

# ARCHETYPES

State of Play



Devon Steiger

# Archetypes State of Play

## Book 1 of the Archetypes Series

Devon Steiger

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## **Also By Devon Steiger**

*Archetypes State of Chaos*

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# Prologue: New assignments

It was early on a Saturday morning, Emile Beauchemin sat in the headmaster's office awaiting his new assignments. Emile was a general in the Western Armed forces, he had served his country for the better part of a decade. He was conscripted at the age of 16, which to him, was a lifetime ago, as the war between the East and West started. He spent the better part of his young adult life here, in these same halls, as a recruit rather than an officer. He adjusted his sidearm. *Why does he keep me waiting*, he thought checking his watch, *it is four in the morning, what could be so urgent that it could not have waited.*

Emile's eyes scanned the room, he was used to its layout. The decorations for valour hung above the mantle of the fireplace on the right wall. To the right of those hung several hunting trophies. Though today, these trophies seemed more innocent to Emile than they ever had. On the far side of the right wall hung some decorative arms, this however did not fool Emile, as he knew that they were more than viable in a fight. On the left wall hung all the headmaster's certificates, degrees and documentation. There were more than enough of them to fill the entire wall. *Leave it to Diangelo to have more emphasis on his appearance than his capabilities*, Emile thought, *most of these papers are meaningless anyway. Institutions, especially military*

*ones give them out all too easily and most of the time to the wrong people. I can scarcely remember the last time we had a pseudo democratic society. We have been under a totalitarian, militaristic regime since I "signed" up. What has gone so wrong in society that we put our faith in people who are meant to kill to govern us, to lead us on the right path, a peaceful path? Governments and military should never have mixed.*

Emile's eyes wandered back to the headmaster's desk. On it lay a mess of papers and orders jumbled with other documents that Emile could not comprehend, *and I would rather not understand his ways*, he thought, *or those of society for that matter.* The only things easily accessible were his firearms strapped under the lip of his desk, a precaution he deemed necessary. Emile looked out the window to the opposing peak. The Academy was sandwiched on a plateau, trapped between two peaks, the fortified castle-like structure had withstood numerous assaults. Encircled by a forcefield it was nigh invisible from the outside. The walls were reinforced with forcefield tech, making them impenetrable to most arms available. It was by no means an "old castle", it was still very viable in the warfare of today. Some of its facilities were in the valley bellow, but all of the housing, administration and education was on the plateau. The only easy way in or out was a heavily guarded railway line. *Even though that could be cut off*, Emile thought, *we still have air ways and the ability to scale the mountains. This was the logical choice for an academy. It is easy to defend, even with a skeleton crew and*

*it is remote enough to never be discovered. It was a great breakthrough that force field all those years ago, and the technology was remarkably easy to adapt to stealth entire structures and entities.*

Emile opened his mind to the world around him, hearing the marching orders outside, this however was not what he wished to focus on. He listened carefully for the rushing of the nearby river, and followed it to the crashing of the cascading waterfall just a few kilometres further downstream. He was brought back as the door slammed shut behind him.

“Good morning Emile,” a man behind him said.

Emile began to stand up.

“At ease general,” the man said as he sat in his seat at the desk, the headmaster had finally arrived.

“Sir,” Emile said “What did you want to see me for at this ungodly hour?”

“Emile,” the man said “I need you to do me a favour.”

“What would you ask of me Diangelo?” Emile asked “do you need someone silenced?”

Diangelo chuckled, *what is so funny*, Emile thought to himself, *I am his go to hit man.*

“Quite the opposite Emile,” Diangelo said “you see there are several people of interest that I want recruited, to replace Alpha Squadron.”

“What do you mean?” Emile asked “has something happened to Alpha Squadron’s chain of command?”

Emile could have sworn he saw the headmaster smile slightly, his usual ‘I’m up to no good’ smile that Emile

recognized all too well, it quickly vanished replaced by a somber face. *I must be imagining things*, Emile thought, *it is early in the morning after all and I sleep too well.*

“Earlier this morning they were wiped out responding to a joint Eastern and rebel forces assault,” Diangelo said.

*Alpha Squadron taken out by rebels?* Emile thought *that makes no sense, they are, were, the best of us. May they rest in peace*, Emile thought taking off his hat and placing it on his chest.

