Alec Kownacki

*Perfection, of a kind, was what he was after,*

*And the poetry he invented was easy to understand;*

*He knew human folly like the back of his hand,*

*And was greatly interested in armies and fleets;*

*When he laughed, respectable senators burst with laughter,*

*And when he cried the little children died in the streets.*

**Velucia-187**

I

Detective Zaine and his partner, Officer Roaneld, rushed to their cop car to respond to the distress signal coming from 2nd and Trappola. Already responding to a call at the same intersection a day earlier, puzzled the two.

“What do you think it is now? A kidnapper or another gay rights march,” asked Officer Roaneld.

“Well, since I am open to equality, I hope it’s a gay rights march,” Detective Zaine responded.

“What are you a fag too, Zaine?”

“No. I just solely believe everybody, no mater what color or gender you prefer, should all have equal rights. Where does it say that gays can’t have rights? Except for the bible, which could have easily been made up,” Zaine answered Roaneld’s remark.

“Alright detective don’t get all preachy on me.”

The two went over 3rd street and noticed not a single soul was walking on the sidewalk. Heading towards 2nd and Trappola, even store clerks were not to be seen. An eerie guise crept over the slow moving cop car as it approached the notorious intersection. Zaine and Roaneld got out of the car and their hands on their guns.

“Zaine and Roaneld at 2nd and Trappola, I repeat, Zaine and Roaneld at 2nd and Trappola,” Zaine announced through the radio.

The two policemen walked around the intersection not exactly knowing what to look for. Zaine yelled several hello’s with no answer. With no clue where the signal came from or why, Zaine and Roaneld started to walk back to the car. As Roaneld turned his back to an alley, a sound came from within.

“Hold up chief,” Roaneld demanded.

He walked slowly towards the alley to see a stray cat playing with some garbage.

“Damn cat, now is not the time,” Roaneld scolded.

The two sat back in the cop car and Zaine shifted to drive.

“Free Velucia,” screamed a mysterious voice.

Heavy gunfire coated the cop car and Zaine and Roaneld ducked beneath the dash. Gunfire coming from the rooftops of surrounding buildings, the policemen were trapped in their car.

“Backup! Requesting backup,” Zaine shouted into the radio.

The gunfire eased and Roaneld jumped out of the car and sprinted towards the alley. Zaine, questioning Roaneld’s sanity, stayed frozen in the cop car. He rolled down his window and shot a couple bullets toward the closest rooftop. The detective eventually crawled out of the car and used the car as a shield as he fired back and forth with the gunman.

“Two down Detective,” yelled Roaneld from the alley.

“Get back here officer!”

The two reunited against one side of the cop car still taking gunfire. Zaine and Roaneld started to pick the gunmen off, eventually getting to one left.

“I’m out man, I’m out,” said Roaneld regarding ammunition.

“Shit,” Zaine agreeing with him.

II

“Where’s our backup,” Roaneld questioned.

When he asked, gunfire came from the opposing direction, hitting the last gunman. Two squad cars came dashing through the street stopping at Zaine and Roaneld’s car. Four police officers jumped out of the cars with their fingers on the triggers of their firearms. Officer Proctor and Private Finly searched through the alley where Roaneld hid from the torrential gunfire. Inspector Week and Detective Proman went to uncover the dead gunman and took samples for future investigation.

When the policemen returned to the police station Commissioner Apani and Lieutenant Bile were already waiting for their arrival.

“Alright, tell me what happened,” Commissioner Apani asked.

“Roaneld and I were responding to a distress call downtown when we were blindsided with an ambush. Four gunmen on the rooftops almost sent us to the sky Commissioner,” Zaine explained the situation.

“The thing that stuck out to me was that one of the gunman shouted “Free Velucia” before the firing started,” Roaneld added.

Lieutenant Bile quickly and suspiciously turned around and walked to his office while Commissioner Apani engaged in the story.

“Well, we’ll keep this on the down low until Week and Proman finish their investigation,” Apani stated.

