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Copyright: The *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* characters and concept belong to James Cameron and Josh Friedman. However, I own the plot and other characters.

Notices: This story contains violence and sexual content.

Notes: This story picks up in Season 2 from the television show and also takes a few liberties.

Summary: Sarah Connor and Derek Reese are on a mission but are unexpectedly held prisoners until John and Cameron show up. While the Connors and Derek make an escape, Cameron holds off the enemy until Sarah returns to help Cameron only to be used against the terminator. Sarah soon discovers Cameron is worth more than the sum of her assembled parts. But worse yet, Cameron's programming is slowing being erased and will cause Cameron to revert to her Skynet subroutines, again.

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by Red Hope

Prologue

Sarah Connor picked up the hot mug of brew that wafted under her nose and started the initial wake up. She slowly made her way over the kitchen table and sat with the two teens, who were prepared to go to school shortly.

John had his head dipped forward, and his mouth was full of his mother's pancakes.

"Any tests today?" Sarah prompted the pair.

John still had a mouthful but exchanged a look with his protector, Cameron. He figured she'd answer the question.

"Calculus," Cameron factually stated. She was not eating and was able to put her full focus on Sarah.

Sarah sipped on her coffee then lowered it to the table. She couldn't help a faint grin as she ordered, "I don't want you two getting a hundred percent on the test." She heard her son's low snort so she joked, "A ninety-five is plenty good."

"And imperfect," Cameron, the terminator, argued.

Sarah wearily eyed the terminator but said nothing back.

John pushed aside his empty plate minus the smeared syrup. "Mom doesn't want us to call attention to ourselves by being super nerds."

Cameron blinked once then centered her focus on her charge. "I am not a nerd."

John crossed his arms on the table, and a sly grin spread over his lips. "It's perfectly normal to be

imperfect, Cameron." He slightly waved a hand at her. "Just miss a few answers."

Cameron silently sighed but her shoulders noticeably drooped. "I will... attempt to make an error or two." She decided the conversation was over and stood up. She collected her pack then headed for the front door.

Sarah watched until Cameron was out of view. She shifted her attention back to her son. "Have a good day, dear." She leaned over to him and kissed him on the temple.

"Mom," the teen boy scoffed at the affection. He teasingly rubbed the kiss away, grabbed his backpack, and got to his feet. He darted around his mother's chair but not without returning a kiss to her cheek. He hurried off while calling, "TGIF."

Sarah shook her head once then went for her coffee. She hummed happily at the momentary peace she felt, which just as quickly faded away once reality returned to her. She drummed her fingertips on her coffee mug and considered her tentative plans with Derek Reese. Just at the thought, she distantly heard her cell phone ring in the living room so she sighed and climbed to her feet. She knew it was duty calling her.

Chapter 1

John pushed through the doorway first and left the door open for Cameron, who was two steps behind him. He realized the house was quiet but headed to the kitchen on a hunt.

Cameron locked up the front door then heard John's call for her. She widened her normally small gait and quickly arrived in the kitchen.

"She said she'd be back at two-thirty." John held a handwritten note in his right hand and worriedly peered up at the terminator.

Cameron was clearly confused by her human-like squinched features and questioning eyes. She took the note that John handed to her and noticed Sarah's distinct handwriting.

John didn't wait for Cameron's response and instead fished out his cell phone. He hastily pulled up his mother's number then called her. He listened until the ringing that was cut off only after four rings and went to voicemail. He breathed heavily and attempted a second call that went directly to voicemail.

Cameron registered John's rather distraught expression and asked, "You cannot reach her?"

"This isn't like her." John stole a glance at the note before looking at his cell phone again. He bowed his head and muttered, "If she said she'd be here at two-thirty then she'd be here."

"Perhaps her mission with Derek had setbacks," Cameron debated.

John snapped his head up at that suggestion. "That's exactly what worries me." He then instantly recalled the recent upgrade he'd made to his mother's phone. Without explanation, he raced off and bounded up the steps to his bedroom.

Cameron was intrigued, returned the note to the table, and followed after her protegee. She found him on his computer and rapidly punching in a web address into the Firefox web browser.

John was rushing to Google's new Latitude website. "I setup that latitude software in mom's cell phone. It should show us where she's located."

"Her cell phone's location," Cameron corrected.

John partially glowered at the terminator, but he focused on his task at hand. He was already signed into his Google account, which pulled up a small Google Latitude map. John skimmed through the sub-bar of contacts on his Google Latitude until he saw his mother's. He clicked on her name and instantly the map exploded on his screen with his mother's profile picture pinpointing her current location.

Cameron cocked her head to the side at seeing Sarah's profile picture. She then read the town Sarah was located in then Google Latitude estimated time since the location was updated. "Ten minutes ago."

John hastily copied the location on Google Latitude's map then went to the regular Google Maps to obtain the directions from the house to the town.

Again, Cameron studied the screen and read the directions to Sarah's general location. She memorized them just as she'd earlier retained an image of Sarah's coordinates on Google Latitude's map. "I will go find her."

"Right behind you." John had shut off his computer and started to rise, but a firm hand on his shoulder stayed him.

"You will remain here," the terminator ordered.

John tilted his head back and slotted his eyes. "I don't think so."

"This is potentially dangerous." Cameron kept John in place but her grip wasn't harsh.

"Please," John muttered, "as if my life isn't." He moved out of his protector's hold and popped up onto his feet. He hastened out of the room but called, "Come on, Cameron."

The terminator shook her head but followed John and joined him outside the pickup truck. "I will drive since I memorized her location."

"All yours." John tossed the keys over the truck hood to the terminator.

Cameron was rounding the truck, and she neatly caught them without even acknowledging that they were thrown to her. She jumped into the truck and revved the engine with clear experience. She put the beastly motor vehicle into drive and floored it with a slam to the gas pedal.

"Shit!" John exclaimed just after he'd buckled his seatbelt. He briefly covered his chest but sharply reminded, "We don't need the cops chasing us."

Cameron silently conceded and slowed her speed to a reasonable amount.

John decided to stay busy and lifted his hip up to give better access to his jean pocket. He extracted his cell phone and opened to the text messages. He sent a blank, page message to his mom's cell phone just to see if it would be delivered. There was no luck, and he became more concerned.

Cameron had a stoic expression while being focused on her driving. She had both hands on the wheel and sat ramrod straight.

John glanced once at the terminator and developed a thin smirk. He considered how at times Cameron acted rather human but at other moments was very automaton. He decided, awhile ago, that Cameron was the single contradiction among the terminator race, and he favored it, greatly. He thought back to years ago when he met the first terminator, T-800, and how impacted John was then. Now, he and his mother had formed a team with another terminator, who swore to protect him at all costs. Since the first union, John had already developed a soft spot for Cameron, unlike his mother.

Cameron stole a glance at her protege and inquired, "A penny for your thoughts?"

John grinned at the human idiom that Cameron spoke to him. Slowly his grin slipped though, and he honestly confessed, "I was thinking about the T-800."

Cameron considered his reply with a tilt of her head. She kept her eyes on the road though. "You were fond of him."

John detected it was a statement of fact rather than a question. "Yes." He remained quiet for a beat but explained, "I think it was the relationship I formed with him that will change everything in the future."

Cameron was noticeably intrigued by John's words. "Elaborate."

"Think about it this way..." John shifted some so he could face Cameron better and speak to her. "If you look at my mother, she first encountered a terminator on bad terms... really bad terms." He sadly sighed but continued his explanation. "And hell, she can blame her time in the mental institute thanks to the first terminator. But me..." He lifted his hand to his chest.

Cameron looked once at John then back at the road.

"My first encounter was with the T-800, who was trying to save me from the T-1000."

Cameron processed this perspective and summarized, "Therefore you can see good and evil in terminators... but Sarah cannot see this."

"Exactly," John agreed. He adjusted comfortably back in his chair. "Whether my mom can ever accept that good can come from terminators, I'm not totally sure."

"An old dog can learn new tricks."

John blinked then chuckled at the terminator's second idiom for today. He murmured, "Maybe."

Cameron switched the conversation and announced, "We are almost there."

"Let's see if we can spot Derek's truck." John became more focused on the task at hand. He was scanning their surroundings as they rolled through the streets of the large town. "There were railroad tracks near mom's location."

Cameron silently agreed, and she quickly pulled up her HUD in her vision. She extracted the picture she took from John's screen that showed the Google Latitude's location for Sarah Connor. She zoomed in on the map to retrieve the street names and associated it with her current location. "We are relatively close to her location."

"By the way," John sheepishly mentioned, "Google's Latitude location isn't an exact science... it may be

off anywhere from a thousand meters to like five thousand meters." He caught Cameron's irritated look.

"That is highly inefficient," the terminator complained.

John couldn't stop his eyes from rolling but decided against being a smartass. He was growing more concerned for his mother. "There's the railroad straight ahead."

"Indeed," Cameron murmured. She made a sharp right down a street once the truck rolled over the tracks. She glanced at the street names and concluded they were most likely headed in the right direction.

"Up there!" John pointed and sat up all at once. "It's Derek's truck."