“I need you to get several people of interest to join up,” Diangelo said “it won’t be easy, there are many that would not want to join.”

“How will I make them then?” Emile asked “do I need to rough them up a bit?”

“We’ll think of something,” Diangelo replied “if there is no reason for them to sign up, we will create one.”

“Fair enough,” Emile said “you seem to have given this a lot of thought, who are we picking up?”

“An old commander from America,” Diangelo answered “he is our primary concern. We need him to command this team, he has,” Diangelo paused “invaluable experience for the trials to come.”

“A foreigner commanding Alpha Squadron,” Emile mused “that will not work.”

“We will make it work,” Diangelo said sternly “he is the only man for the job. You will understand when you meet him, his files will be waiting for you upon your departure.”

Emile calmed himself.

“Yes sir,” he said “anyone else?”



“Several other important assets,” Diangelo said “you and several others will be handling the recruiting. I am leaving the ‘sensitive’ ones and VIP’s in your capable hands,” he paused “the rest will be split up among others.”

“With all due respect sir,” Emile said “my hands are capable to get rid of people you do not want around. They are capable of holding off an assault or roughing someone up. I have no arm for diplomacy.”

“You must learn,” Diangelo replied “I’m sure you will figure it out. You are the best man for the job. You don’t go in guns blazing unless those are your orders...” he paused “several others would take too much pleasure in breaking some bones to get the job done.”

Emile nodded, *so I know who the others are now, he thought, God help those recruits.*

Emile tipped his hat as he made his way to the door.

“Anything else sir?” he asked grabbing the doorknob.

“That will be all general,” Diangelo said God speed.”

Emile stepped out of the room closing the door behind him. *What have I gotten myself into this time?* He wondered *what could have happened to Alpha Squadron, and why would Diangelo send his hit man to recruit. Society is too far gone to be blamed for this, but in essence, it is us, the military, who pay the price this time. We may not be accountable to any mortal anymore other than our superiors. God help us all if they all become corrupt.* He tipped his hat at the next one awaiting the Headmaster’s audience.

The man nodded and proceeded to enter the headmas-

ter's office. *That Blais*, Emile thought, *that thug should never have been allowed to serve here*. Emile continued down the hallway stopping at the secretary's desk.

"Good day General," she said "I have your files for you, as the headmaster requested."

Emile nodded picking up the pen and signing out at the same time as he signed for his orders and documents. *These contracts*, Emile thought, *one day they will get me killed. Bloody foolish to sign away all rights to decline what is enclosed in the documents without seeing them. By signing this I am bound to do whatever is in these files unless I can find a way out. And knowing this office there wouldn't be any.*

He picked up the files and stowed them in his briefcase. Retrieving his firearms from the guard he received a quick salute before he headed down the winding stairwells and into the main part of the Academy's administration district.

He passed the instructors offices on his way out.

"Oi Emile," a man said grabbing him from behind.

Emile had his assailant in a headlock ready to break his neck in a split second. It was Billy, the combat instructor.

"Billy you bloody idiot," Emile shouted "what the hell were you thinking?"

Billy was released and he stumbled to the floor.

"I wanted to get a look at those orders of yours," he said rubbing his neck with his burly hands.

"And why do you think I would allow that?" Emile mused "you really are one crazy son of a bitch Billy, I am glad the headmaster has reeled in that leash of yours."

*Or so you think, Billy thought laughing, your day will come soon cupcake, and those fancy moves of yours won't help you then.*

"Aye sorry general," he said "best you be on your way then."

"That I should," Emile said "good day."

As Emile exited the administration building he bumped into a hooded figure.

"Sorry," Emile said "I didn't see you there."

"Don't be," the figure said "your time will come."

The figure began to leave.

"Who did you say you were again?" Emile asked reaching into his jacket to grab his firearm, assassination attempts were common at this level.

"I didn't," the figure said leaving "Good day general."

Emile grabbed the figure from behind not wanting to take any chances, the officers and recruits in the street laughed at him as he was flung through the air landing on his ass.

"I would not try that again Emile," the man said "you would not live to regret it, good day."

Before Emile could respond the figure had already made his way into the building.