“But sir, what about the “Free Velucia” statement, doesn’t that sound like a call to arms?” Zaine asked.

“Our great city of Velucia is as free as it ever has been, Detective. I don’t think we should worry about that.”

Commissioner Apani starred at Zaine for a few seconds before returning to his office. When Apani walked into his office Bile was sitting in front of his desk and Apani slowly lowered his blinds.

III

Detective Zaine sat at his cubicle looking over the results from Inspector Week’s investigation on the four gunmen. It all seemed like the usual: escaped convict, accused murderer and theft, but, the last gunman had an interesting aspect to his portfolio. An Ex-Cop. Zaine dove more into the investigation and uncovered the name of the Ex-Cop. Leonard Bile. Zaine gained a perplexed look on his face as he read more on the profile. Is this just mere coincidence? Does Lt. Bile know about this? Is there any relation? Numerous more questions surfaced in Zaine’s mind and as a detective he has to pursue every single one.

“Hey Roany, come look at this,” Zaine asked Roaneld

Roaneld glanced over the paperwork and wasn’t impressed until his eyes scanned over the name of Leonard Bile.

“What the hell is this Z?”

“Not a clue, but I think we need to investigate this more. I’m not going against the Lieutenant, but Bile is not a common last name. It’s more than likely a coincidence, but there’s still room for possibility. That’s why it’s more than likely, not it is,” Detective Zaine explained.

“I agree, but Z, if people find out we’re questioning the higher power, don’t ya think questions would be thrown around about us?”

“Not everyone can be trusted, question everyone and everything around you. Don’t be succumbed by a mere title and judge your trust off of that title, even the All Mighty has his flaws.”

IV

“Hey Z look at this,” Roaneld told.

Roaneld held a flier stating “Join the force” with three valiant policemen in action. Detective Zaine became confused for the police force now has reached capacity. With the addition of newcomer Private Finly there was more than enough police officers at the station and on duty.

“I’m talking to Apani,” Zaine stated.

“I wouldn’t do that chief, Proctor asked him about and Apani ripped him a new one for being “nosey” and “out of line”.”

“That makes absolutely no sense, we are the police force, we are capacity, and no one else can join even if they wanted to.”

Zaine charged towards Commissioner Apani’s office and laid his hand on the door knob. At that moment, everyone’s radio went off requesting backup for Officer Proctor. Zaine and Roaneld along with Inspector Week and Detective Proman ran to their cars and drove off to help Officer Proctor and Private Finly.

They arrived at the location where Private Finly requested backup. There was no one around. Zaine observed a graffiti painting of a saying that read “Free Velucia”. Detective Zaine insisted that everyone had their guns loaded and locked as they walked down a side alley. A disturbance came from the darkness in front of them and they all raised their firearms. It was Finly.

“Finly! What the hell happened here?” Inspector Week asked.

“Ambush, we were Ambushed by a group of radicals screaming “Free Velucia”,” Finly replied.

“Tell us the rest later, where‘s your partner, Proctor?” Roaneld asked.

“Down the alley, they took him. I tried to get him but one of them knocked me out cold as I was running after him.”

Private Finly hobbled back to the cars, Week and Proman stood watch and Zaine and Roaneld continued on down the alley. They eventually reached an opening within the bowels of the surrounding buildings.

“Alright Proctor, a suspicious conscience is not always the way to go,” said a familiar voice.

“Go to hell,” Proctor sternly replied.

Detective Zaine and Officer Roaneld listened from around the corner and didn’t dare watch what was going to happen.

“We all had high hopes for you my boy, but one vacuous question ruined those hopes. Why couldn’t you just let those recruitment fliers be.”

‘Wait a minute” Zaine thought to himself, “who else would know about the question he asked?”

“Guys what’s going on down there?” Commissioner Apani yelled over the radio.

The gunman paused their speech and looked for where the talking came from.