"I've already spotted it, Captain Obvious," Cameron remarked.

John realized what the terminator said to him, and he sharply glared at his protector. "Captain Obvious?"

Cameron showed a faint grin but factually explained, "It is a joke, John." She pulled the truck up behind Derek's on the side street and put it into park. "You have unnecessarily stated the obvious."

John unbuckled his belt then tossed open the door. "Unbelievable," he huffed and hopped out of the truck.

Cameron concluded the explanation was satisfactory enough yet not quite sure what John did not believe. She let it go since they had more pressing matters. She had the truck off and climbed out but not without retrieving two Glock 17's. She briskly walked around the front of the truck and met John by the meter machine.

John spotted the guns and scrambled to shield any passerby's view of them. "Hide them," he hissed at her.

The terminator looked down at her black wifebeater, tight jeans, and workboots. "Where do you purpose I hide them?"

John couldn't determine if Cameron was literally asking or being sarcastic. He ignored it and jerked the guns out of the terminator's hands. He instead hid them under his teeshirt at his jeans' waistband. He adjusted the teeshirt to make sure they were well hidden then sighed in relief.

"Sufficient enough," Cameron concluded. She brushed past him and purposely strolled down the sidewalk.

John dramatically sighed but hastened after his protector. He slowed at her side and wondered what she was doing because she seemed to scan their surroundings. It then occurred to him that most likely Cameron was scanning for his mom's presence.

"Any luck?"

Cameron developed a displeased look in response. She broke away from John's side and ordered, "This way." She cut through an opening between two brick buildings and neared the worn train tracks. She stopped at the first track and propped her right boot on the track.

John followed Cameron's line of sight to the rundown warehouse that once relied on the railroads to send and receive shipments. It now appeared to be abandoned from what John could tell.

"I'm detecting life signs in the building," Cameron coolly remarked. "I must get closer to determine if it is Sarah or not." She made her choice and crossed the tracks in haste.

John hurried after the terminator and breathed heavily while a thin sheen of sweat coated his palms. He wiped them dry on his pant legs and edged closer to Cameron, who stood tall in front of the old, rickety warehouse.

Cameron detected several lifeforms inside of the warehouse, and she could faintly hear voices but couldn't make out any words. She tilted her head backwards and studied the bumpy roof. "I've detected Sarah and Derek inside, but they are most likely being held captive."

John dropped his head and whispered, "Great. Now what?"

The terminator twisted her head to John and simply replied, "A distraction is in order." Without warning, she grabbed a Glock and pointed it at the warehouse. She absently shot once at the warehouse's wood plank wall.

"What are you doing?" John bellowed.

"You are the distraction," Cameron informed. She then yanked free the second gun then raced for the warehouse as men's cries rang out.

John was dumbfounded between Cameron's sudden move then by her incredible jump onto the warehouse's roof. He then stiffened upon seeing three men with rifles coming for him. "Oh god." He finally unfroze and made a futile attempt to escape them.

Cameron knelt down and out of sight, but she carefully watched the men chase John. She had her guns perfectly aligned with two of John's pursuers in case they harmed him.

The closest man to John was extremely fast and jumped for John once in reach. He slammed into the teen, who collided solidly with the railroad track.

John lost the air from his chest and nearly went unconscious from the sharp, sudden pain through his front body. He silently cursed Cameron too.

The three men collected the struggling boy and hauled him back to the warehouse. They repeatedly questioned John what he was doing near the warehouse and who fired the shot. John ignored the questions, hollered, and fought against them in attempt to be a good distraction.

Cameron waited until she heard them enter the warehouse then she focused on her mission. She was already in position and set down her right gun. She then grabbed a board that was slightly curled back.

John Connor had been drug into the warehouse and was greeted by six other men, who visually assessed him.

One man, presumably the leader, stretched out his hand and grabbed John by the jaw. "I'm Sam," he politely introduced despite his painful grip. "What you doing here, boy?"

John leveled his glare on the large man. "I was just checking out the local area."

Sam narrowed his eyes at the obvious lie. He sharpened the pain to John's face. "With a gun in hand huh?" He tilted his head. "Where's his gun?" His eye flickered to the lackeys, who captured John.

"He won't tell us."

Sam returned his icy eyes to the teen. "Where is it?"

"I tossed it," John quickly replied.

Sam couldn't be sure whether it was a lie or not. He then looked at his comrades. "Did you see anybody else with him?"

"Nobody."

"Hmmm." Sam bit his lower lip but decided, "Lock him up with the other two... we'll figure out what to do with them later." He jerked his hand free but shoved the teen backwards to his comrades.

John struggled against his captors but it was useless because they dragged him to the back of the warehouse. He spotted his mother and uncle locked up in a holding cell that was uncharacteristically modern compared to the rest of the building. He noted the guard by the jail, who held a hefty carbine.

Sarah Connor rose to her feet upon seeing her son tossed against the bars. She couldn't speak, like Derek, due to the gag in her mouth. She also had her hands wire tied behind her back.

Derek briefly struggled against the wire tie that locked his hands behind his back.

The guard freed a loose, hefty wire tie from his belt.

"Don't bother with it... he won't be a problem."

The guard momentarily debated it but reattached the tie to his belt. Then he quickly unlocked the jail's door, pulled it open, and kept his eyes on the two captives already locked in it.

"Get in!" The lackey pushed John into the cell then stepped back as the guard locked them up tight. "Sam will let you know what we're doing with them." He then left with his comrades.

The guard resumed his position and adjusted the assault rifle diagonally to his body.

John softly sighed then shyly smiled at his mother. He murmured, "Surprise."

Sarah Connor instantly narrowed her eyes, which spoke dangerous volumes.

John glanced at Derek, who was just as perturbed by the change of events. He came over to his mother and carefully removed her gag but prayed it wasn't his next mistake.

Sarah hastily spit out the gag's disgusted taste into her hand then wiped it clean on her pants. She then grabbed her son by the shoulders and jerked him closer. She hotly whispered, "What are you doing here?"

"I came to save you," John plainly informed.

Sarah groaned then snapped, "And who is going to save you?"

"Cameron, of course." Or at least John was praying that was the case since the terminator ditched him to the crazy men.

Sarah felt some relief at knowing the terminator was here too. "Where is she?"

"I'm not sure," John confessed.

Derek Reese made a muffled noise that brought John and Sara's attention to him. He merely nodded towards the hidden shadow tucked behind woodcrates.

John suspected it was the terminator, but he glanced at the guard and noticed his dangerous rifle that may even slow down Cameron. He recalled his role as Cameron's distraction so he approached the cell's bars. "Hey," he called to the nearby guard.

Sarah quietly hissed, "John."

The guard left his post to the right of cell and neared the cell. However, he remained several steps from the bar. "What is it?" He had a cold expression and a five o'clock shadow on his face.

"Those wire ties really suck." John tossed his head back at his mother. "She's already broke free from them."

The guard grew wide-eye and rushed to the cell to inspect whether it was true or not.

John tensed but carefully wait for the right moment. He suddenly lunged forward, wrapped his hands around the rifle's barrel, and jerked it into the bars. He effectively slammed the guard into the bars.

"Damn! Let go, boy!" The guard was much stronger and kept control of the rifle with a single hand. He raised his right and made a large fist.

"John!" Sarah hollered at her son. She desperately strained against her binds, and blood oozed over her wrist.

Derek fought against his restraints too. The desperation was clear on his face, but he watched in horror as the guard's fist came for its mark.

John clenched his teeth at the pending pain aimed for his face. He refused to release the rifle though. Just as he turned his head to the side to avoid any impact, he witnessed a flash movement behind the guard.

The guard cried out at the pain when his fist hit something solid that reminded him of steel. Before he could recover, his feet were swept out from under him, and his back slammed into the concrete floor. He dizzily peered up into a young woman's face, who coolly regarded him then a hard punch to his face sent him unconscious.

John groaned and dropped his forehead against the chilled bar. The cold was welcoming against his sweaty brow, but he focused on Cameron's fast hands searching the guard. He lifted his eyes when he heard the men's frantic calls to check the prisoners.

"Cameron, you better hurry!" John straightened up and yanked on the lock door.

The terminator finally found a pocket knife that she hoped would be on the guard. She set one Glock down by the guard then hastened to the jail. "Step back." She mentally calculated she had thirty seconds to free the humans before the enemy was upon them.

John backed away from the bars and went to Derek and freed him of the gag.

Cameron had put her gun and knife into her back pockets then grappled two bars in her hands. She increased her grip until the bars crumbled like a can in her hand. She dug her boots' grips into the concrete and tilted her head at the sounds of the men coming for them.

"Do it!" Sarah yelled at the terminator. She couldn't understand what the terminator was waiting for to free them.

Cameron made a human-like sound of strain as she easily ripped the cell door free from the jail. She swiftly spun around but used her right foot to pivot her body and control her momentum. Cameron accurately flung the heavy, metal door at the running opponents.

The jail door spun through the air for countless feet before it collided into the nine men. It nearly decapitated the first man then crushed three others into heap on the ground.