"What are you twits looking at anyway?" Emile bel-lowed at the onlookers "get back to work that's an order."

# Chapter 1: Someone Else's War

Max walked down the winding, deserted dirt roads leading towards his new hometown. He had been taken in by a hospitable European family after the anti-foreigner sentiments began in the East. What he found however was more than he bargained for. He was taken in by a family who took him as their own son. They had lost theirs in service against the Eastern Federation's troops. As the first year passed, Max began to forget about his life in America, that to him now, seemed like another life, one which he had left behind the moment he stepped on board that Expedited Airlines EXP. flight #792, headed for Geneva, Switzerland. He quickened his pace, not wanting to be late for dinner as his reminiscing had slowed him down considerably.

On his final approach, Max noticed massive columns of smoke arising from a nearby village, within seconds it registered in his mind that his village may have been next. He sprinted the last three hundred meters to the brush to see the outskirts of his town lying in smouldering ruins. He heard the town guard shouting to regroup, he overheard them preparing for a renewed assault. He could only guess that the rebels had pulled back to prepare for a final push. He wanted to gun it through the vast clearing ahead of him into the town, but he suspected that there were a few rebel snipers still on duty. He was torn between running through

an almost certain death field, or waiting in the brush until it was safe, or until he could make a move. He decided to wait.

Max lay prone over a small ledge in the brush. The woods were quiet, too quiet, as if all life had been sucked out of it. He noticed now how beautiful this area of Switzerland actually was, with the flowering fields that had been untouched on this side of the town, and the mountains behind the village, they were oblivious to the conflict of mortals happening at their base. Max drew his standard military issue knife, one he had been given by his adoptive family, the same one that their son used in battle. Max only hoped that it would serve him better than its previous master.

Max had been lying in wait for what seemed to him like ages, but was only about five minutes when he heard the shuffling of feet nearby, most likely an enemy patrol. He readied himself for the end, one way or another. The footsteps got closer and closer, until they were right under him. He held his breath and rolled off the overhang dropping down on his oblivious victims, grabbing one from behind and pressing his blade to his neck. The other turned to him, they were members of the town guard.

"Hold Max," the one who turned to face him said "We are not enemies, I have known you a long time, and I am sure you are not a rebel assassin so please put that blade away."

It was true, Max had known the guard, Perrin, for a long time, but something did not feel right about this

situation.

"I will once you answer this question," Max said "How did you two get out here, if the city is under siege. There are snipers in these woods, how could you manage to make it this far without being shot?"

"We were sent out on patrol by commander George," Perrin said "The two of us were about to make our way back, care to join us?"

Max shook his head, patrols were always four or eight men, never two. He didn't like this one bit, but he didn't want to believe Perrin was a traitor. He was torn between killing this soldier who he had not seen the face of and probably being shot by Perrin, or following them and risk getting shot in the back. Either way he didn't like his options.

Max had noticed that the soldier he had taken hostage had said nothing the entire time even with a blade on his neck. No town guard militia had those nerves of steel. He then noticed blood on his shirt as he inched backwards, this person was in a battle, but Perrin had no sign of having been in one. It then dawned on Max that he had taken hostage a hostage, and Perrin was escorting him to the rebel commander. He did his best to hide it.

"All right Perrin," Max said slowly releasing the man in his grasp before launching his blade at Perrin, striking him dead between the eyes.

Perrin never saw it coming. He was however ready to shoot both of them on the spot, he never had the chance.

Max turned to the soldier who was now on the ground

trying to get away. He noticed now what he couldn't have from behind, the soldier was gagged. He was scrambling on the ground, his two hands tied to his side.

"It's ok," Max said extending his arm to unbind the soldier "I'm an ally, I will get you back to town safely, you just need to tell me what happened."

The soldier reluctantly put his fate in Max's hands. When he was unbound and un-gagged he told Max the story of how the town was attacked. The enemy apparently had knowledge of the holes in their defences. He had been sent out in a patrol of 8 to search for any survivors and to see if the rebels were still in the area, four of such patrols went out. He then explained how he came to be Perrins hostage, being transported to their rebel commander for further questioning.

