

At that moment an uproar from out on the street had each and every one of them jerking their heads towards the window. Something had obviously happened to renew the crowd's vigour. This wouldn't be something they'd want to miss, therefore it was as one hurried collective that the trio, Devon, police and even the Calverts came together from where they'd respectively been stood in the house to barrel towards the door, the officers managing to push their way in front.

Once outside, peering over the heads of the rabble, it was soon evident what the matter was. One of the Naemods, the one who had previously been leading the riot, had exited the church and was coming down the path, a metal box carried in his arms. Already the other police officers on the scene were coordinating keeping the residents where they were and issuing a demand that the approaching man stay put in turn. Before the crowd could bunch in as their anger led them to want to strike back at the cause of their distress (only to be subsequently held at bay by those representing the law), the trio managed to glimpse that the Naemod did indeed stop, although the timing may have been coincidental.

Casting his gaze to either side of himself, gauging the necessary angles and measurements, Leonard twisted a pop-out dial on the top of his machine. Believing the settings to be correct, he only spared a second to savour the power he thus held over them...not that he didn't have power the rest of the time...but this simple motion would nonetheless be a decisive undertaking. He pressed down on the dial.

From slits along the sides of the box escaped what looked like thousands of flying insects, shooting off to form a circular wall around the church with Leonard at its edge. There was plenty of space between each of the hovering black drones once they'd settled, yet the barrier was still clear. With these gaps in mind, some onlookers correctly came to the conclusion that this must not have been the final stage, thus one policeman was driven to leap just in time between them so as to be on the criminals' side before the opportunity was sealed off. As it was, only the heel of his shoe got singed as the drones cracked open, spewing perpetual fountains of flames out into the air around them. In one instant it was like someone had switched on a second Sun right in the heart of this village, making up for the lowering one in the sky. Despite the drones' tiny sizes, it didn't seem that they were going to stop burning any time soon. On top of this, while what they formed was a mere wall with no form of roof to prevent any entry from above (were such a feat possible), the lower hanging branches of a number of trees on the church grounds were ignited in the process.

There were screams from many of the faces lit up by the blaze. Not all of them had realised that the eruption wasn't spreading. But regardless of whether they saw the reality of the situation or not, a good number were already darting in retreat to their homes to make use of any water-carrying vessels they could find on such quick notice. It was a testament to the unity of the people of this village that they would take such swift and proactive actions, even if ultimately it would prove to be no more than a

gesture of that unity. Any bucket-loads of water that made it to the church grounds were completely ineffectual at dousing.

“There’s a school down the road,” a pale Bree proclaimed. “They should have some fire extinguishers.”

Hearing the woman’s words, Reynolds restated this fact to some of the other officers attempting to quell the situation, the ones who weren’t calling for the fire services or on the radio with their superiors, issuing them to go find said precautionary aids. When they would return their efforts would similarly be proven useless. This defence would not be one to be so easily taken down.

“What do we do?” Eve asked in horror.

Devon shook his head, “I have no idea.”

“But it must be Naemod-made, right?”

“Okay, yes, I helped with the assembly, and I know how to work the casing; that’s the easy part. I was never told enough to let me guess how the actual ammunition could be counteracted.”

On the other side of the flames Leonard put down the cuboid machine, its job done, freeing himself up to fully turn to the policeman to his right. The shock of the combustion had prevented said policeman from doing anything between his leap and now, at which stage it was hence the Naemod’s stare that kept him still doing nothing after that. Leonard didn’t even have to say the words ‘You asked for it’.

The crowd gave a collective exclamation of horror as they saw, through the obstruction of the flames, the Naemod strike the policeman, not once but over and over again, each time with the same powerful fist, each time too soon to allow for any sort of retaliation. They could only watch as the pale intruder in their village beat the poor officer to the ground, only to lose interest and begin to walk away. If only the man had chosen to lie motionless with his injuries. But he moved, trying to pick himself up again so as to do his duty in restraining the hooligan, thus leading his opponent to finish the job, this because he could rather than due to any sort of mania this time around.

From where they stood the youths didn’t have the best view of Leonard’s assault, therefore the three of them ended up being more inclined to watch with apprehension the slow spread of the amber lightshow along the tree branches. As well as this however Jimmy also found himself glancing at Cary, especially at how she was standing herself, with her phone by her side tilted such that it was almost as if the screen was intentionally pointed for him to best see. He wasn’t quite sure why he thought this, but held as it was he could easily imagine a string of text notifications appearing at the top of it such as a self-proclaimed personification of popularity like Cary would surely be receiving on any other day. This in turn led to another thought whose wildness took Jimmy by surprise. He didn’t give it time for consideration though, for his body was already running with the notion. In a flash the boy had grabbed the phone from its

owner's clutches and was scampering off, his small stature allowing him to better manoeuvre through the rows of onlookers. As he went he brought up the camera on the device and began snapping whatever pictures he could get of the unnatural flames, the images' resolution thankfully good enough to also pick up the floating black dots that were the sources of all this.

In front of the crowd, looking through the conflagration, Leonard jeered, casually wiping his bloody knuckles off against his side, spreading the stains of a lesson that had had to be taught. The humans had to learn who was in charge. This had simply been a chore of giving them a demonstration. But what was this? Between the fixated adults was emerging the youngest of the humans present in that old prison of a house. He had a phone in his hand, yet unlike others of his kind his eyes weren't glued to it. They instead met his, the boy having chanced upon stumbling out almost exactly in line with him. With there being no way of reaching the child Leonard elected to glower down at him, wanting to nevertheless convey his disdain. Those watery eyes didn't waver, so they would continue to stand as they were, facing off on either side of the barrier.

The staring match was broken by Cary taking a firm hold of Jimmy's shoulder to wheel him away from Leonard like a nervous mother guiding her child from the window of an unsettled predator's enclosure at a zoo. None of the residents around them took particular interest in their passing between them in either direction; they were too busy milling in front of the stable inferno or rushing to get more water, despite the fact that it clearly wasn't having any effect.

[REMOVED FOR SPOILERS]

While he usually would have been happy to have had someone explain a situation to him, Jimmy felt this was one time that he had to put his foot down, "What else do we do? Nothing works. Those people are trapped in there now. Philip's gone and Devon can't think of anything, so we need someone else smart enough to think of something. Eve, didn't you say Philip wanted us specifically to fix this?"

She shook her head, "We can still go to Devon and..."

"It's your phone," Jimmy prompted Cary. "What do you want to do with it?"