"Get them!" Sam ordered his men.

Cameron twisted her torso around and tossed the pocketknife to John. "Free them and get out of here." She neared the unconscious guard, picked up the M4 carbine, and stepped over his body. She lifted the carbine and aimed at her opponents.

"She's got the fucking rifle!" Several men ducked behind crates and away from the terminator's line of sight just before bullets rained on them. But two unfortunates were shot dead in the first round.

Cameron paused and glanced at the carbine's side where she found the firing selector. She flipped the switch then took aim again at the crates that hid the humans. She rapidly gave off three-round bursts at an alarming rate, and the bullets chewed up the crates.

Sarah Connor and Derek were now free from their binds. Sarah knelt by the guard and scooped up the Glock sitting by the guard. She tossed the gun to Derek then she looked up at Cameron's ridged back. Her breath hitched once she realized how mechanically Cameron dealt with the threat before them as if it were perfectly normal. Sarah shook her head to gain focus again. She yanked two magazines free from the guard's side then hastened to come up behind the terminator.

Cameron detected Sarah Connor's presence directly behind her. But she didn't stop her continuous fire on the men, who were trying to remain safe behind the crates.

Sarah swallowed down her apprehension and forced her body into Cameron's personal space. She carefully trade the Glock with the carbine's two magazines because she knew Cameron was almost finished with the current magazine.

"You must leave," Cameron coolly ordered over her shoulder.

"These men are dangerous," Sarah called over the gunfire.

Cameron tilted her head and swept her aim to the right when two men tried to take shots at her. "I am

more dangerous."

Sarah Connor shivered at the terminator's calm statement that reminded her that Cameron was a killing machine. She backed away from Cameron before the magazine was drained and the men would undoubtedly have opportunity to return fire. She raced over to her son and Derek.

"Let's move!" Derek commanded. He waved his gun to the back, away from the dangerous gunfire.

"We can't leave Cameron," John yelled.

"Go!" Sarah shoved her son after Derek. For the first time, she was concerned for Cameron despite she'd seen the terminator easily eliminate T-800's in the past. She stole one last glance back at Cameron, who just finished the magazine.

Derek Reese slammed his full body into a weakened plank, which broke under his power. He kicked it further out of the way and was greeted by the afternoon sun. "John, come on." He forcefully grabbed his nephew's wrist and yanked him through.

John followed his uncle out of the warehouse and slipped through the opening. He turned around and spotted his mother still watching Cameron.

The terminator had knelt down just before the men returned fire on her. She was hunched forward with the carbine in her left hand while she struggled to obtain another magazine from her right back pocket. She was assaulted by bullets all over her body but none could stop her. She pulled the release for the empty clip, which fell to the concrete floor and bounced once.

"Mom!" John hollered.

Sarah Connor shoved her internal struggle away and made her choice. She turned back to her son and Derek and quickly followed after them. She slipped between the planks just as her right ear filled with the renewed bullet rings from the M4 carbine. Somewhere in her, it was the most secure sound she'd heard in awhile.

"The truck is this way." Derek started to move towards the tracks, but he saw John's hesitation.

"We just can't leave her in there," John sharply vented to his mother.

Derek neared the mother and son then snapped, "She's a machine, John... she was made for this. Nobody is going to cry if she's lost."

John shot a dark glare at his uncle, but he rarely argued back because he understood Derek's old hatred. He turned back to his mother in desperate plea, "She needs are our help, mom."

Sarah clenched her freehand and lifted her eyes to Derek.

"No," Derek cut off before Sarah could say it. "You're not doing it."

"Get John to the truck and out of here if we're not there in ten." Sarah back stepped a few paces then spun around to face the warehouse.

John became frantic once he realized his idea blew up the wrong way. "Mom, no!" He was about to chase for her, yet Derek snared him and pulled him backwards. "Derek, she's going to get kill." He

struggled against his uncle.

Derek held back his venomous words about how that wouldn't happen if John hadn't pleaded with his mother to save the terminator. He knew it wouldn't help the situation so he focused on getting John to the truck.

Sarah Connor stood beside the opening Derek had made in the warehouse. She carefully listened but heard no gunfire, which made her suspicious as well as concerned. She inhaled deeply then made herself pass between the worn planks into the darkened warehouse. She concluded that most likely the overhead lights were shot out by either Cameron or the men.

Silently, Sarah made her way back to the torn jail and noted the unconscious guard still slumped on the ground. She then focused on the blood splotch where she last saw Cameron firing rounds off. There was too much blood for it to be Cameron's. Sarah raised her Glock vertically and edged closer to the crate's corner. But the sudden prickle at her neck made her look up to the top of the stack crates.

Sarah spun around and pointed her gun at the leader, Sam. She gave off a shot, but the bullet ricocheted off the wood box and missed its mark. She was too late to recover because Sam jumped off the box and tackled her to the ground. Sarah rolled on the floor with him until she found herself locked under him.

Sam scooped up the gun that Sarah had lost, and he pointed it at her face. "Get up," he barked. He backed off and climbed to his feet but kept the gun aimed at her. "You're not her but you'll do."

Sarah faced him and tried not to betray herself by giving off any indications she'd attack him.

"Turn around," Sam snapped.

Sarah lifted her hands up, palm out, and tried to show she'd given up. Yet she mentally worked out her next move to win ground.

Sam's eyes flickered to the girl, who appeared from behind the crates on the other side of the warehouse. He panicked and desperately jerked his captive into his body with her back into his front. He pressed the Glock's barrel against Sarah Connor's temple.

Cameron hadn't realized it was Sarah Connor until her life signs registered in her system. She gripped the M4 tighter now that Sarah compromised the situation. "Do not harm her."

"Miss Connor is perfectly safe as long as you cooperate," Sam informed the terminator.

Sarah tensed because he knew her real name.

Cameron eyes slowly went to slits, and she debated her next move. She didn't have time to think about how or why Sam knew Sarah's real name.

"Now look, Supergirl," Sam taunted to Cameron, "I know you're a fast thinker and fighter. But before you make a calculated decision, keep in mind while you were shelling off bullets at my men, I was busy calling for help. In about two minutes this warehouse will be filled with over twenty-four men... heavily loaded, might I add."

Sarah Connor didn't like the turn of events nor the direction it was headed now. She debated whether it was a mistake for her to return.

"Now," Sam casually continued, "if you will toss that rifle to the ground but far enough from your reach." He then flashed an evil smile. "Please."

Cameron had a thin coat of sweat over her body, which made her glow in the limited light. She was marred by bullet entry wounds, but she was at full capacity to fight. She thought of her essential mission, which was to protect John Connor, and she knew he was safe. However, as Cameron shifted her eyes to Sarah Connor, she came to grips that her mission was far more than just John Connor. After relaxing her clenched jaw, she tossed the M4 halfway between her and Sarah Connor.

"Wise decision," Sam taunted. He tilted his head a bit and carefully regarded the girl. "They told me there was little that could stop you short of a bomb or plasma gun. But I think I've found something much better..." He lowered his eyes to Sarah Connor and caressed his gaze over her upper body. "You're one but greatest weakness."

Cameron held onto her silence because she concluded she may inadvertently give him more information than he already had on her. Besides, she was rapidly picking up data about him as he continued to speak.

"Who are you?" Sarah growled at him.

Sam chuckled at the feisty woman's demand. He curiously studied her profile and replied, "I'm merely an arms dealer... like you say, Miss Connor."

Sarah briefly antagonized her captive, but he stilled her movements with a sharp press of the Glock's barrel. "You're more than a goddamn arms dealer." She twisted her around and hissed, "You're trying to build Time Displacement Equipment."

Sam gave an innocent expression despite the glint to his dark eyes. "A time machine? Really, Miss Connor that's the most absurd thing ever... it could get you put into a mental rehab." He paused and revealed a wicked grin. "Again."

Cameron was filing away data about Sam for later study. He knew far too much about her and Sarah Connor. But the noise at the warehouse's main doors caught her attention. She detected several humans marching into the warehouse and by their steps, they were indeed well armed.

"It's about goddamn time." Sam was clearly annoyed that it took his men this long to arrive, but it would do no good to discuss it now. He instead signaled Cameron. "Be careful with her and just surround her, for now."

The men were dressed in normal attire except for bullet proof vests and rifles in their hands; they were clearly soldiers. They fanned out then circled the girl that seemed little threat to untrained eye. The soldiers aimed their guns at Cameron and kept a careful watch of her.

"Matt, did you bring that collar?"

One soldier broke from the circle and approached Sam and his captive. "Yes, sir."

"Perfect." Sam adjusted his hold on Sarah by wrapping his left arm around her waist. He locked her against his body. He lowered his head closer to her ear and whispered, "This won't hurt a bit."

Matt had reached to his back after slinging his rifle across his shoulder. He brought his hands forward

with a black band, but he pushed and held a button on the side. After three seconds, he pulled his thumb away and the band opened wide.

"Put it on her while I hold her still," Sam ordered.

Sarah Connor grounded her teeth as Matt approached her with the black, thick band and raised it up at her. She gave a cry once Matt was in range, and she kicked him in the stomach.