"Perrin took us by surprise. He volunteered for rear guard, we thought he was just being cowardly," the soldier explained "I was lead guard, he shot each of them in the back, that bastard, and he held a gun to my head before I could turn to face him, and told me either I would die a nobody, or I would go with him."

"That's an interesting story you have," Max said looking at the soldier "private..."

"My name is Luke," the soldier said.

"Very well private Luke," Max said "Can you run?"

"I think so," Luke said "I didn't get hit badly, just a grazing bullet to the leg, I should be fine."

Max picked up Perrin's rifle, the cold steel burned his hands, this was the weapon that took the lives of six allies

in cold blood, Max did not want to carry it, but he had no choice.

Max lead the way through the brush, heading around the perimeter to the side where the brush almost extended straight into the back of the city, there would have to be a lot of town guardsmen stationed there.

"On the count of three we make a run for it," Max said, staring down the fifty meter sprint they would have to get into the city "Are you ready?"

"Yes sir," Luke said.

"I am no sir," Max said "I am a civilian, I am not to be addressed in such a manner."

"My apologies Max," Luke said "I assumed by the way you fought that you had been in the military."

"This isn't my war," Max said "never was, never will be."

The two waited for a few more seconds.

"Go!" Max shouted and the two of them sprinted through the clearing, quickly covering the ground and making it to the outlying towns in the city.

Before they were safe Luke took a shot to the shoulder, sniper fire.

"Go," Luke shouted through gritted teeth, pinned down in the brush outside of the city "Leave me here, save yourself."

The town guard looked at Max from the other side of the barricade, guns raised, not moving.

"No," Max said diving to the ground avoiding the sniper's next shot as he went.



"You idiot!" Luke shouted "Get to town that's an order."

Max lay prone quietly, waiting to hear where the next shot would come from. He closed his eyes, focusing all his mental energy on his hearing.

A bullet struck the ground next to his feet, he turned to where he heard the sound come from and fired the rifle in one quick motion. A second later, the sniper fell out of his perch in the tree, dead.

"How did you do that?" Luke shouted stunned.

"It isn't my war," Max said "that doesn't mean I don't know how to fight in one."

Max dragged Luke to his feet and rushed him into the village, the guards parted as they passed.

Max tossed the rifle to the ground in front of them, spitting in disgust.

"That rifle was used to murder six squad members in cold blood by sergeant Perrin, I don't want to touch it anymore, and I want no further part in this," Max said turning around to leave the barricade.

"Where are you going Max," a man said from behind him "If you plan to return home, that home was destroyed in the first assault."

"George!" Max shouted turning around "What the hell do you mean it was destroyed? Is my family alive?"

"We don't know Max," George said handing him a rifle "But if you want to get through this alive, we need more guards. I saw how you handled yourself out there, and I have never seen such a seasoned shooter in this village, had I known one existed you would have been conscripted right

away. You handle yourself too well for a militiaman Max, and that is an advantage I can't afford to lose."

Max looked at his long-time friend sadly. He had known him before he emigrated to Europe, he was a good officer, and a good friend. Several times he had been sent on diplomatic missions in the EU's territory, and George had been his liaison and escort. Of course, George never really knew what Max and his small team were doing; they were too small to be a traditional special ops team; or at least George must have thought. He looked at the rifle, then back at George.

"I'll do it," Max said "But once this is over I want absolutely no part in this war."

George nodded, and Max took the new rifle from his hands. This hard wooded riffle was not an ordinary militia rifle, Max new it right away, it was the rifle of a second in command. He looked up at George.

"Yes," George said "You are now second in command of the defence, commander Sue was killed earlier this morning."

"But Captain," Max said.

"No buts commander," George said "now get a move on."

Max picked up a walkie talkie, "Yes sir," he said as he moved through the town heading to the eastern flank, ready for another assault.

Max made his way through a crowd of terrified civilians, looking carefully to see if his family was among them. He did not see them. He could not afford to slow his pace

to much as he had to reach his post before the next assault. As he approached the post, the guards present saluted him.

"At ease men," Max said "I am only temporarily part of this war."

Max took his spot at the sandbag.

"I'll tell you this once," Max said "If any of you do not kill at least five rebels for each man, women or child that was killed today, you do not have the privilege of calling yourself a man of the towns guard. There are hundreds of civilians back there counting on people like us to keep them safe. You took an oath joining the town guard, and that oath is your lifeline. Be strong men, not for yourselves, but for those depending on us to survive. We will get vengeance, even if some of us die in the process!"

