your buddies, so that's up for speculation. If you leave now and go on your merry way, I promise no harm will come to you. But this offer expires in one minute."

I guess the robber likes the option I gave him, as he shoves the girl to the ground. Regrettably for the man, he doesn't think things through and he decides that shooting me is a brilliant idea. Alas, now our deal is null and void, along with his minute being up. This is what happens when I try to be merciful and nice.

With a quick scowl, I pick up a bag of money and hurl it at the bank robber. From the sheer force of the throw, the robber is thrust against the vault's wall before falling to the ground. Nonchalantly, I stroll over to the bank robber and pick up the gun he dropped when he hit the vault wall. Then, without hesitation, I end the robber's life. All it takes is two shots and then there is one less unlawful person.

Woman: "You saved my life."

Arcadia: "I was never here."

Woman: "Why not?"

Arcadia: "What is your name?"

Donna: "My name is Donna Fellwood. What is yours?"

Arcadia: "Doesn't matter. Now, Donna. I can call you

Donna, right?"

Donna: "Yeah."

Arcadia: "You know what they do to superheroes?"

Donna: "They execute them, unless they work for Boundary."

Arcadia: "And I don't want to deal with the hassle of facing execution, so I was never here or you won't be either, if you get the picture."

I pick up the bag of money and pluck about \$500 in cash.

Donna: "What are you doing?"

Arcadia: "I have a bar tab to pay."

Donna: "But that's stealing."

Arcadia: "I just shot a man dead. Do you really want to have an ethics debate with me? This is the world we live

in. The sooner you face it, girl, the more likely you are to live to a ripe old age.”

Donna: “It didn’t use to be like this.”

Arcadia: “Last time I checked, superheroes didn’t decimate a city to save the world. One would think, between the movies deals, video games, or even the merchandising, that would have been enough. But greed is greed. As a matter of a fact, that is the tagline for today.”

Donna: “What?”

Arcadia: “If anyone asks, the bank robbers got greedy and got into a fight. The one robber, killed all the other robbers, including the one in here. As for John, the greedy robber, he was shot in the shoulder and tried to flee. In momentary distraction, John got sloppy, and you killed him. Then you exited the building, the acclaimed hero.”

Donna: “Is John, the other robber you speak of, dead?”

Not yet.

Arcadia: “Yes. Now, stay in the vault for five minutes before leaving the bank. Even if you hear things, ignore them and follow my words so we both come out winners here.”

Donna: “Okay... I owe you my life, so I will do what you ask.”

Arcadia: “You will be a local celebrity and probably gain some wealth in the process. So you can say that I am doing you a favor.”

I touch Donna on the shoulder, almost as if I am

trying to comfort her, but that is not my true intention. I need the ability to transform into Donna. Now that I have the ability to be Donna, I simply walk out of the room without even uttering another word.

Once out of Donna's sight, I touch my side, where I have been shot. While the wounds initially always hurt, I will eventually heal from this as I always do. It will be easier though, if I speed things up. So I make up my mind to shave a few years off of the surviving bank robber's life, before I kill him. Yes, I have decided to just kill John, rather than to have a little talk with him. I'm not in much of a talking mood, due to his buddy.

It is only when I stand outside the room where I have stashed a tied-up John that I transform into Donna. I frown when I see that John is almost out of his bindings. Apparently, John was going to make this more difficult than it needs to be. I actually would have preferred if John was asleep, but I will take what I can get.

Arcadia: "Trying to escape, I see."

I shoot John in the shoulder. John lets out a scream that could have waken the dead and for some reason I think less of him. John thought he was some big shot who could rob a bank but when the going got tough, he couldn't even take a bullet.

John: "You, crazy bitch! I am going to kill you once -"
Arcadia: "Not a smart thing to say to the person who has the gun."

I pick up John with one hand and slam him against a cabinet. Then I began to drain a few years off his life. I take roughly six years as, if I take any more, someone will notice that his age is off and could potentially look into things. The few years that I do take have noticeably drained the criminal of the ability to move. Even when I rip off his bindings, he is unable to run or even to flip me off, for that matter.

John: "You are... Shift... Wayward... how could you?"

Arcadia: "Wayward Shift is gone, just as you are."

Now, I am not particularly proud of what happens next. I shoot the criminal dead, just as I did with his counterparts. No villains left behind to fight another day, especially no one who saw my true form. I often wish that, when I steal youth, I didn't change back to how I normally look. Even if the man hadn't recognized me, I had decided before I walked into the room that I was going to kill him.

Having more or less healed myself and taken care of the hostage situation, I grab the remains of the rope bindings. Then, using my speed, I quickly take to the roof and fly off.