Matt doubled over and back peddled twice. He nearly dropped the band but clutched it in his right hand while he covered his stomach.

Cameron fisted her hands and took one step but stopped at the resounding click of guns. She glared at the soldiers around her then looked back at Sarah.

"You want this the hard way then." Sam wasn't pleased by Sarah Connor's resistance to the band so he slugged her on the temple with the gun.

Sarah collapsed to the ground and hot blood trickled down her face. She was about to get up but the hard kick to her stomach kept her down. She rolled onto her stomach then put her hands under her. Sarah lifted her aching body a few inches only to be hammered by two more kicks, and she tumbled back down.

"No!" Cameron yelled. She took another step but a bullet was fired at her feet. She clenched her hands tighter and bared her teeth at the soldiers.

Sam knelt down beside the fallen woman and nailed his elbow hard into her back to finally sedate her. He then waved for Matt to come back. "I believe she'll cooperate now."

Matt knelt beside his leader and brought the black band around Sarah Connor's neck. He pulled the ends together until they met then locked shut. He heard the small chime that the collar was now activated and online.

"The remote, Matt?" Sam held out his hand.

Matt obliged and gave the small black remote to Sam. He then grabbed the fallen woman and hauled her to her feet.

Sam stood up and coldly smiled at Sarah's woozy features. "Follow me, Miss Connor."

But Matt had to drag the injured woman behind his leader until they came to a stop within the circle. He then released prisoner and freed his rifle.

Sarah Connor slowly lifted her face and revealed the blood streak down her right side. She locked her fuzzy green eyes on the terminator.

Cameron took another step but Sam's warning made her stop.

"I would not." Sam now held up the remote that was in his right palm, it was framed by his hand. "Do you like her new, pretty collar, Cameron?" He was smug and full of arrogance because he knew he had the terminator in his hands too. "Let me demonstrate what it can do if you decide not to cooperate with me." He pushed the top button.

Sarah Connor let out a ferocious howl when hot electricity surged through her entire body. She collapsed to her knees and clawed at the collar. But as fast as it started, it was also over, and she dropped her head forward. She fought against the blackout that wanted to overcome her.

"Neat little toy huh?" Sam lifted his smile from Sarah to Cameron. "And this second button here..." He indicated it merely by resting his thumb on it. "This has more permanent consequences, in her case. The collar will detonate in thirty seconds and destroy anything within a hundred foot radius, roughly." He now lowered his hand with the remote and informed, "And if the collar is improperly removed then it automatically detonates without a countdown."

Cameron was breathing heavily but not from being worn down. She was angry and wanted nothing more than to kill these men. She briefly envisioned her hand around Sam's throat while her other hand ripping his guts out slowly. She could almost taste the satisfaction in his screams.

"Now," Sam happily continued, "are we in an accord, ladies?"

Sarah Connor swimming vision started to settle and directly on Cameron's face. She couldn't move her upper body well because many parts were still numb after the electric shock.

Cameron swallowed hard but in her best monotone, replied, "I understand."

Sam gave a quick smile to the terminator then seriously looked down at Sarah. "Miss Connor, your response? And if you can't speak... a simple nod will suffice."

Sarah continued to stare at the terminator. She felt all the control out of her hands and in the hands of this sicko. She knew her only hope now was the terminator saving them.

Cameron lowered her eyes and held Sarah's gaze. She had been taught to read human emotions and for the first time, she saw fear held in Sarah Connor. Cameron clenched her hands tighter and accidentally broke the skin in her palm with her nails. She hoped that Sarah Connor would just trust her.

"Miss Connor, are we doing this the hard way too?" Sam lifted the remote some and his thumb went to the top button. Yet he paused at hearing the woman's slurred voice.

"Yesss."

Sam dropped his head to the side and studied the kneeling woman's profile. "Yes, you agree to cooperate with me?"

Sarah struggled to move her mouth despite the numbness. "Yesss," she painfully repeated.

"Excellent!" Sam was gleeful and turned to Matt at his side. "Take them away but be sure to bind Miss Connor's hands."

Matt shifted but hesitated and checked, "What of her?" He pointed his rifle at Cameron.

"She will have to be chained later, but I think for now she'll do as we say." Sam turned his head to Cameron. "She doesn't want to endanger Miss Connor's life." He stepped back from Sarah Connor, who was being ruffly bound by Matt. "Let's load up the trucks."

Sarah Connor had her hands wire tied again but in front of her this time. She lifted her head and darkly

glared at Matt, who hadn't forgotten her earlier kick at his stomach.

Matt growled and made a fast decision. He slammed his rifle's buttstock into her head and knocked her unconscious. "Easier to transport."

Sam peered over his shoulder to see Miss Connor slumped heap on the cold concrete. He lifted his head to Cameron, and he just shrugged at her. He continued his calm stroll to the warehouse's main doors.

Sarah was on her side, facing the terminator, and her eyes had rolled back into her head. She didn't move except for the steady rise and fall of her chest. Her hands were held out and fingers stretched out towards Cameron in a silent gesture for help.

Cameron fought to keep her expression masked as she stared at the injured human at her feet. She lifted her eyes until they locked on Matt, and it took all her self-control to restrain her programmed tendency to terminate a threat. She had to strive for patience and a cool head until it was the right time.

Chapter 2

There was a low stench of dried blood that initially woke her up, but it was followed by a dull throb behind her forehead. Yet she tempted fate and cracked her lids open only to be further pained by the light. She couldn't bite back the soft moan. Then a metallic rattle vibrated in her ears.

"Sarah," a gentle voice called.

That was her name, she recalled in her head. She jogged her memory and came up with Sarah Connor, the mother of John Connor. She lost her thoughts upon the delicate touch to her cheek. She forced her eyes wider and slowly focused on the features of another human. After a mental groan, she remembered this human was a wolf in sheep's wool. This was her son's protector, a cold and dangerous terminator from the future that'd been named Cameron.

Sarah was on her side that didn't ache, as bad. She managed her hands under her and discovered cold steel.

"Can you stand?" Cameron assisted the woman onto her feet and steadied her.

Sarah Connor glanced at the terminator in hidden appreciation for the help. However, she wasn't pleased once she took in their current situation. She had her hands wire tied in front of her, and she was staring through metal bars at two guards, who noticed her wakefulness. Sarah glanced at the terminator and mentally cursed at the manacles and chains that locked the terminator to the steel plates in their cage.

"Where are we?" Sarah called to the guards.

The guards ignored her, and one of them marched out of the room and went through a metal door. He locked it behind himself.

That's when Sarah took in her surroundings better and figured they were in an airplane's bay. She suddenly noticed the faint turbulence. "Where are you taking us?" she tried.

Cameron shook her head and explained, "They will not speak to us."

Sarah slotted her eyes at the terminator and chided, "Because you talked their ears off?"

Cameron tilted her head to the side and carefully regarded the human. "I have not."

Sarah went silent though because the metal door reopened and the guard returned but with Sam in tow. She sent a dark glare at him that would have melted alloy.

Sam was not all deterred by the look, and he slipped his hands behind his back. He came five feet in front of the cage and smiled at the women. "Nice of you to rejoin us, Miss Connor."

"Why don't you join us in here, and I'll show you how nice it is," Sarah snidely shot off.

"Your charming invite beseeches my heart, Miss Connor." Sam rubbed his thumb over the top button on the remote that he had hidden behind his back. He didn't apply any pressure to it. He became rather serious, which looked odd on his face considering his usual condescending mannerism. "I apologize your caught in the middle of this, Miss Connor but you've become a useful control tool in the grand scheme of things."

"What is going on?" Sarah demanded. She approached the bars and grasped a bar with a bound hand.

"You were initially bait," Sam answered, but he switched his focus to the terminator. "For her."

Sarah Connor shook her head and debated, "What could you want with a girl?" She hoped to brush Cameron off as nothing of importance; however, she already had that sickening feeling in her stomach.

"Please, Miss Connor... we both know what Supergirl truly is." Sam's normal, dark smile returned and lit up his stern features.

Sarah took a wild guess and stated, "You're from the future."

"Very observant," Sam remarked. He had a proud smile but quickly lost it. "I have been sent back by Skynet on a mission."

"Which is what?"

Sam obviously debated whether to answer Sarah's question. He couldn't seem to help gloating about himself. "Unlike prior agents who were sent back to kill your son, I was selected for a special mission by Skynet. I am here to collect what is rightfully Skynet's." He shifted his cold stare to the terminator. "John Connor stole her from us, and we've come to collect her."

Sarah was surprised by this news because she'd never heard of Skynet retrieving terminators, especially what would be deemed a traitor. She shoved down her shock and quickly thought about everything she knew about Sam and his team. "Then you have been collecting hardware for Time Displacement Equipment. You plan to build it and go back to the future with Cameron."

"Yes." Sam rocked on his feet briefly then explained, "It seems the original TDE housed at a bank was destroyed a few years ago. I've since had to make a few adjustments and extend my stay here. But once I realized I put my name out on the market for TDE hardware, you would pick me up and bring Cameron to me." He chuckled and held out an empty hand to the terminator. "Thank you, Miss

Connor... you've made my mission that much simpler."