"Yes Sir!" the militiamen shouted, now more ready than ever for the assault.

"Ok George, we are in position," Max said over the headset "we will hold the line on this end."

"Glad to hear it commander," George said "we must hold the line, no matter the..." but Max never heard the rest of that sentence as a massive RPG explosion cut it off, the assault had begun.

Gunfire erupted from the western edge of town.

"George!" Max shouted over the walkie talkie "George, answer me damn it!"

There was only defiant static. Max slammed his fist onto the sandbag.

"We continue the defence men," Max said "I am in command now."

A man in blue held his position, crouched behind a sandbag, some fifty meters behind them, he hesitated slightly. He had refused to fall back to safety, instead demanded that he stay here near the fray. Max had no idea what was in this man's head, but he could not afford to waste the resources to escort this lunatic back to where he should be.

Moments past and no advancement had been made on their position. Max was itching to kill some of these rebel bastards, but none were showing up.

"Sniper," Max barked "hand me your rifle."

"Yes sir," the sniper on hand replied handing over his sniper rifle.

Max turned it to its thermal setting and looked down the field. He saw no figures approaching them. They all seemed to be circling around to the back entrance of the village. The column had almost all passed.

"Do we have any stronger scopes on hand," Max barked "this won't do."

"We have a 50x commander," a recruit piped up.

"Pass it over here," Max said and he attached the new scope to his rifle and turned it to maximum.

Max scanned the brush for the enemy camp, within moments he located it. The assault at the back of the town only grew in intensity.

Max lowered the rifle.

"Ok men," Max said "We have one way out of this, and I don't like it any more than you do. We will leave behind a skeleton defence crew, I don't believe that they will attack

this flank with a measurable force. I need eight volunteers to lead the charge with me to the enemy camp. There are maybe four dozen guards there at the most. The rest of you will report to whoever is commanding the defence at the other side, and let him know that we will commence the assault from the rear the next time we send a radio signal. Until then we will maintain radio silence."

The men looked at him, not knowing if he was joking. No one stepped forward.

"I will join you," said the man in blue standing up from behind the sandbag.

"A civilian with more courage than you," Max said tossing him a gun "What's your name?"

"The names' Emile Beauchemin," he said.

"Very well Emile," Max said "The rest of you should be ashamed."

Immediately after seven more volunteered to aid him.

"Good, the rest of you decide how you will split up, we are heading out now," Max said "God speed to you all."

"God speed commander," they replied.

Max lead his team of volunteers through the clearing, shortly after leaving the safety of the sandbags a sniper began to fire on them. The team immediately hit the dirt. Their sniper proceeded to get up slightly and scan the area. Max pulled him down.

"Don't draw their fire, I have this," Max said getting ready to pull off another miracle shot.

The team looked at him concerned, Emile seemed increasingly interested in his command. When the sniper

tried his luck one more time and missed Max immediately turned to the source of the sound and fired, shooting the sniper through his own scope. The sniper fell out of the tree dead.

"Nice shot commander," Emile said "where did you learn to do that?"

"If we live through this," Max said "I will tell you."

"Fair enough," Emile whispered back.

The group advanced, not encountering any more resistance. The camp was only a hundred meters ahead when Max ordered a full stop. They could hear the radio controller relaying orders back and forth between rebel command and the troops.

"Ok men," Max said "I want the four of you forming up with me," he pointed at Emile and 3 others "I want you," he pointed to the sniper "to cover us, you, he pointed to a young man "guarding him," he then pointed to the last man " and you to keep watch. Those are your orders men. Only begin supporting once the guns start going we want to get as many as possible by surprise, understood?"

"Yes commander," the men replied.

"Good," Max said "Let's get this over with."

Max lead his team as they crept toward the enemy camp. The forest was dead silent, as if it were holding its breath, waiting to see what would happen next, hoping to be liberated. The trees' leaves didn't budge, the animals made no noise, only the sounds of battle and the faint flowing of a stream muffled their footsteps.

"How many throwing knives we got," Max asked at a

distance of maybe fifty meters from contact.