I end up flying to what should have been a sanctuary for heroes, but ended up being a place for death for many that I used to know. Two of my friends and fellow heroes had their throats slit in their sleep, and one was killed in the kitchen. The death that devastated me the most was the individual who died in my arms, right in the middle of what once was the command center.

Arcadia: “Some Security Safe House this turned out to be. Whoever names this shit should be found and slapped.”

It is hard to believe that it's been three years since that horrific attack that changed my world for the worse. Believe it or not, I used to be a much happier and kinder person. I never used to kill, and I once stood for something good. Nowadays, I just get by, but I think a lot of people are doing the same thing now that Lord Douche in charge. I fucking hate Broderick and the sad part is, we were once very, very close.

I honestly don't know why I still live at the Security Safe House. It's like living in a haunted museum. After burying the deceased, I sealed off the rooms where they died, except for the command center. There, I simply put up caution tape where my friend died. I even left the blood spatter on the ground and, in some screwed up kind of way, it is like a shrine to Pious.

Pious. Pious. Pious, even now I hate saying his name because then I have to admit that he is dead. The worst part is that it is my fault that Pious is gone, and he was the best of us heroes.

Maybe it was because of Pious that I stayed in the safe house. Or maybe I stayed at the safe house because I had nowhere else to go. I'm not sure exactly why I stayed, but I did try my best to fix up the parts of the building which were damaged in the attack, minus the areas I closed off.

March 21st, 8:35 p.m.

Arcadia: “Hey Seth. I have been meaning to give you this since I walked into the bar. Here’s the money that I owe you, so we are square.”

I plop the \$250 I owe Seth onto counter of the bar. Seth hastily comes over and scoops up the cash. After quickly counting it, Seth puts the money in the drawer.

Arcadia: “Oh, and a little something extra for you.”

I motion for Seth to come back over. Then I lean over the counter and tuck a \$100 bill into the chest pocket of Seth’s flannel shirt. Is that action a bit condescending towards Seth? Why, yes, it is but the priceless reaction on Seth’s face makes the entire action worth it.

Seth: “Do I want to know what you did to get the money?”

Arcadia: “Nope.”

Seth: “Was it legal?”

Arcadia: “Depends on who you ask.”,

Seth: “On second thought, don’t tell me, and I will just accept a gift as a gift.”

Arcadia: “Exactly. Good man.”

Suddenly, a really attractive fellow walks into the bar. I mean, drop dead, damn. He is the type of guy who would surely turn anyone’s head, whether they were gay or straight. No one should be that gorgeous...

it really should be a crime.

Seth: "You interested?"

Arcadia: "No."

Seth: "Your eyes say otherwise."

Arcadia: "Don't you have drinks to get?"

Seth: "Joe's got it."

Arcadia: "He looks miserable."

Seth: "Joe needs to get out of his shell and learn to talk to people a bit more. Besides, I am entitled to a break just like everyone else."

Arcadia: "I can't argue with that."

Seth: "So why don't you go over and talk to the guy?"

Arcadia: "There was a time I could get any guy.

Everyone wanted to be my friend and I was someone special."

Seth: "What happened?"

Arcadia: "New York City."

Seth: "Did you lose someone?"

I failed New York City. I failed the people. I failed at being a superhero. I failed. I failed. I failed.

Arcadia: "Let's change the topic. Besides, he probably has a girlfriend."

Seth: "Sorry for -"

Arcadia: "Don't feel sorry. Feel angry."

Seth: "That's a bad way to live."

It's uncomfortable, where our conversation is going. I look for an out and, sure enough, I find it. The extremely attractive man is taking pictures of the bar,

which is very strange. Just as abruptly as the man began, he sits down at a booth and starts texting.

Seth: "I know I should let this go, but I really think you should go and talk to him."

Arcadia: "Why do you think he was taking so many pictures?"

Seth: "Tourist, probably."

Seconds later, an obnoxious woman of about twenty-five years of age walks in. The woman squeals when she sees the hot guy and runs over to him. After hugging the guy, the woman sits down beside him.

Arcadia: "It looks like it was a good thing that I didn't go over there and talk to the fellow. I don't need to make a fool of myself."

Seth: "Have a beer on me."

Seth pours a nice malt beer and slides it across the counter my way. As I drink the beer, I think that something isn't right about the good-looking couple, but then again, it is hard to trust my instincts. I was fooled by several members of the superhero team that I belonged to. I am well aware that not everyone is fucked up and has some evil motive behind what they do. Sometimes a picture is just a picture and it can really be that simple.

Out of the blue, I hear an eruption of cheers from a group of men on the other side of the bar. One of the guys gets up from his bar stool and walks over to the Wall of Superheroes board. The burly man picks up the

red marker next to the board. My heart begins to beat faster as I begin to think who Broderick is going to execute next?