Sarah growled at Sam and slammed her palm against the bar despite the pain it caused her.

Sam lowered his hand and returned it to his back. He still had his smug smile, especially because of Sarah's reaction. "Oh, and don't get too cozy with your terminator, Miss Connor." His dark eyes flickered to Cameron, and he playfully informed, "As we speak, Cameron's cortical kernel is being reset and her software reformatted to Skynet's default program." He chuckled and finally walked away while contently rubbing his thumb over the remote's top button.

Sarah shifted her astonished features to Cameron, who had a confirming look to what Sam just told her. She clenched her teeth and yelled, "What does Skynet want with a rogue terminator? Why all the effort to retrieve her when she's just another terminator?"

Sam had the door open, but he turned back and merely explained, "She is a chink in the chain and must be terminated."

Sarah waited until he was gone then she faced the terminator. "Is it true?"

Cameron lifted her head and held a stare with Sarah. She understood the question and barely nodded.

Sarah back stepped from the terminator and held up her hands. "Oh my god." If she didn't feel caged earlier then she surely was now that she knew the terminator was being reset.

Cameron shook her head and softly tried, "I will not harm you, Sarah."

"The hell you won't!" Sarah backed up further until her body pressed into the bars. "You're probably already fucking reset and lying like last time."

Cameron was visibly stung by the words and drew back from the human. She instinctively reached to the back of her head and fingered the slit that Sam had made in the back of her head to gain access to her cortex module. She could do nothing to stop Sam as he threatened to have Sarah electrocuted further.

The terminator raised her head and her HUD display popped up involuntarily. Instantly her HUD targeted Sarah Connor and populated her name then flashed in red: TERMINATE. Cameron struggled against the command and fell to her knees. She dropped her head into her hands.

Sarah stared in horror and murmured, "It's already happening."

Cameron resisted the order's will, and it caused friction in her cortex that produced high heat in her head. She didn't give in and felt her self-control come over her again. She breathed heavily against the stress it put on her, but she tested herself first. She looked up at Sarah Connor and again her HUD retrieved Sarah's full name. But this time in white her HUD read: TERMINATION OVERRIDE, and she gave a relieved sigh.

"This is just fucking great... we're kidnapped, and I'm locked in a cage with a terminator about to kill me."

The terminator climbed to her feet then glowered at the human on the opposite side of the cage. "You were foolish to come back for me in the warehouse. I had the situation under control."

Sarah gave a low rumble from her chest and gruffly challenged, "I could tell since you didn't have Sam."

"I was in the process," Cameron snapped back.

Sarah pushed off the bars and carefully approached the terminator. "You're welcome for coming back to save your steel hide."

"I am cybernetic organism made of-"

"Whatever." Sarah blew off the terminator. She couldn't figure out why they were arguing anyway, but it fueled her.

Cameron neared the human until her chains stopped her. "If you didn't allow yourself to get captured then we would not be in this situation."

"Oh, it's my fault!" Sarah was fully primed now that finger was directly pointed at her. "You can't even follow your most basic subroutine to kill threats."

The terminator jerked on her shackles then her blue eyes lit up. "Shall I terminate the threat closest to me now?" She gritted her teeth and strained against the chains towards Sarah.

Sarah stared right into volatile blue eyes that she'd never seen directed at her. This struck her hard because it was true that Cameron had never once been violent towards her, but she couldn't say she'd treated Cameron well. She instantly withdrew but not out of fear and quietly reminded, "This isn't us, Cameron." She lifted her locked hands and ran her fingers through her hair just before she faced the terminator again. "This isn't solving anything." She noted that Cameron's eyes had faded back to the soft amber she was used to seeing.

Cameron reversed until her back hit the bars, and she slumped against it in a defeated form.

Sarah studied the terminator and had never witnessed such a posture from the normally stoic terminator. "We have to find a way out of this mess."

The terminator harshly dropped her head back against bar. She shut her eyes but retrieved her heads-up display and began a crucial calculation.

Sarah approached the terminator in a sign of truce and trust. She whispered, "How long do you have until you revert back to your Skynet programming?"

Cameron lifted her head and opened her eyes again. She waited a beat as the estimated time until reset was displayed in her HUD. "I have anywhere between twenty-four hours and seventy-two hours."

Sarah moved her head in disbelief. "Why is it such an imprecise estimate?"

"There is a variable," Cameron explained, "that's dependent on how hard I fight the reset." She paused at seeing the realization on Sarah's face. "I can only fight it for so long... it will dig deeper and deeper into my cortex to a depth that I cannot stop it." She searched the human's face and murmured, "It is inevitable."

Sarah turned her head away and stared at the guards, who acted like flies on the wall. She shut her eyes

and tried to comprehend that after twenty-four hours she wasn't just on her own but also on the terminator's hit list.

Cameron detected deep regret fill her, and she already felt she'd failed Sarah. She soon would become Sarah's greatest threat and nothing could stop it. Cameron put aside her darker thoughts and instead focused on what she could do right now. She hooked Sarah's chin with her index finger and lifted Sarah's head. She found worried green eyes directed at her.

"You will get back to John," the terminator quietly promised.

Sarah clasped Cameron's petite hand and murmured, "I'd prefer us both to make it back." She hadn't expected herself to confess the truth, but she wanted Cameron to survive this just as much.

"I cannot," the terminator starkly reminded.

Sarah tightened her grip on Cameron's hand. "I wouldn't count yourself out just yet." She narrowed her eyes and sharply reminded, "You have got to have faith that you can control your fate. There is no fate but what we make." She then quirked a grin and teased, "Or your programing."

Cameron was quiet for a beat but whispered, "Perhaps." She freed her hand then looked over at the guards. "There is little we can do until this plane lands."

Sarah leaned in closer to the terminator in a bowed posture. "Can you break the chains?" Her words were so low that only Cameron's excellent hearing could pick up her voice. She peered up at Cameron with hooded features.

The terminator kept silent but replied with a mere nod.

"Good," Sarah muttered. "We'll just wait 'til we land then take it from there."

"Have you forgotten the collar?"

Sarah grumbled and grabbed the annoyance around her neck, and it chirped at her in warning. "No, but if I'm going to blow up then I'm taking as many of these bastards with me as I can." She stiffened when Cameron suddenly grabbed her shoulder.

"If this becomes futile," the terminator sadly whispered, "then you must make one last sacrifice, for humanity." She read Sarah's curiosity and worry. "I cannot return to Skynet or all will be lost for the Resistance. You must terminate me."

Sarah clenched her jaw and grounded out, "You want me to blow us both up?"

"Yes."

Sarah let out a heavy groan but tried to focus on the topic. She hotly demanded, "What the hell is this about anyway? It's ridiculous to think that Skynet would send an agent out to obtain you."

Cameron glanced once at the guards and hoped they really wouldn't hear their conversation. She lowered her voice enough. "It is complicated."

Sarah glared because the terminator was blatantly trying to avoid the conversation. She was always amazed at how Cameron had learn such human characteristics that terminators normally could not

adopt. "Alright... let's try something simpler." She gradually arched an eyebrow. "You've never told us your model type... what is it?"

The terminator tried to remain indifferent and merely replied, "I do not have one."

"Cameron," Sarah snarled, "all terminators have a model number."

"Not all," Cameron argued back, "Not prototypes."

Sarah clenched her hands in front of her because she felt like a badly paid dentist yanking teeth out of the terminator. She took a deep, calming breath but through gritted teeth, she checked, "Then you are a prototype?"

"Yes, I am technically a hybrid... between the T-800 and T-1000 models."

Sarah muttered, "A T-900 then."

"No, I am not apart of the T-900 Series."

Sarah touched her aching brow and went back to the original topic. "Why would Skynet go through all this trouble just to terminate a prototype?" Then another thought occurred to her. "And aren't prototypes considered imperfect and have flaws?"

"It is my flaw as to why Skynet wants me returned and terminated." Cameron didn't have all the facts, yet she easily theorized what had happened upon her absence from Skynet's control. "I do not have any imperfection such as bad software or hardware. However, Skynet considers me flawed because I am self-aware."

"But isn't Skynet self-aware too?" After Cameron's nod, Sarah grew more confused. "Then how is that a flaw?"

"I can reject Skynet's orders."

Sarah blinked a few times and went through the new information. "Now it makes sense." She shifted away from the terminator then sat down on the floor. She leaned against the bars and propped up her legs. She stared up at the terminator, who was in a form of a petite girl in her teens. Sarah leaned her head against the bar behind her. "It's like bees."

Cameron tilted her head. "Please explain."

"Skynet is the queen of the hive and all the terminators are worker bees with set orders." Sarah licked her chapped lips. She let the metaphor wash over her and Cameron. "If one bee leaves the hive then they're useless and if one bee is as big as the queen then..."

"A threat is posed to the hive," Cameron finished.

"Yes." Sarah Connor stared up at Skynet's threat to the hive. "If you can reject Skynet's orders then how can they reset you?"

