

The Villain in All of Us
A Short Story by M. E. Omori

Sebastian Crest

August 1, 2030

13:10

New York, New York

I'm looking outside my window. The streets are filled with people, chatter, and cars. The city's rustling without a trace of silence. The place never seems to stop. People are walking and walking, their eyes straight ahead. The paralysis in their eyes, their ignorance of the beauty of this world. The decision that crippled me. The decision they're taking for granted.

I bring my left hand out from my side and turn it until I see my palm. Immediately, I clench my hand into a fist and thrust it away from me. A bolt of lightning travels from my knuckles to the steel generator in the corner of the room. The generator rattles for a bit and then settles down. I hear footsteps approaching, so I run back to my work table and sit down. Without a second to spare, the door flies open.

A man in a white-collared shirt with a blue tie walks in. His shirt's been far too worn out, evident from the spot of brown that's forming beneath the shirt's front pocket. His brown

khaki pants are a bit too big on him, and my room starts to fill with the smell of heavy cologne and oil. It's David, my manager.

"Walker, I heard something in here. What's going on?"

"Nothing," I replied, "I'm just typing up the weekly budget sheet that you asked me to do."

He scans the room through his scratched-up glasses.

"Walker, if there's anything that's bothering you, just tell me, alright? Soon, one day, you'll be just like me, a manager at an established airline customer service office. You'll be swimming in power and riches."

He doesn't even notice me anymore; he's trapped in his own delusions of grandeur. "Yeah, you got it, boss."

As he starts closing the door, he stops and looks straight at me. "James, just don't fuck this up, kid. You're almost at the top." With that, he closes the door and walks away. I wait for a few seconds, until I can't hear any more of his footsteps. Then, I take both my hands and shoot lightning towards the generator. I don't stop. A steady stream starts to form from my hands to the generator. The stream rolls like the waves of the ocean, slowly and gracefully. I stop and sit back down. I chose this life for myself. No, they chose it for me. And I'll never forgive them.

Sebastian Crest

August 1, 2020

13:10

Elementalist HQ

“Sebastian, hurry up, you’re lagging us behind.”

“Just go on without me. I’ll catch up to you guys later.”

“You know we can’t, asshole. You’re the one who controls electricity. We have no fucking clue how to man this aircraft.”

I give Haley a smirk. “Ha, so I am the best elementalist then.”

“Whatever, sunshine. If thinking that helps you sleep at night.”

I finish tying my shoes and sprint towards the Jax. The Jax is the elementalist’s aircraft; it was designed using the Fantastic Four’s hovercraft as the prototype. It’s exactly like it, but instead of four different parts it can separate into 10 parts, one for each element. Once I’m near the Jax, I shoot jolts of electricity from under my shoes and make a huge leap into the Jax. I’m the captain, so I get the driver’s seat. In front of me are lights, panels, and charts that mean nothing. I remove the black latex gloves from my hands and place my hands on the flat surfaces beside me. In an instant, a stream of

yellow and white radiates from my hands and travels throughout the Jax. The electricity flows like veins in a body. I wait until everyone's in their respective seats. Finally, I shout the roll call, as the electricity begins to start up the Jax.

"Fire!"

"Present," says Sapphira.

"Hey, that's not how we agreed to respond to these role calls. Do what the fuck we agreed on," says Rocket.

"Fine," with a jab of her right fist, Sapphira expels a flame into the air.

"There we go," Jason adds while applauding.

"Water!"

"Here," and Marina creates a river of water above with a swipe of her left hand.

"Earth!"

Without a word, Devon extends both of his arms into the air and a boulder appears on top of us. After a few seconds, he clenches both hands and the boulder collapses into dust, hovering in the air.

"Air!"

"I," and Xin waves his left hand. A breeze flows in the garage and guides the dust away.

"Poison!"

Jeffrey doesn't say anything, but I can start to smell a foul scent. "Dammit, Jeff! Just make a puff of green smoke or something. I can't stand this shit!"

"If it pleases you, Grace."

"Light!"

"Right here," and Mason shoots a beam of light from his eyes to the ceiling.

"Still freaky as the first time," says Devon.

"Darkness!"