They could see five guards with their machine guns facing their way, oblivious to their impending doom.

"I have two dozen on me sir," Emile said.

It was all Max could do not to shout "Two dozen?" but he stayed silent out of the astonishment.

"Hand over a dozen," he said stretching out his hand.

Emile handed him a belt of a dozen knives.

"All right men," Max whispered "let's do this quietly, take as many by surprise as possible." Max looked at Emile, "You had better know how to throw these," he whispered counting down with his fingers.

When he finished counting down, the two let down a barrage of knives, slaying four of the men and wounding the last, all before they knew what hit them. Max immediately stepped out of the brush, his combat knife in his hands and covered the mouth of the surviving soldier.

"You will tell me what I want to know," Max said "and I just may be inclined to be merciful, do you understand?"

The rebel nodded.

"Good," Max said "I will ask you a question, you will have five seconds to answer. Answer as soon as I take my hand off of your mouth, make any attempt to contact your men and I will make the pain worse. Understood?"

Max removed his hand from the man's mouth.

"Yes," he said.

"Good," Max placed his hand back over the mouth of the rebel "you have a name soldier?"

"Lorenz... Lorenz Vonderporten," he said.

"Ok Lorenz," Max said "How many men are left guarding the camp?"

"Two dozen or so," Lorenz said as Max took back his hand "including the commander and radio officer."

"Good," Max said and he replaced his hand "Where is the best place for my team to sneak in?"

He stared at Max.

"Look Lorenz, you are part of the foreigner liberation army," Max said "I can tell that by your colours. I'll tell you what, I am a foreigner as you can probably tell by my accent, an American. Let me put it to you this way," he paused "I know you are trusted by your CO. As the CO of the defence, I am willing to let him surrender and leave, as you fools are attacking a camp that foreigners find solace in. You shouldn't believe all the intelligence reports you receive blindly, you have been made a fool of."

"Commander!" Emile shouted "You can't offer that!"

"It's my decision," Max snapped "I have no love for any rebels, but I will not let more blood be spilled on either side over this nonsense. It is not my war, I didn't choose this battle, I didn't choose to lose my family, I was dealt those cards, now you deal with my orders."

Max turned to Lorenz once more.

"What will it be? I cannot offer you all medical treatment, the town would be in an uproar. You can withdraw, minimize casualties on both sides, we can even supply you with medicine off the record," Max said "I don't want to kill you."

Lorenz looked torn between two worlds.



"It's the CO's decision," he said "I can't make that call."

"You can relieve him of command if you don't agree,"

Max said "Will you make the offer?"

One of the recruits raised his gun at Max.

"I'm sorry sir," he said "I can't let you make that offer."

"Put that gun down ensign," Max barked.

"I'm relieving you of command under penalty of death," the ensign stuttered "step down or I will shoot."

Before either of them could react, the ensign's throat was slit from behind.

"Anyone else have any problems with this decision?" Emile asked.

They shook their heads.

"We don't want bloodshed," one of them said "We want this over. This village finds life sacred, we don't even want to have soldiers, if they weren't needed we wouldn't allow their weapons."

"What will it be Lorenz?" Max asked.

"I'll do my best," Lorenz replied.

"Good," Max said giving Lorenz a hand up "lead the way."

Lorenz lead the way through the brush, stumbling somewhat as he went, Max helped him carrying him by the shoulder.

They reached the front gate of the camp, five guards raised their guns to fire.

"Stand down," Lorenz said "That's an order."

"Commander," one of the lead guards said.

"Ah so you are the lead commander," Max said "I thought I recognized that insignia."

The guards were ready to fire.

"Stand down that's an order," Lorenz repeated "We are pulling back."

"What?" a girl asked exiting a tent "You can't be serious commander."

"Sacheverell, these men spared my life," Lorenz said "even if none of that matters, we are attacking a foreigner place of refuge."

She laughed.

"Did he make you believe that?" Sacheverell mocked.

"Aye," Max said "You would think that a foreigner would only be a commanding officer in a place of refuge for them wouldn't ya."

She looked at him stunned "You're... You're..."

"An American," Max said "Yes I am. And I am in command here."

She turned to their intelligence officer.