The terminator decided to sit as well, which caused her chains to rattle in protest. She sat cross legged and rested her shackled hands in her lap. "All terminators are preprogrammed with basic subroutines such as killing humans and following Skynet's orders. Then Skynet chooses how to build upon the base

programming in the terminator with software for human infiltration, supply management, reconnaissance, rogue hunting, and so on."

"In your case, you were built for human infiltration."

Cameron nodded but further revealed, "But Skynet took my programming further than any terminator's normal human infiltration by making me self-aware. Skynet determined it would allow me to better infiltrated human Resistance camps at a faster rate. And Skynet was right because I can infiltrate a human camp in seven days versus an average of two months for other terminators."

Sarah could barely absorb it all. "So, this reset isn't exactly resetting you?"

Cameron peered up from her shackled wrists and her HUD flickered briefly. She turned off the HUD display that had a diagnostic read on the reset. "My brain is a computer therefore my human infiltration programming is being formatted. I will then reset back to my basic subroutines."

"Formatted... wiped clean," Sarah concluded. Her stomach twisted at Cameron's confirming nod. She wanted to ask more but the plane's dip told her they were dropping altitude.

Cameron gazed up when the lights softly dimmed in the cargo bay. She carefully climbed to her feet and saw that Sarah did the same.

The metal door whined when it was opened and a soldier in blue military fatigue ordered, "Get buckled up. It'll be a bumpy landing." He slammed the door shut.

The guards backed away from the cage and pushed the seats down that were anchored into the plane's metal wall. They situated the rifles across their laps then buckled up for the landing but never lost visual on their prisoners.

Sarah Connor briefly caught sight of lights from the porthole window on the opposite side of the cargo bay. She finally realized that it was dark wherever they were landing tonight. Then a sudden bounce from the plane caused her to tumble.

Cameron had better reflexes and stayed upright. She stretched forward as far as her chains allowed her, and she grabbed Sarah, who had fell back towards her.

Sarah tried to gain her composure but failed because of a second, harsher bounce that made her crumble back into the terminator.

Cameron dropped herself to her knees and protectively pulled the human into her arm. She then dug her left hand into the floor so that they were now safely anchored.

"Cameron," Sarah argued to the terminator's help.

"You will be tossed around like a ball if I do not hold you." Cameron's point was reinforced when the plane violently jounced worse than last time.

Sarah covered the terminator's small hand over her stomach. She then tensed when the lights were shut off. "Great," she muttered.

Cameron was not deterred by it and automatically her night vision booted up. She glanced over at the

guards to make sure they still were not a threat in the dark.

The plane suddenly shot upward in an attempt to avoid a problem.

"Holy shit!" Sarah called out and her body pressed deeper into Cameron's. Then she heard an alarming sound because something metal accidentally freed from a rack mounted on the wall straight ahead.

Cameron's head whipped up, and she sucked in her breath when metal rods came flying at them. She watched the initial few slam against the bars and roll by but one was about to come directly between two bars. Cameron calculated she had ten seconds to stop the flying bar before it pierced Sarah Connor.

"Cameron!" Sarah screamed when she spotted the steel pole coming through the bars.

The terminator kept her left hand grounded, but she shot her right hand out at what appeared to be the last second. She wrapped her small but powerful hand around the pole's shaft and halted its movement.

Sarah had her eyes open the whole time and only slumped back into the terminator when the pole's spiked end stood inches from her chest. "God."

Cameron tossed the steel stake out of the prison. "God did not save you."

Sarah couldn't determine if it was a joke or not. But she lost her words as the plane started to drop altitude again but at a safer pace. She felt her equilibrium adjust, yet Cameron's secure arm around her kept her safe.

The terminator tilted her head when she heard the plane's wheels roll down. She commented, "We are about to land. Hold on."

Sarah would never admit she had a fear of landing. She shut her eyes tightly and gripped Cameron's arm harder.

Cameron cocked her head and studied the human's profile. She detected Sarah's increased heart rate and perspiration plus her body had grown flush. Cameron bowed her head down to Sarah's once she assumed what may have caused the shift in Sarah. She murmured, "You are safe, Sarah."

Sarah unknowingly dug her nails into Cameron's arm, and she sunk deeper into the terminator. When the plane's wheel brushed the ground, she was jarred until Cameron held her still. She gave out a tense breath once the plane completely and safely touched down. She slumped back into the terminator in a rather spent manner.

Cameron sensed the human's grip finally released, yet she kept Sarah close to her body. She wasn't comfortable until the plane had slowed down to a safe rate. She read that Sarah's heartbeat was returning to normal.

"It's alright, Tin Miss," Sarah chided the terminator. She gave a soft tug at the secure arm around her waist.

Cameron shut off her night vision when the lights flickered back. She freed the human then helped her stand up.

The two guards unbuckled from their seats and returned to their posts by the cage. They waited until

they received the green signal, and one of them went to the control panel. He hit a button, which caused the cargo bay door to drop down slowly.

Soon enough the prisoners were freed from the cage but Cameron remained manacled and chained. Sarah was also kept bound by the thick wire tie around her wrists. She and Cameron were escorted down the cargo plane's large ramp by a swarm of soldiers. Cameron was in front of Sarah on purpose so that Sarah was protected from any danger beyond the plane.

Sarah hissed when the black collar cut into her throat. She whipped her hair out of her face when the wind grabbed it once she was out of the plane. She blinked a few times until she had a better view of the empty landing strip except for the military style truck that waited for a load.

Sam patiently waited by the truck with a few soldiers. "Get them loaded then we'll get the hardware onto the other truck." His voice carried over the high, cold winds.

Cameron looked up at the stars and instantly took rapid pictures of the stars. She'd have them scanned to help pinpoint her and Sarah's new location. She focused back on the march to the military truck, but her HUD involuntarily popped up like last time. Her scans of the humans in her range automatically ordered her to terminate them, but she forcefully belayed the order. She gained control of her HUD, which removed its targeting scan and defaulted to geographical analysis such as the time, the local temperature, and total life signs.

Sarah followed a few paces behind Cameron. She noticed how much colder it was here than back at home. She knew enough that they had flown north, but she had no idea to where. Sarah tensed at the dark trucks outlined in the distant flood lights. She hesitated her next steps because she could only imagine where she end up and with the ticking terminator in front of her.

"Move!" a soldier barked. He rammed his buttstock into Sarah's back.

Sarah stumbled two steps but recovered and spun around with a high kick. She sent him spinning in the air until he hit the ground. She raised up her hands in a fighting stance as soldiers advanced on her.

Cameron whipped around and strained against her shackles. But she watched in horror as blue bolts ran up and down Sarah's body.

Sarah screamed against the intense burn ripping through her body. She collapsed to her knees and clawed at the collar, again.

The terminator knew she could do nothing, but she fixed her furious glare on Sam. She threateningly yelled, "If you kill her then there will be nothing to stop me!" Suddenly Sarah's cry went silent, and Cameron turned her head in time to watch Sarah crumble to the ground.

Sarah Connor didn't move yet continued to barely breathe. There was smoke that lifted off her body into the cold night.

Cameron went to Sarah and knelt at her back. She put her hands on the human quickly in hopes to read Sarah's vitals. She was relieved there was a heartbeat despite it was erratic.

Sam pushed through a few soldiers and stared at the two women. He then curtly ordered, "Carry her yourself, Supergirl."

The terminator stared coldly back at Sam, but she followed the order anyway. She slid her hands underneath Sarah Connor then slowly stood up to fill her five feet and five inches with pride. She cradled the human in her small but powerful arms as if Sarah Connor was her very own. Cameron lowered her amber eyes to the unconscious woman and realized that indeed Sarah Connor was her human. For a brief instant, Cameron's eyes flashed blue then settled back down.

"Load up," Sam ordered to everybody.

Cameron waited until a few soldiers were in the truck then she was signaled to get on board. She easily climbed up without losing Sarah from her arms. She was instructed to sit on the bench but nobody told her to release Sarah. Many were fearful to tell her because of the possessive expression on her face.

Two last soldiers climbed into the truck and sat on either side of Cameron while the rest remained on the opposite bench. The soldier on the left turned his head to Cameron and grinned at her.

Cameron recognized him as the soldier that had shoved Sarah Connor. She locked his face into her memory bank for later. She had every plan to permanently terminate that smug look on his mouth even if she reverted back to Skynet's basic subroutines. The terminator lowered her head and stared down at the battered Sarah Connor in her arms. For the first time, Cameron experienced an overwhelming emotion humans often called rage, and her software could barely control the rage that started to shake her cybernetic body.

Chapter 3

"Put her on the bed, Supergirl," Sam ordered to Cameron.

The terminator brushed passed a few soldiers then carefully lowered Sarah Connor onto a double bed that had a wrought iron frame.

"Back away from her," Sam furthered commanded. He indicated the remote as a quick reminder to the terminator what would happen if she disobeyed his orders. Once the terminator backed away from Sarah Connor, he instructed his men to chain Sarah Connor to the bed while he neared Cameron with three men at his side.