"I've been practicing, but here it goes." Grace shoots a beam of shadow from her eyes to the ceiling. She holds it for two, three seconds tops until it starts blinking and stops.

"Well, it was better than before," says Mason.

"Thanks."

"Nature!"

Atlee snaps her finger and the plant in the corner of the garage starts to grow and sprout.

"That's all you can do?" asks Marina.

Atlee snaps her other hand and the plant starts to grow even bigger. Vines start to grow from the plant's stem, and the petals start to enclose. Sharp yellow teeth appear to form inside this enclosure. The vines orient themselves to create two

arms, with six fingers on each arm. The plant yells out a vicious howl, “AWOOOOOO!”

Marina blink in amazement, “Point taken.”

Atlee smiles, and the plant begins to shrink back to its original form.

“Last but not least, metal!”

Moving her hands up, Haley opens the garage door. Rays of sunlight begin to enter the garage.

“Everyone wearing their seatbelts? We’re supposed to be showing an example for the kids, so please don’t make a fool of yourself in this trip.”

I get a few “yes,” but the people in the back can’t hear me. Haley helps out and attaches everyone’s seatbelt without moving a finger.

“Someone’s getting stronger.”

“Yeah, yeah. You don’t have to flatter me.”

I can feel heat entering my cheeks. Before Haley finds out that I’m blushing, the Jax powers up, and I take off.

Amanda Payne

August 1, 2020

13:40

New York, New York

“Hillary! You said you were going to be there!”

“I know. I know, but John just invited me over for dinner. And you know I can’t resist a man who can cook.”

“Dammit, I don’t want to be by myself. It’ll be too awkward.”

“It’ll be alright, Amanda. It’s just a formal dinner meeting.”

“That’s easy for you to say. I’m terrible at making small talk.”

“Ahahaha, you’ll be fine. Just introduce yourself to everyone. It’s all about networking. Besides, everyone else who’s going to be there are also rookies, and they’ll be scared shitless, just like you!”

“Wow, thanks for the vote of confidence.”

“Anyways, where are you right now? It sounds really busy in the background.”

“I’m waiting in line at The Halal Guys. You know how long the line can get, but I’ve been dying for a platter since watching the Food Network special on...”

“Amanda! What was that?”

“...”

“Amanda!”

“Sorry...something...bullets...running away...”

“Amanda, are you alright?”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine. I needed to find shelter. There were bullets and loud sounds. It’s okay though. I ran across the street. I’m not hurt. I’m here inside KFC, but there’s glass following from the sky.”

“Is it a terrorist attack?”

“I’m not sure. Most of communication is down here, so talking to you on my phone is a miracle. Are you near a television? Can you check the news?”

“Sure. Give me a second. Did everyone clear out of the streets?”

“Yeah, we’ve opened the doors. Everyone in here isn’t hurt.”

“Okay, all of media is saying it’s not a terrorist attack. But something did strike...wait, no.”

“What? What happened?”

“It’s the elementalists.”

“Why are they here? Aren’t they supposed to be flying to DC today?”

“Yeah, not anymore.”

“Why not?”

“They just crashed into Bank of America Tower.”

“Oh no.”

“What? Hillary, what’s going on?”

“Some of them are dead.”

“What? How?”

“They’re calling him, Agent Zero.”

Agent Zero

August 1, 2020

13:50

Bank of America Tower

“Is everyone alright?” Haley asks. Smoke and dust surround Haley, as she tries to get vision of the place.

“Yeah, still in one piece. Wait, hold on.” Sapphira snaps her right hand and a flame rests on top of her thumb. “Yup, in one piece.”

“What happened?” asks Mason.

“I don’t know. One minute we were hovering over New York, and the next thing I know the Jax starts malfunctioning, and we’re crashing down. Where are we?”

“Haley, I think we’re in the Bank of America Tower.”

“What makes you say that, Mason?”

Mason points his finger at one of the office rooms, or what’s left of it. In the room, there’s a huge banner with “Bank of America” that seems unscathed.

“Where are the others?” Sapphira asks.

A pile of concrete and rubble levitates above the ground and then slowly travels away from its source and is set down. Devon pops out of where the rubble just was.