As soon as Zaine and Roaneld were about to jump into the opening, a gunshot went off. Zaine saw Officer Proctor fall to the ground with blood pouring out of his skull. Roaneld attempted to chase the gunmen but they ran away before the two police men could see which way they went.

V

Officer Proctor’s funeral was a couple days after the incident. Detective Zaine, even at a peaceful ceremony, had possibilities and hunches flying through his conscience. Mayor Oublieux was in attendance and gave a speech about how honorable being a policeman is. After Officer Proctor was lowered into his final resting place, Commissioner Apani and Mayor Oublieux conversed—a conversation that Zaine wanted to hear. Zaine watched as Commissioner Apani told the Mayor and respectable representatives of the city old cop stories and made them burst with laughter. He finally walked up to the two and asked what everybody was thinking: what is going to happen with these Free Velucia radicals. Mayor Oublieux ended the conversation and walked away to his car.

“Now is not the time detective, this is a peaceful time. Not a time to think about more death,” Commissioner Apani mentioned.

“So you’re saying we are going to go after these guys?” Detective Zaine questioned.

The Commissioner looked at Zaine with a blank expression.

“The man who is behind this nonsense will be taken care of, okay Detective?”

Zaine, unsatisfied with the answer, walked away full of sorrow for his fallen comrade. Roaneld and Zaine sat back in their car and drove back to the station.

“I smell some double crossing bullshit here Detective,” Roaneld spoke.

“What do you mean Roany?”

“The Commish…he doesn’t seem fazed at all. One of his cops got murdered in cold blood and he’s out there feeding the mayor and his subjects war stories and forcing them to laugh.”

“I felt the same suspicion and those fliers that are hanging around, how convenient that they go up a day before the murder.”

“And that voice in the alley…sounded a lot like the...”

“Lieutenant?”

Both of them looked at each other, thinking the same thing. They walked up to the door at the station and received fliers for a march on the city council building for equal rights for all: homosexuals, African Americans and women. They took the fliers and headed inside. They headed straight for Private Finly’s cubicle to finally hear what exactly happened on that sorrowful day.

“Alright, we were responding to a call at 4th and Foster for a small disturbance during gender equality rally,” Finly told, “We stepped out of the car and instantly saw a robber rob one of the protesters and run into the alley. So as cops should, we ran after the guy. Not knowing it was a trap.”

“Keep going Finly,” Roaneld requested.

“Sorry, we ran into the alley about halfway to that opening when we were ambushed from above. Gunmen all around us, we took cover and one of the guys took Proctor and as I got up to chase him I got clocked right in the back of the head. And the rest, you guys know.”

“Thanks Finly,” Zaine said.

The two walked back to their computers with an empty feeling inside, not knowing where to go on their secret investigation.

“Hey guys,” Inspector Week oddly said.

“What’s up Week?”

Uh, one the guys went on a response call for a protest that got out of hand and called for backup. Do you guys mind if I tag along? I’ve been listening to your guys’ hunches and I have a theory.”

“What is it, tell us.”

“I’m not telling until I know it’s true, but if it is, this city is going to need some help.”

VI

“Ya know the Commish is getting pretty pissed with all the backup calls we’re all calling for,” Roaneld said.

“As long as we get the job done, why should he care how?” Zaine questioned.

Detective Zaine, Officer Roaneld and Inspector Week all arrived at the location where the backup call was issued. Again, there was no one around but fliers floating around for the protest that was happening. All of them questioned where all the protesters went and more importantly where were the other cops.

“My theory is looking promising,” Inspector Week added.

The empty cop car from the other pair of officers made the policemen question even more where they had went. Inspector Week, as his title included, inspected the car to see if there was any clues about the missing policemen. As Week looked inside the car, Zaine started to hear a slight and slow beeping noise. He asked Roaneld if he heard what he was hearing and Roaneld replied with a confused no.

“Hey Week, can you step away for a minute,” Zaine advised.

“Just a minute, I see something.”