Will it be Tersina, Zafer, Gluestick, or even Perro to die next? Maybe Mr. Cash but I think he would buy his way off of the execution block. There are just so many variables that I had a hard time predicting who would might caught in the near future and sent to execution. I try remember the names of everyone with powers as the Wall of Superheroes board is incomplete. There are many enhanced people who have chosen to live a normal life. If a person has powers, they are either with Boundary or dead to him ... so suburbs or not, anyone like me is fair game.

It feels like I have been punched in the chest when I see the burly man draw a giant red line over Flatline's face. Flatline, or Mackson Moss, used to be one of my best friends and the guy that I should have been with, but never really happened. Unfortunately, I chose the wrong man to love and to marry. Ha! I am always one bad decision away from breaking my own heart.

Being somewhat of a masochist, I walk over to the television and change it to the news channel. I really need to buy a cell phone or a tablet so I can pull up the news instantly as the group of men apparently did. I just don't want to own any form of technology that has the ability to be traced.

Unfortunately, the news verifies what I feared, that Flatline is marked for death. Mac is to be executed via gas chamber in a little over a week's time. There is a bit more interrogation that needs to be done before

Mac's death will be streaming live for the world to see. If a person doesn't own a television, all an individual needs is a device with an internet connection to see death on demand. Streaming live executions is a sickening thought, and yet Broderick somehow thinks that his methods are saving the country.

Suddenly, I am brought back to reality, when I hear Jeremy and his crew being more obnoxious than normal. Jeremy, Henry and Paul come into the bar once a week for a guy's night and to escape the wives. Truth be told, if I were their wives, I would tell them to go out every night. On the other hand, I would prefer if Jeremy and friends never came to the bar but I have no say in that. As long as the three men are paying and not causing any problems, they are welcomed in the bar.

Jeremy: "Can you believe it, Henry and Paul? They are killin' freaking Flatline. I never thought I would see the day."

Henry: "Why not? It's not like he has superpowers."

Mac had powers, but he didn't like using them. In all the years that I have known him, I have never seen him demonstrate his abilities. But I did hear him screaming one night about eight years ago for "it" to go away. Don't ask me what or who "it" was. Mac refused to talk about what happened that night and simply said he hated using his powers because he had a hard time making them stop.

Jeremy: "Yeah, but that guy was my hero. He got to

hang out with those hot chicks, Wayward Shift, Honey, Ink, and Vegas. I wonder if he ever got busy with any of them?”

Paul: “I doubt that. Wasn’t he the one that built all those gadgets that the other heroes used?”

Henry: “Yeah, and it was Mr. Cash who funded all those toys so he could play with them. If you ask me, Mr. Cash should be the one you are idolizing, Jeremy. Tits and ass loved Mr. Cash as he was everything neither of you slobs ever were. Flatline was just some nerd who got lucky to hang out with the cool kids.”

I don’t know Henry, but he needs to watch his tongue.

Jeremy: “You might be on point, Henry, but it’s not like you are any better than Paul and me, asshole.”

Henry chuckles.

Henry: “What? What did I hear? Jeremy’s buying the next round.”

Jeremy: “Fine. You are still an asshole.”

Henry: “Oh, I am for sure, but I have a beer and I am alive, unlike Flatline in a week’s time. All hail Lord Boundary.”

It takes me a few seconds to realize that I have cracked the glass that was in my hand. I am just so pissed about what I saw on the news that my strength has gotten the best of me. I know that, if I let go of the glass even a fraction of hair, that beer will spill

everywhere. Logically, I'm not sure how I can get away with lying about cracking a glass with my bare hand. The only course of action I can come up with is to drop the glass on the ground, and that is what I do. Anyone who observes the incident will just assume that the glass broke when it hit the ground.

Seth: "Shit, Arcadia, are you okay?"

Arcadia: "Yeah, my bad. I guess I've had enough for tonight. If you have a dustpan and mop -"

Seth: "Don't worry. I got it. Just get home safe, okay?"

Arcadia: "Thanks."

As Seth begins cleaning up my mess, I make my way to the front door. I pause at the superhero board and, with a quick tug, I tear down the picture of Flatline. Then I shove the picture into my pocket. If anyone sees me take the picture, they don't say anything, so I just leave.

I can't use the alleyway to take flight as there is some homeless man standing there, talking to himself. He may have a mental illness, but I don't need the guy to ramble about a girl flying. So I walk a few blocks to this condemned building that I know no one will be at. It is from the roof of this building that I jump up and soar into the night sky.

It probably would be best to go straight inside when I get home. Instead, I pace the coast of the island off of Georgia, where I live. I am honestly ready to start a fight so, luckily, I am the island's only human inhabitant. In the past, only government personal and superheroes have been allowed on this island. I don't

even think the island is on any official maps, past or present. Sure, with much of the old government having been dissolved, someone is more likely to stumble upon the island but to date, no one has come around.