“Devon, are you alright?” Sapphira asks as she walks towards him.

“Yeah, I’m fine. A few bruises, but nothing too bad.”

Haley and Mason group up with the two. Haley says, “Devon, use your kinesis and locate the others.”

“Sure, does anyone know...”

A black figure appears from the smoke. With a simple aim, he fires a gun and strikes Devon right in the temple.

“Devon! What the fuck!” Mason fires with arms an array of light to the figure. The figure elegantly dodges every attack.

“What the...”

Before Mason could finish his sentence, the black figure appears behind him and bashes his head with the gun. Mason tumbles forward, blood spewing from the back of his head. With a flick of her finger, Haley forces the gun out of the owner’s hand and throws it away into the rubble. Sapphira jumps in and exhales fire to the black figure. The figure evades the attack and jumps to the ceiling. Using the ceiling as a support, he lunges towards Sapphira with extraordinary speed. Sapphira flinches, but Haley creates a steel barricade around Sapphira. The figure ricochets off the barricade and now lunges towards Haley. Before the figure can get to her, steel supports wrap the figure’s feet and hold him to the ground.

“Who are you?”

The figure remains silent.

“I said, who the fuck are you?”

No words.

“Fine, I can figure it out myself.” As Haley approaches the figure, he starts nodding his head.

“Aww, what? The figure doesn’t want his toy mask to be removed?” A beep echoes throughout the office.

“What was that? Hey, what the fuck was that?”

Another beep. Haley tries to see through the smoke and finally notices. There’s a red light shining from the barricade she made for Sapphira. With each beep, the red light shines brighter.”

“No.” Haley tries to remove the bomb from the barricade, but the instant she tries to remove it with her kinesis, it detonates. The bomb looses out a deep hum. What’s left of the barricade is now another layer of the rubble. Haley removes the metallic protection she made for herself to protect from the explosion.

“Sapphira? Are you okay? Sapphira?”

No word.

A tear starts to form in the corner of Haley's eye. Before realizing, she directs her attention back to the figure, but the figure's gone. She sprints to Mason and tries to shake him awake.

"Mason, everything's going to be alright. Mason, just stay with me."

Mason looks at her and gives her a smile. "Stay honest." Then, he closes his eyes and breathes his final breath.

"No, no, no, no, no, no!"

With that final "no," she yells out in agony. And with it, a breath of fire.

Sebastian Crest

September 1, 2020

21:00

Elementalist HQ

We're seated around the HQ table for the first time since the incident two months ago. The table used to be surrounded by ten. Now, it's just the four of us. This so called Agent Zero has killed five of the elementalists. Haley said she saw the Agent himself take away Devon, Sapphira, and Mason. Xin and Marina died in the crash. Now, it's just me, Haley, Grace, and Jeff. Haley can control fire now. We don't know how, but we think it's because she unintentionally was the one who killed Sapphira. If this is true, then we know the Agent's motives. And we need to stop him.

"How are we supposed to stop someone who's hiding?"

"He's not hiding, Jeff," I reply, "he's practicing."

"What are you talking about?"

"What Sebastian's trying to say is that if our guess about the Agent's motive is correct, then he's practicing the elements as we speak."

“Haley’s right,” I add, “if our hypothesis is true, then he’s learning how to manipulate earth, air, nature, light, and water. All at the same time.

There’s a silence that fills the room. What used to be a room bundled with joy and gratitude is now filled with anguish and pain.

“What the fuck are we supposed to do? I hate sitting by and doing nothing,” says Jeff.

“As much as we want to do something, we can’t be rash about our decisions,” Haley replies, “people have been using the incident for propaganda. Remember we weren’t the only ones affected. Four thousand other people lost their lives, innocent lives. Now, the world’s taking about it. It’s bigger than 9/11.”

I direct my attention to Grace. She’s keeping to herself and staying silent. “Grace, are you alright?”

I resound the sentiment. “Grace, you good?”

“Grace, just fucking say something. You’re an elemental. You’re supposed to be a part of this meeting. You’re supposed to be helping us make a plan to resolve this issue. Stop being quiet, and start doing something, dammit.”

Haley and I look at Jeff in disbelief.