The beeping grew louder and faster. Roaneld then looked right at Zaine and they both yelled for Week to get away from the…

“Shit, Shit, Shit. Week! Get him out of there!” Roaneld yelled for Zaine’s help.

“Week hold in there buddy, just hold on, we’ll get you out,” Zaine plead.

The two policemen pulled Inspector Week from the fiery car and dragged him to a far away distance.

“Week, come on man talk to us,” Zaine demanded.

Week slightly opened his eyes and looked towards Zaine.

“My...theory. I was right, I was right,” Week said softly.

“Tell us Week, come on,” Roaneld demanded.

“Every time there is a protest…a cop dies. You guys were ambushed and they tried to kill you. Proctor was killed and now me.”

“Come on man, stay with us,” Roaneld said with a sorrowful voice.

“I can’t…you guys know, I never was the strongest guy. Who ever is doing this is using protests to stir up anger and violence and one by one picking off the police force,” Week announced with his last breath.

Zaine decided to take Week back to the station immediately and worry about the missing cops later. He charged into the doors screaming for help and others came to assist him. Commissioner Apani stood there watching over the anarchy of carrying Week back to the medical room. Apani asked numerous times what has happened and Zaine starred every time those blasted words rolled off his tongue.

“Another one of your cops are dead and all you care about is what happened? Someone is murdering all of us,” Zaine said with animosity.

Apani took Zaine into his office and sat him down.

“Look, we have new recruits coming in to fill those spots so that’s why I don’t seem as worried. I only really care about the better of Velucia,” Apani preached.

“Your city is tearing itself apart with these protests and Free Velucia radicals, sir,” Zaine responded.

“Let me let you in on a little secret, Oublieux is almost out; perfect timing for a new leader right?”

“Yeah, but he can run for one more term.”

“Nay, Oublieux is losing control of this city and the population wants him out, that’s where I come in. I already control the majority of the things there are to control in this city so why not just give me the title.”

Zaine inferred what the Commissioner was going to say before the words came out. When the Commissioner spoke, Zaine paid no attention to Apani’s mayor aspirations. Zaine simply stood up and walked out of the office with disgust for he felt betrayed. He walked over to Roaneld and told him about the Commissioner’s hopes of becoming mayor and “leading” the city. Roaneld found this even more suspicious that the Commissioner doesn’t care about his own police force. Apani only grew angrier with every backup call that was made. A connection was made within Roaneld’s cranium.

“Okay, tell me if this sounds completely out of the ball park, Apani and or Bile are recruiting new police officers to revolt against the mayor,” Roaneld explained, “and they’re using protests to stir up violence and what other way to completely rid loyal subjects? Kill them.”

Zaine sat there for a minute to let him mind take in the newly found theory. He thought about what Week said and all of the suspicion around Bile and Apani.

“For as radical as that sounds, it makes sense,” Zaine agreed.

“I mean why else would Apani not care about his fallen men and only care about the mayor job?”

“So, is Apani the one killing all these cops? Is he behind the Free Velucia radicals?”

Right when Roaneld was about to answer a call came in from Private Finly and Detective Proman on a run for another rally that got out off hand. The two looked at each other with urgent expressions and then sprinted to their cars.

VII

They sped well over the speed limit to reach Finly and Proman. Again and like Week’s theory, there was no one around. An empty cop car sat in front of an alley and Zaine and Roaneld quickly loaded their guns. As they stepped into the alley rapid gunfire commenced toward the policemen. They took cover behind a dumpster and didn’t dare to call for more backup. They spotted Private Finly ahead of them running towards the gunfire. Zaine and Roaneld yelled for Finly to take cover and wait for them to advance. With yelling not working, they ran after Finly and…

“Finly!” Zaine yelled.

“God damnit!” Roaneld added.

Finly fell to the ground. The thing that truly startled the two policemen was who was in front of the falling Finly with the gun that shot Officer Finly. Detective Proman. Proman stood there and watched as his fellow officer fell to the ground with his bullet in Finly’s chest. Zaine and Roaneld’s face became blank and their blood began to boil.