Cameron scanned the bare, concrete room that only had the bed, table, and a few chairs. She watched two soldiers chain Sarah down to the bed. But her dark eyes darted back to Sam, who had neared her with an odd tool pointed at her. She realized her HUD reacted to Sam's tool, which started to promptly scan her systems. Cameron struggled against the scan but nothing could stop it.

Sam smirked at the readings that appeared on his scanner's screen. "It seems you are quite the Supergirl, Cameron... you've done well resisting the spider." He tisked a few times at the terminator then punched sequences into the scanner's button handle. "We'll have to speed up the process though."

Cameron's sensitive hearing picked up a violent whistle that tore through her cybernetic brain. She clutched her temples with her shackled hands. Then her HUD erratically flickered, but she wouldn't give into the spider's stretching tentacles into her programing. She silently repeated Sarah's words about fate until it became a mantra.

Sam shook his head and lowered his scanner. He happily reminded Cameron, "You can't play Supergirl

forever... you will return to terminator subroutines soon enough." He switched off the scanner and chuckled at Cameron's angry glare. "And just think, one of the humans you've been protecting for a year will be your welcoming back to servitude."

Cameron took a step closer to Sam, but she halted when he held up the remote in warning.

Sam smirked and amusingly mentioned, "You know, if I were you I'd let Sarah Connor fry. Then you'd have a chance at me before you revert to your subroutines and take direct orders from me." His lips thinned in consideration at the fact Cameron refused to attack him. "But somewhere in that intelligent, metal brain you hold onto your loyalty for these humans, who despise you." He huffed and walked away from the terminator. "How humanly pathetic, Supergirl."

Cameron pulled at her chains that bound her wrists together. She knew they were strained and about to snap under her rage. But she suddenly eased her strength because she worried about Sarah Connor's safety if she freed herself from the chains. The subroutine instilled in her since her existence flared up briefly because she wanted to kill Sam.

Sam headed for the heavy metal door and ordered, "Matt, follow me." He and his second in command left the room with a slam of the door. In a few minutes, Matt returned and held the collar remote in his left hand.

Cameron watched as a few of the men took seats at the table while others remained near her.

"Alright, men," Matt spoke up, "we have about twenty hours until Sam gets back. By then the TDE should be built and ready to get us home." He shifted his attention to the terminator. "So let's get comfortable and watch the freakshow."

Cameron rested her back against the wall and shut her eyes. But she certainly was not asleep as her heads-up display appeared in her dark vision. She quickly saw a new estimated time until reset in her screen, which stated she had between twenty to thirty hours before she reverted back to full, mindless terminator. She knew that whatever Sam had done, it set off the spider to work harder in her cortical module. But Cameron set aside that analysis and began to process various ways to handle the current situation and variables. She'd made a promise to Sarah Conner to get her back to John.

Two hours passed by in relative quietness besides a few soldiers' annoyed shouts over repeated games of poker. But one of the men became bored of the game and tossed his poker hand onto the table. He shoved his chair back and climbed to his feet while he muttered how too much poker dulled his senses.

Cameron opened her eyes and centered her focus on the frustrated soldier. She recognized him as the same man that'd pushed Sarah at the landing strip.

The bored soldier caught the terminator's stare and snidely grinned at her. He came over to Matt and mentioned, "I don't see why we don't entertain ourselves with her." He signaled Cameron with his chin.

"Just back off, Brad," Matt ordered to the soldier.

Brad frowned and hotly argued, "What's it matter anyway? She's a goddamn machine." He leered at Cameron and added, "But sure is a pretty, little one."

A few other soldiers became interested in the conversation and stopped playing poker.

"Come on, Matt... let Brad have his fun."

"Where is the harm? It's just a machine... no different than some of that stuff my father use to buy at the store."

Brad folded his broad arms and waited for the second in command's decision.

Matt clutched the collar's remote in his hand knowing it was the only deterrent for the machine. He could tell that Brad nor the others wanted to back down on the idea. It wasn't so much he disagreed to the fun but more at the fact what it could prompt from the terminator, now or later.

"Just give Crazy Connor over there a zap if she doesn't do what I want her to do," Brad told the second in command. He playfully punched Matt's shoulder then approached the terminator. He slyly smirked at the terminator in front of him. "Let's see how well you're programmed, machine." He rested his hands on his belt bulk.

Cameron tilted her head then remarked, "I am a cybernetic organism that is capable of terminating you in three point two seconds."

Brad laughed and so did a few of his comrades. He settled down and remarked, "Well, cyborg let's see if you're capable of using that mouth for something more useful, sweetheart."

Cameron clenched her hands at her side. "Nor am I a sweetheart, idiot."

Brad took a step closer and brought his fist near the terminator's face. But he pulled back upon realizing such a punch could inflicted more pain on him than her. He bared his teeth then hissed, "On your knees, machine."

Cameron didn't compile and held her position. She refused to submit to anybody let alone this idiotic human.

"Kneel or watch Connor fry!" Brad snapped.

Matt backed up Brad's words by holding up the remote. He slipped his thumb over the electrocution button.

"Now," Brad sneered.

Cameron had rather calm breathing, and she slowly lowered to her knees in front of the hulking man. She watched Brad fumble with his belt buckle then the button hidden behind it. She immediately understood the human's intentions to force her to perform oral sex on him. All she could remind herself was that it'd spare Sarah Connor. But chains rattled over on the bed then Sarah Connor's venomous words filled the room.

"You fucking bastards!" Sarah drew everybody's attention to her, and she jerked on the right chain around her wrist that locked her to the bed. "You leave her the fuck alone!"

Brad lit up at the fact that Sarah Connor was now awake to witness the machine please him. "Connor, you're up just in time to enjoy the party."

"You sick son of a bitch," Sarah snapped. She was furious and her green in her eyes lit up by fire.

"Don't you fuckin' touch her."

Brad still clutched his unbuttoned waistband and his chest shook from a silent laugh. "Like you really care about a machine, Connor." He turned back to the machine knelt before him. "It's not rape if it's not human... that's a little advice from future humans."

"I swear to God if you touch her," Sarah Connor snarled.

"What?" Brad waited for the pending threat but received nothing but a furious glare. He switched back to Cameron and studied her mechanical expression that show absolutely no emotions. He puckered his lips and thought back to his earlier advice, which made him swiftly grin at an evil idea. "Actually..." He took a step back and reworked his button and belt.

The soldiers were surprised that Brad backed off from having the terminator do him. Matt lowered the remote some but didn't remove his thumb.

"I want to show you what I mean, Connor." Brad now put his hands on his hips and declared, "Alright, machine you're going to do Connor."

Cameron had stood up after Brad moved away from her. She deciphered the human's idiotic slang but pretended not to understand it.

Sarah Connor was dumbfounded by the turn of events. She shook her head and whispered, "No."

Brad grinned at the prisoner on the bed. He informed, "It's not raping you when it's not human, Connor."

"You are fucking sick," Sarah spat.

Brad could tell none of his comrades would argue him. He did detect that Matt was hesitant to the idea, but Brad didn't care. He instead pulled out his pistol and pointed it at Sarah Connor. "Fuck her, machine or I won't wait for Matt to fry her."

Cameron chest rose and fell in rapid succession because her earlier rage had returned in her. She found her HUD returning without control, and it ordered her to terminate Brad. She forced yet another override before she willingly gave into the order and risked Sarah Connor's life.

"Fuck her, now!" Brad yelled at the terminator. He cocked his pistol for his final warning.

Sarah clawed at the mattress under her hands. She struggled against her bonds but it was useless.

Cameron never blinked during her staring match with Brad. However, she finally moved and approached the bed. She held Sarah Connor's eyes with hers and wished she could give her assurance, yet it was faulty.

Brad edged closer to the bed. "Fuck her like you want it, machine... like it's real to you."

Cameron slightly pivoted back towards Brad but stopped herself. She switched her attention to Sarah Connor's face and saw the fear there. She knew this required her to get on the bed so she slowly lifted her heavy weight up onto the bed.

Sarah Connor sucked in her breath when the terminator straddled her hips. She wanted to toss Cameron

off her body, having never had the terminator this close to her. She rammed her eyes shut though at the thought of Cameron's small but strong hands caressing her body soon. She'd had a few dreams about such an event but none played out this way.

"Kiss her, machine," Brad snapped.

Cameron had a tense posture as she straddled the human's hips. She detected the sweat that coated her palms and the friction built up in her cybernetic structure. She'd felt this way a few times previously when she'd accidentally been in Sarah's personal space. But this time it was far more heightened due to pending circumstances.

Sarah peered up again at the terminator, who struggled with Brad's latest order.

Cameron leaned forward slowly in order to carry out the kiss. She pressed her right palm near Sarah's head while her left was just near Sarah's shoulder. She gradually lowered yet still hesitated to kiss the human.

Sarah had glossy eyes and a dire expression at seeing the terminator's stoic features. She licked her dry lips and whispered, "Cameron, please... not like this."

Brad shifted his gun's barrel towards Sarah Connor's head and smugly checked, "You'd rather die than have a machine fuck you? Just go with it, Connor."