Grace looks at Haley. “Sorry, may I be excused?”

“Sure thing.”

Grace slowly walks over to the door and leaves.

“What the fuck was that?” I say to Jeff. “You know she’s sensitive to these things. There’s no reason to be an asshole when we’re all stressed.” I stand up and walk towards the same door. “I’m going to talk to her.”

“Whatever. I’m just giving it her straight. We’re all stuck in this together. It’s about time to take things seriously. And if you’re still stuck in emotions, then nothing’s going to be done. Fine. If you guys don’t want her to grow up, then fine. I’m heading to bed. Let me know when you guys actually want to do something.”

I close the door behind me and try to find where Grace went. After a few minutes of stumbling around in the hallways, I hear a faint sob. I turn two lefts and then a right and find Grace sitting alone by herself.

“Hey, how are you, kiddo?”

“Go away.”

“Don’t worry about me. Pretend that I’m not even here.”

After a minute of silence, Grace speaks up. “When I learned about my powers, I thought it would be cool, you know. I could be a real super hero, like all the comics I was reading at that time. I found you guys, other elementalists, and I knew it would

be great. And it was great! We were fighting against criminals and saving the world. But I never thought that...that..."

"That what?"

"That we would lose. It's the first time that we couldn't complete a task, and many people died. How is that possible?"

"Don't worry about it, kiddo. It wasn't your fault."

"But it was my fault! It's exactly my fault. Zero came and killed four of us. Why didn't he kill me? Was I not worthy? Was I just too weak that he didn't need crash to kill me?"

"Grace, don't think like that."

"But how can I not? If he didn't kill me, that mean's he didn't think I was a threat."

"Grace, stop it."

"No, you stop. You, Jeff, and Haley. All of you stop. Everyone in this world needs to stop. I...I...I just..."

Grace embraces me and sobs on my shoulder. With my left hand, I pat her back. And with my right, I support the back of her neck.

"Why couldn't I just die? Why couldn't I just be the one who didn't need to deal with all of this?"

"Shhh, it's going to be just fine, Grace. It's going to be just..."

With a loud bang, a cloud of smoke forms in the hallway. Something splits us apart, and I can't see where she went.

"Grace! Grace! Where are you?"

"Sebastian!" She's still crying. "Sebastian! Don't leave me! I don't want to die. Sebastian, please hel..."

"No! Grace." With my left hand, I send out an electrical impulse, just enough to force every single living being to pass out. Once the cloud dissipates, I can see Grace lying on the floor at the opposite end of the hallway. Immediately, I rush to her and shake her.

"No, no. Grace, it's going to be okay." She looks at me. Her eyes barely able to open.

"Why?"

"Why, what?"

"Why, why did..."

Then, she closed her eyes. And never opened them again.

Amanda Payne

October 14, 2020

20:30

Resistance Riot in New York, New York

“Down with the power! Down with the villains! Down with the power! Down with the villains!”

“What do we want?”

“Equal power!”

“When do we want it?”

“Right now!”

“Hillary, are you joining the riot?”

“Of course, I am. Aren’t you?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, if you’re not for us, then you’re definitely part of The Alliance. Are you siding with them?”

“No, of course not, I just mean...”

“You mean what? Ever since The Libration, you’re either part of the Resistance or part of the Alliance. And if you’re a part of the Alliance, then you support all the innocent killings that the Elementalists did.”

“But...”

“There are no ‘but’s’, Amanda. How can you not choose? Have the Alliance brainwashed you?”

“It isn’t that. It’s just that it wasn’t their fault. They were told a mission, and someone, Agent Zero, caused it to crash. If anything, it should be Agent Zero’s fault?”

“Are you kidding me? He did it to empower us, to show us that we don’t need to be oppressed by the Elementalists. He did it to help us into a better world.”

“Are you serious? He killed people, innocent people. It isn’t alright for the Elementalists to accidentally kill lives, but it’s perfectly fine for some advocate to kill off people to prove a point? It’s alright to call it a stupid name like “The Libration”? Where’s the logic in that?”

“Shut up, so you have brainwashed by The Alliance. You know what? If you don’t understand, then don’t talk to me. You clearly don’t know the truth.”