After running a few laps around the island, I still can't shake the anger I feel. There is also some pain mixed in there as well. Flatline is going to die unless I intervene, but if I do, Boundary will know I am alive and he will come for me. While I am strong, I don't think I can beat Boundary... I couldn't in our last encounter.

Arcadia: "I am not a superhero. I am not a superhero. I am a vigilante. I am a vigilante who only cares about herself. Fuck!"

I punch a tree with force that I haven't used in a long time and, in turn, the tree shatters. For the last few years, I have restrained my strength as beating up common city thugs doesn't require much force. Momentarily, I find some sense of relief. But then I think about Mac again and I drop to my knees.

I should have gone looking for Mac years ago, but I thought wherever he was hiding out was better than coming back to this shithole. I should have... there are so many things I should have done. Regret.

5 years ago...

Mac: "Working?"

I turned around to see Mac standing in the

command center of the Security Safe House.

Arcadia: "Our work is never done."

Mac: "Didn't you get married this morning?"

Arcadia: "Yeah."

Mac: "Shouldn't you be on your honeymoon in Yellowstone?"

Arcadia: "Broderick is doing a talk show tonight. He is helping some network execs promote a fictional television show about him."

Mac: "Don't you mean us? The show is about all of us heroes."

Arcadia: "Yes, but Boundary is the starring character. I think some A-list star is also playing him on the show. It's really a big deal."

Mac: "The team isn't just Boundary. You may not have super strength, but you are a bad ass fighter and you can change into people. Ink can take images off paper and make them come to life. Then there's Perro who can talk to dogs and -"

Arcadia: "I get it. It's just that Boundary is the media darling of the group."

Mac: "Remind me again why you married the guy?"

Arcadia: "He's bit rough around the edges, and at times a little self-absorbed, but he loves me."

Mac: "Do you love him?"

Arcadia: "... I do."

Mac: "I sense hesitation."

I said nothing.

Mac: "You are Wayward Shift, voted numerous times as the most beautiful woman in America. Women adored your long blonde hair and little girls dressed up as you for Halloween. Men desired your curvy but fit body. The

sad part is, you can have any man that you want. Yet you picked one of the idiots.”

Arcadia: “Is that why you didn’t come to the wedding?”

Mac: “No, this is -”

Mac pulled me against him and, with a wildness I didn’t know, he possessed me, kissed me. For a few moments, I got lost in the kiss, but then I quickly remembered Broderick and how we had only married a couple hours before. As I gently pushed Mac away, I silently cursed myself. This was a horrible way to start a marriage.

Mac: “I love you.”

Arcadia: “We can’t. You should have said... it’s too late.”

Mac: “Shitty timing. It’s my speciality.”

Arcadia: “No, that’s not true.”

Mac: “I am leaving.”

Arcadia: “What?”

Mac: “The reason I wasn’t at the wedding was that I was in talks with some bigwigs about opening up a Security Safe House type facility just outside Las Vegas. With the Pennsylvania Safe House almost done and this location to be decommissioned soon, I think this would be a perfect way to grow our brand. Eventually, maybe we can get something operational in the Midwest as well.”

Arcadia: “Why would you break up the team?”

Mac: “It’s not breaking up the team. It’s redistributing the members so we can be a better service for our country and the world.”

Arcadia: “You are our tech guy.”

Mac: “All my work is on secure servers, which authorized personal can access. Anything I create,

whether here or in Henderson, Nevada, you can get to.”

Arcadia: “But I don’t want you to go. We have always been a few rooms away, since we were ten-years-old.”

Mac: “We aren’t children anymore, which is now more apparent than ever. I am sorry that I waited so long to tell you how I truly feel. Perhaps the better man won. So I think it’s best if I go. Goodbye, Arcadia.”

Arcadia: “Mac!”

Mac took flight courtesy of his flight belt. I could have run and gotten my own flight belt and taken off after him, but what would have been the point? I was married to Boundary and he was good to me ...sometimes. I couldn’t break my husband’s heart, especially since I made a vow, and I always kept my word. I would just have to forget about what Mac said and go back to what I was doing.

March 21st, 11:41 p.m.

Arcadia: (Whispered) “I should have gone after you, Mac.”

If I had chased Mac down, what would have happened? Would I have divorced Broderick and ended up with Mac? Would Broderick have even let me divorce him? Would I have still gained the rest of the powers that I now possess? Could I have stopped Broderick before he killed countless people? Who knows, but if I could, I would change everything. All my friends who were murdered, and the people who died in New York City. I’d save them if there was even a possibility.