“You son of a bitch,” Zaine screamed.

“Free Velucia,” Proman stated.

Roaneld shot at Proman but the elusive cop murderer took cover before the bullet reached him. With the rest of gunmen dead, all there was left was Zaine, Roaneld and Proman. They exchanged gunfire for an extended time until Roaneld finally hit Proman’s hand. Proman fell to the ground exposing him to the others.

“You sly son of a bitch,” Roaneld said.

Proman writhed on the ground, begging for mercy.

“Why,” Zaine asked, “why were you behind these killings? Murdering your own kind, why were you fueling the revolt?”

Proman chuckled, “If you two don’t know who the real person behind this is by now, this city deserves a revolt.”

Zaine and Roaneld looked at each other. Zaine raised his gun and with confusion he debated if killing Proman right then and there was the right thing to do.

“You wouldn’t kill me, you’re too soft. You always side with the lower of the population: women, gays and blacks. You’re weak. This is why the man wanted us out. He wanted a new force to rebuild this city and I hopped on that train as soon as possible. You two are as dead as me.”

Right then, Zaine pulled the trigger proving to the now deceased Proman that he wasn’t weak. It was a personal reason why he pulled the trigger. Pride and strength. Roaneld looted Proman to see if he had any valuables on him that could help with their investigation. He found a key that looked similar to the one of Commissioner Apani’s. They quickly sped back to the station and went to Apani’s office.

They noticed he wasn’t there so they went down to the vault (where no one could go except for Commissioner Apani). The key fit and the door opened. Shelves upon shelves of weapons and firepower were stashed in the vault.

“Seems like the Commish is greatly interested in firepower, ay?” Roaneld commented.

“What do we do now, Proman wasn’t behind all of this, he was only apart of it,” Zaine questioned.

“I think our answer is here Detective, either the Commish or Bile.”

“But why would one want this much firepower? We’re the only ones left, what could they use this for?”

“Possibly a large assault or attack?”

Zaine thought for a minute but then remembered that flier that was given to them by those protesters a few days ago. He figured it out.

VIII

“A while back the Commish pulled me in his office and told me his mayor aspirations, remember?” Zaine told.

“Yes,” Roaneld answered.

“He seemed jealous of the mayor and had such anger with him. So I think Apani or Bile are going to use this Equal Rights March to go after the mayor. I mean why else have these weapons and remember what Week said, whenever there is a protest a cop dies. In this case it’s the mayor.”

“When’s the march?”

“Today at 3:35 PM, we’re in luck that we figured this out right now.”

They both grabbed extra firearms and drove to the city council building where the mayor was holding a meeting. The parked the car and stood on the steps in front of the building waiting for the march to arrive.

Two hours passed and the march finally reached the building with more people than Zaine and Roaneld had thought. They both thought where to go from there and what to do. “Just wait,” they both thought until a suspicious bystander entered the bowels of the march. The Free Velucia scream was belted out and radicals stormed the March; burning Gay Rights flags and destroying banners that held inspirational quotes. Perfect chaos broke loose and Zaine and Roaneld still waited for the assassin to run up the steps into the building.

“Assassin spotted Z,” Roaneld announced.

“Alright let’s go,” Zaine demanded.

“No, I’ll stay out here and make sure no others go in there to ambush you.”

Zaine gave Roaneld a nod and ran in after the assassin. He entered the building with adrenaline pumping through his veins like gasoline powering a car. He searched every room for the meeting and looked especially for the mayor. With hope being lost he opened the final door and saw three older men standing within the room. He named them off in his head: Mayor Oublieux, Head Secretary John Gills and Lieutenant Bile. As soon as Zaine stepped in the room, Bile shot both of them in the back of their skulls. Zaine couldn’t even reach for his gun and hope to shoot Bile first.

“Stop!” Zaine yelled, “Why are you doing this?”