“How can you...”

She hung up.

Agent Zero

November 5, 2020

21:35

Jefferson George's room, Elementalist HQ

Agent Zero slides into Jeff's room through the window. With silence he takes a few steps until he is at his bedside. He pulls out a syringe from his belt and injects the liquids into Jeff. Jeff awakes and slaps the syringe away.

"What the fuck did put in me?"

With his right hand, Jeff creates a circular motion over the area of the injection. Liquids begin to pour out.

"So, poison. You thought you could outsm..."

Zero uppercuts Jeff and pushes him towards the wall. Jeff collides with the wall, and the impact creates an implant. Jeff waves air into his nose and blows a gust of arsenic. A thud hits the ground.

"Not easy to breathe in, isn't it?"

The cloud of poison begins to dissipate, but Zero's still standing up.

"But how?"

Zero starts to walk slowly towards Jeff. Jeff backs away until his back hits the wall. Suddenly, he slides down.

“Wait? What’s happening to me? Why can’t I feel my legs?”

Zero appears in front of him, with a gas mask put on.

“How are you always one step ahead? And how did you
paralyze me? Why Zero?”

For the first time, Zero speaks. “It’s not a zero; it’s an
omega. And I am the end.”

Haley Days

July 19, 2021

23:40

Pier #10 in the New York Harbor

“Honey, where are you taking me? Can’t I just take the damn blindfold off?”

Sebastian replied, “Hold on, for just one more minute.”

We walk a few meters before he says, “You can take them off now.”

I remove the blindfold from my head and see the New York skyline.

“It’s amazing. Why take me here?”

“Well, your birthday is tomorrow, and since you’ll be spending the entire day with your family, it would be great to have you for some part of it.”

I smile, and he hugs me from the back as we both stare off into the New York. “Everything’s peaceful.” I toss small metal from the ground to the waters below with a swipe of my right hand.

“It’s been awhile since we’ve used my powers. Ever since Jeff died and shutting down the Elementalist permanently, well, I don’t know.”

“What’s bothering you, Haley?”

“The riots stopped, and everything went back to normal, but at what cost?” I gulp. “I don’t know, Sebastian. Sometimes I wonder if what Zero did was ever right. Yeah, he stopped the riots and the insurgence, but he killed our friends, our closest friends. I just. I just don’t know. It can’t be right. He killed our friends! But this peace. Sebastian, I don’t know how to feel. Do you ever feel the same way?”

Sebastian is ignoring my question and is focused on the New York skyline. “Haley, I have to show you something.” He takes my hand and guides me to down to the ocean shore.

“Please don’t overreact.”

“Overreact to what?”

Sebastian clasps his hands together and slowly parts them away. In sync, the ocean starts to divide into two separate parts, with land beginning to surface between them.

“Whoa, when could you manipulate water? How did you...”

The world collapses on me. I take a few steps back and fall down.

“No. It can’t be. It was you? You’re Zero?”

“It’s Omega; I don’t understand how the media didn’t see that. But yes, I’m Zero. Please, understand that I did this for the better good.”

“For the better good?! You killed our friends. Not only that, you tricked all of us. You tricked me. You lied to me. How could you do such a thing?”

“You need to realize, Haley. The world was getting out of control. The Resistance never started after The Libration; it started way before that. It was going to happen either way, with or without the crash. I just sped things up.”

“But why did you kill our friends? How could you kill them?”

“The crash wasn’t supposed to kill them. I swear! It was only supposed to send a message. When Marina and Xin died, I began to control the earth around. It was the reason why I survived. That’s how I got rid of the rubble on top of me. But then I realized it was dangerous. If someone in the elementalists found out and took away people’s abilities, the world would go into tyranny. I had to stop it there and now.”

“No, they were our friends! We could trust them!”

“To you, they were. We can manipulate the elements, but in the wrong hands havoc would ensure. I couldn’t risk that chance.”

“Then why didn’t you kill me with the rest? Why let me live when I had to see all of them die? Why save me for last?”