"Give the order to fall back," she said "And kill the bastard who gave us this faulty information."

"Yes Ma'am," the operator said.

The rebels began to withdraw. The town guard could not comprehend why, they were pushed back to the last few men, holding the last line they possibly could. They would never know the true reasons behind the rebel retreat, they would always believe that the camp was seized, and to save their commanders the rebels retreated. The six other men with Max were sworn to secrecy.

"That was some quick thinking and leadership there Max," said Emile catching up to him back in town

It was now three days after and the city was rebuilding.

"It was nothing," Max said, carrying his knapsack on his shoulder heading to the outskirts of town.

"You never told me where you learned to do that," Emile said "I believe it is known as the Aereo manoeuvre is it not, Mr. Aereo?"

"How did you!" Max shouted turning around.

"A military officer has to know these things Max," Emile said "I know you served on the American Elite strike team before emigrating to Europe. You were the best they had and obviously you have not lost your touch."

"You know who I am then," Max said "But I do not know who you are so I am at a disadvantage now. How did you even receive that information it was..."

"Classified," Emile said "Yes it was, it was a bitch to get clearance for. I am Emile Beauchemin, I am acting as part of the recruitment division of the military academy, which as you know is now more of a fighting force. I am a general for the West's army but my exact designation and role is classified."

Emile paused.

"Yes," Emile said "You are the reason I was in this town, I came to find you Max, I came to plead you to return to service."

Max turned to walk away.

"Don't walk away damn it!" Emile said "this country needs you! I have a letter; a copy of your final orders."

Max stopped to turn to Emile, he laughed.

"The orders specifically stated I was to help the Swiss government or the EU if they ever needed me, as neither of those two entities exist I think it is safe to say I am off the hook."

Emile tossed the letter on the ground.

"Those two governments may no longer exist," Emile bellowed "that may be true; but their citizens, the same ones you would have to protect need you."

"It isn't my war," Max said walking away "It never was. I came here for retirement not to be pulled back into a war. Let the Europeans sort this out."

"Damn it Max!" Emile shouted "It is your war! It's a war caused by the foreigner immigration. Your family is missing, not even a special forces commander as good as yourself can track them down alone. If you sign on I assure you we can devote some resources to finding your family. It won't be much, but it will be better than what you can do alone."

Max kept walking, however he slowed his pace.

"Max," Emile pleaded do it for them if not for the country, they took you in, you care about them."

Max turned around.

"I will do it," he said "Only until they are found, once they are back, we will have no more business, understood?"

"Yes Max," Emile said.

"I don't think you have," Max said "I am a very bad man to cross," he paused "I would not like to be in your position if you cross me, you won't survive long enough to regret

it.”

“Yes sir,” Emile said.

“Good,” Max said “I will be ready to leave at dawn.”

Max turned around and walked back to the makeshift hut that had been assembled for those displaced.

*What have I gotten myself into now, Max wondered, I'm only doing it for them, Damn the country, the Swiss are nice, but I swore never again to go to war, the only thing that is forcing me to is them... I just hope they are alive.*

—

“Five more for transport,” a soldier said.

Soldiers grabbed five civilians, they started with an elderly man, who was injured, they tossed him in and laughed, he feebly tried to sit up. They also grabbed a middle aged woman, she tried to resist.

“Try that again and we will have some fun with you,” one of the soldiers said laughing.

He hit her and tossed her into the truck.

Next came a middle aged man, he didn't put up a fight, he didn't want any more trouble for his wife. He boarded the truck himself. An elderly woman was thrown into the mix, she sat beside the elderly man. All that was left was a little girl looking scared at the soldiers.

“It's okay sweetie,” the man said “daddy is here.”

“You bet he is,” said a soldier smacking him with the butt of his rifle.

The group laughed, and tossed in the little girl, the dad caught her.

“Good,” a scarred man said “These are the ones we were

waiting for, be sure they get to base alive.”

“Yes sir,” the driver said entering the vehicle.

“Don’t worry little one,” the scarred man said looking at the young girl tossed into the truck “You will be ok,” he slammed the door in their faces laughing.

He tapped the back of the truck twice, it began to drive off. He stood there, waving mockingly at the prisoners trapped in the back.

“So it begins,” he said to himself “so it begins...”