Bile smirked and starred at Zaine.

“Quit asking a question you already know the answer to. Power. He who wishes to be obeyed must know how to control. This man, lost control. Look outside.”

“You stirred this up, not them!”

“We all have something to fight for Detective, but some of us need a little push.”

“You’re fueling this fire, they just want to express their beliefs and go home to their families with no risk in doing so.”

“There’s no fun in that now is there. We successfully took over this city with the city itself helping us. The Mayor was too oblivious to see this silent uprising and that is the very reason why he had to be ousted. A miracle man is what I am if you ask me.”

“Vile is what you are. What do you expect to do after this? Tell all of Velucia that you killed the mayor and expect them to follow you?”

“Not me, Detective, him”

Lieutenant Bile pointed right behind Zaine as Commissioner Apani walked into the room.

IX

A bullet left Apani’s gun that he was holding and struck Lieutenant Bile in the forehead. The fire of the gun startled Zaine and seeing Bile fall to the floor made him jump even more.

“So, shall we have a seat Detective?” Apani strangely asked.

They both sat down slowly and on edge. Zaine looked around to see if any other person was in the room before he talked.

“Finally, after weaseling out all the cubs, the momma bear shows herself,” Zaine said.

“Don’t be foolish, you knew all along Zaine. You just couldn’t say it with all the now deceased cops around in fear of being shunned,” Apani stated.

“I had no direct motive to think it was you.”

Commissioner Apani chuckled, “Right, it’s not like I said in front of you that Oublieux is a coward and I want his job, or did I? I don’t remember.”

“Oh no, you did. Loud and clear. But, I have a question for you Apani: What do you expect the public to say to this? Do you expect them to follow a tyrant?”

“My dear boy, the public shall not be difficult to control. Look at them now, fighting for their own beliefs. You see, why end racial or gender inequality? Everyone is fighting each other, not the cause, but each other and they are leaving *us*, the higher leaders, alone. They are occupied with their petty crusades while we sit here and puppet their every move. Giving people something to fight for will force them to fight to the death and simply leave *us* to control them.”

Zaine sat and listened to Apani’s lesson of how easy controlling the masses can be.

“I know human folly like the back of my hand Detective; I know how people work and what motivates them to the extremes. Breaking a man can be as easy as breaking plastic. You bend it, break down the atoms within, feel the heat rise within its being and then, broken.”

“You see that’s where you’re wrong, you can’t break a man the way you do a dog or horse, the more you beat a man, the taller he stands. If you beat us down, we will always find a way to get back up Commissioner. It’s human instinct.”

They both sat there starring back at each other waiting for the other to make a move. Commissioner Apani stood up and walked to the window to observe the continuing riot. Zaine watched his every move.

“You’ve done a stellar job here Detective. Plotting my every move and figuring out what exactly I was doing. Now, comes the time of one last victim.”

“And it’s you,” Roaneld announced.

Zaine turned around to see Roaneld standing there with his gun pointing right at his chest. Zaine felt sick, betrayed, disgusted. He had words to say and questions to ask, but he knew they would not matter in five minutes when he would be laying on the floor with blood oozing from his chest.

But something caught Zaine. A wink. Roaneld winked at Zaine, perhaps signaling a ploy. Zaine caught on and winked back.

“Ah, Roaneld, I knew you’d follow soon enough,” Apani stated.

While Apani was spewing his speech, Zaine quickly ducked as Roaneld fired. Four bullets struck Apani in the chest pushing him backwards and to the floor. Zaine immediately sprang up and gave Roaneld a hug of thanks. The two walked outside to calm down the riot and once it was calm they returned to the council building to clean up the bodies.

Roaneld went to Apani’s room and Zaine went to where Bile and the mayor had been shot. Only something was missing. A body. But what replaced the body was fake blood makeup, a cap gun and a note stating:

*Riddle me this, two vile humans, two brilliant minds, two incredible plans and one simple wish: Control.*