“Because I truly cared about you, Haley. You don’t remember, but you were the only one who talked to me and cared about me. While everybody else was talking about saving the world and becoming a super hero, I just wanted to hide and be a normal person, a normal citizen. You were the one who motivated me and helped me. I couldn’t kill you.”

“So what? You killed everyone else? How were you never caught? With Grace? With Jeff? How didn’t the surveillance cameras catch you?”

“You need to understand that I was the strongest among all of us. I created a magnetic field with electric currents using my hands to disrupt the cameras. That’s why it was all static.”

“And Jeff? How did you paralyze him? He’s immune to poison.”

“Our brain is a very powerful tool. It’s made up of electrical impulses that guides our nerves and muscles what to do. I simply severed the electrical impulses that guided his motor reflexes.”

“What, you monster.”

“Haley, just listen out. It’s all over now. We can live together and in this new peace. We don’t have to worry about someone abusing the elements because we won’t be able to use it again.”

“No, no. You’re a liar. You abused your elements to get what you want, not peace.”

“Look around, Haley. There is peace. No more riots. No more insurgence. If I didn’t stop it then, it would have grown too big to stop.”

I can’t listen to him anymore. The lies. The deceit. I levitate a metal pipe and throw it straight at him. He forces a strong air current and suppresses the pipe before it hits him.

“Haley, please, try to understand.”

I create a metallic encasing around his feet and his arms, forcing him to lay down with the weight of the metal.

“I’m stopping you now, Sebastian.”

“I don’t think so.”

A shock enters in my back, and I can feel it sliver from the bottom of my back and shoot up to my brain. “What are you doing?” Without my control, I wave my hand in front of him and remove the metal encasings.

“Haley, I told you. I’m the strongest of us because I can control the brain. Don’t you get it? I was gifted with electricity because I was the one who was supposed to make a difference. You nine just needed to keep me in check, but I realized that it was I who needed to keep you guys in check.”

“So what are you going to do? Kill me? The last and only person whoever cared about you?”

“No, you’re going to kill yourself and reveal to the world that the last Elementalist is dead.”

“We’re at the pier. No one’s going to know.”

“Honey, we’re not at the pier. We’re at the place where it all started.”

My vision begins to blur, and a sting starts to retract from my eyes. After a few seconds, my vision starts to clear, and I can see the cars and buildings below.

“How did you you?”

“Like I said, I can control the brain. I can manipulate your visual and audio information. I can let you believe what I want you to believe.”

“Then why not just brainwash me. Why kill me?”

“Because to bring universal peace, the world needs to see Haley Days dead. The world needs to see you, controlling all the elements, dying. And I intend to do that, right now.”

Sebastian shoots a jolt of electricity from his palm to the buildings around him. He releases a gas of poison and uses a current of air to move it to the ground below. He chips away boulders and cement from the building, falling on helpless citizens below.

“Now, you must fall and die.”

“Sebastian, please, you don't have to do this.”

“Haley, you need to understand, this has to happen to achieve universal and harmonious peace. It's going to hurt me, more than it's going to hurt you.”

He pushes me, and I free fall to the people blow.

Agent Omega

July 20, 2021

12:00

Bank of America Tower

I stabilize the connection with Haley as she falls. I can't release the grip. She'll be able to live by encasing herself with metal. I can't let that happen. With a last electrical impulse, I send her a message. "I love you, please forgive me."

I don't feel the connection anymore. An emptiness inside starts to grow, and I sob. By myself. Alone.

No words.

Sebastian Crest

August 1, 2030

14:00

New York, New York

David strides into my office.

“Walker, did you finish the budget. It’s already 2.”

I snap out of my remembering. “Sorry, I just got caught up by something important.”

“Important? What’s important is that damn budget? Now give it me.”

I look away from me and send an electricity to the entire New York City. I want someone, anyone, to be grateful for the sacrifices I had to make. Nothing. Not a single person remembers the incident.

I look at David and sweep him off his feet.

“How the fuck are you doing this? Wait. No. You were all supposed to be dead.

Yeah, now he remembers. With a snap, I electrocute him, making him feel all the pain I had to suffer for the last ten years. All the pain that I had to keep to myself. To create true peace, everyone has to feel the pain I felt. Now, I must do the same. To everyone.

“I am the end.”