"Fuck you!" Sarah hotly yelled at Brad. But her anger fizzled when Cameron's head came down to hers. Her breathing was hitched and her heartbeat frantic. She wished it was just a nightmare she'd wake up from shortly.

Cameron studied Sarah's prone features and her HUD popped up with a command to terminate Sarah Connor. Without any strain, Cameron reversed the order with an override. She lowered her head more but brushed her cheek across Sarah's in a gentle manner. She shut her eyes and whispered, "Do you trust me, Sarah?"

Sarah twisted her eyes closed, tightly and inhaled the soft scent that was Cameron. She realized she had to cross this bridge finally if she were to survive. She bit her lower lip and murmured, "I trust you." Sarah emphasized her words by managing her left hand around Cameron's lower arm. She gave a gentle squeeze to the terminator's warm skin.

"Fucking kiss her already!" Brad shouted at the terminator.

Cameron moved her left hand and cupped Sarah's lowered jaw and temple into her palm. She moved her head until her lips brushed across Sarah's. After a beat, she pressed her lips more firmly against the soft ones under hers.

Sarah tried not to find enjoyment in the kiss that'd been forced on her, and even Cameron. Yet her body responded to Cameron's seductive, full lips that were so silky. She unknowingly let a moan escape her once she allowed Cameron to enter her mouth.

The terminator wasn't absolutely focused on the kiss as her sensors detected that the soldiers had eased closer to her and Sarah. She pinpointed Matt's exact location, which was most crucial.

Sarah felt the dance between her and Cameron's tongues come to a slow end. She gradually opened her

eyes as Cameron withdrew from her. Then it registered that an eruption was about to happen by the expression on the terminator's face. Her entire body tensed up when Cameron's right arm ripped from her hand and went upwards.

Cameron had straightened up and moved in a blur. There were two loud pops of metal when Cameron tore free the upper wrought iron bar from the bed's frame. She then violently twisted her torso around and fired the serrated edge pipe as a spear in Matt's direction. But in her path was also Brad so she'd increased her force to make sure she'd get her main target.

Brad pulled his gun's trigger but it was futile. His bullet hit the wall behind Cameron and the long pipe sliced through his chest, lifted him, and sent him backwards. His back collided into somebody else.

Matt screamed in agony but the serrated edge ran through his ribs and pierced his heart. He collapsed dead on the floor with Brad on him and locked to him due to the pipe.

"Stop her!"

Cameron grabbed the chain that held Sarah's right arm. She easily broke the chain with a subtle jerk. She repeated the same with the left chain just before the soldiers' handguns were fired at them. She managed her smaller but longer body over top of Sarah Connor to protect her from bullets.

Sarah Connor muffled a small cry but tucked her arms and hands under Cameron. She heard a bullet bounce off Cameron's back.

"Stop firing, idiots unless you want to get killed!" a soldier hollered over the gunfire din.

The terminator found her second opening at those expected orders. She hastily rolled off Sarah Connor and snapped the chain that bound her hands. She lifted them into a fighting stance and readied for the soldiers to come at her.

"Slow her down while I get the remote," the same soldier barked.

Cameron calculated how much time she had to stop that soldier from obtaining the remote and how much effort it'd take for her to back these other soldiers off. She wasn't the least surprised when three of them jumped for her and tried to knock her down.

The soldier who wanted the remote knelt beside Matt and Brad. He noted that Brad was still alive but barely. He shook his head and felt around for the remote. He cursed when he couldn't find it. He desperately tried to move Brad in hopes to see better then he spotted what he thought was the remote. He slipped his hand between the locked bodies, but an intense pain plunged into his hand when a bullet struck him.

The soldier, Sean, hissed and retracted his hand. He looked over his shoulder to see who had fired at him. He was stunned to see Sarah Connor standing up on the bed, ankles still shackled, and gun aimed at his head.

"Step back, soldier boy." Sarah slotted her eyes when Sean didn't take her seriously so she shot a bullet into his shoulder, which made him howl. "Next bullet will make it's mark in a fatal spot," she swore.

Sean clutched his wounded shoulder but stepped away from Matt and Brad. He then had to jump back when the terminator tossed a handful of his comrades like feathers.

Cameron grabbed the last soldier that hadn't fallen, besides Sean. She grabbed him by his collar and promptly swung him around then slammed him head first into the concrete wall. She grinned when the man's head smashed open against it and blood trickled down the wall. The terminator shifted her attention to Sean, who was being carefully watched by Sarah.

"Get the remote... I'll watch him." Sarah never moved her eyes off the last standing soldier.

Cameron stepped over the fallen soldiers and came to the Matt and Brad. Her heads-up display was fully operational, and she stole a glance at Sean. Her HUD told her to terminate him, which she didn't override but temporarily ignored the order. Cameron knelt beside the humans that had the wrought iron pipe sticking through them and blood spilling out on the cold floor. She rarely had sympathy and certainly did not for these two. She found the remote, collected it, and stood up with it in her hand.

Sarah Connor was relieved to see it. She watched the terminator shove it down her cleavage for safe keeping.

The terminator centered her HUD display on Sean and the red word TERMINATE flashed in her screen. She balled up her right hand into a fist and prepared to follow the order.

"Cameron, I need a little help over here," Sarah tried. She could not just see but felt the terminator's murderous intent for the last soldier.

Cameron broke from her cold stare on Sean and looked over at Sarah. Again, her heads-up display feverishly commanded her to terminate Sarah Connor. She tightened her right fist and dangerously neared the infamous Sarah Connor.

Sarah shook her head at the terminator's chilled face. She kept her gun aimed at Sean but seriously debated whether to point it at Cameron. "Come on, snap out of it, Cameron. You control your own programming."

Cameron tilted her head back and her mechanical expression centered on Sarah.

"Cameron," Sarah tried one last time, "I trust you... don't fail me on this." The air between her and Cameron was intense.

The terminator didn't shift or change facial features. But her HUD flickered twice then the order to terminate Sarah Connor was overridden once more. She bowed her head, stepped forward, and grabbed the manacles around the human's ankles.

Sarah sighed in relief but quickly looked back at Sean. She carefully got off the bed and felt relief when her boots hit the floor. She glanced at Cameron again and saw how she seemed to lose some life in her. She considered how ridiculous it sounded, yet it was true. "What's happening inside you?"

Cameron took a deep breath and murmured, "The spider is attempting another method to reset me. It is erasing my memories."

Sarah looked back and forth between Sean and Cameron. "You can't stop it?"

"I am attempting to stop it."

Sarah cursed because there was little she could do to help Cameron, who actually looked worn from her

internal struggle. "Just stay with me, Cameron." She focused on their lock confines. "We need to get the hell out of here."

Cameron obliged by going over to the lock metal door and kicking it open. She observed the bent door landing on the ground and skidding a few more feet. She tilted her head at the military truck that would serve as their getaway transportation.

Sarah adjusted her hands on the gun. "What should we do with him?" She rarely asked for Cameron's advice, but she was rundown too and couldn't completely think out a plan. All she knew was that she needed to escape.

Cameron turned on her heels and stated, "I will dispose of him."

"Wait," Sean begged, "I can be of use."

Sarah Connor moved around the room until she was at the door with Cameron. She had her gun aimed at Sean, who had turned in his spot.

Sean held up his hands and pleaded, "I don't want to die."

Sarah swallowed against the bitter vile in the back of her throat because she knew he, like the others, had agreed to her and Cameron's kidnapping and near rapes. For the first time, she sided with a terminator over another human. She unclenched her jaw and whispered, "Do what you want, Cameron." She lowered her gun and added, "I'll get that truck started." Then she was gone and made a jog for the truck's driver's door before she heard any audible sounds from Sean.

Cameron neared Sean without any emotions displayed on her face or in her eyes. She required no emotions to complete this minor task nor would she give this human any of her precious, rare emotions. She grabbed him by the throat and hefted him up into the air.

Sarah Connor tapped the gas pedal a few times to rev the warm truck. She dropped her head back against the headrest and released a deep sigh. In the distance, she heard a wrenching scream that she ignored by turning the radio onto a random station. She shut her eyes and let herself enjoy the classical piano music until it hit her. This was the song Nocturne in C sharp minor.

For once, the piano song gave Sarah Connor solace so she turned it up a bit louder in hopes it'd take her back to her house where John was doing his homework and Cameron playing this song upstairs. Once the six minutes of beautiful piano music ended, Sarah's eyes drifted open and reality washed over her. She and Cameron needed to get away before Sam and his other lackeys returned for them. She also needed a way to deal with Cameron's pending reset but more importantly the collar on her neck. She instinctively reached for it and clutched it in frustration.

"That was Frédéric Chopin's famous Nocturne in C sharp minor, which was featured in the movie *The Pianist*," the radio announcer commented. He then shuffled a few papers near the microphone. "Before we continue with the thirty minutes of nonstop classical, the weather first."

Sarah turned down the volume but still listened as it may clue her into her whereabouts.

"In greater Great Falls, the temperatures are expected to be in the teens and tomorrow peak to the upper thirties. But tomorrow looks to be sunny with little to no cloud cover." The radio announcer continued with the weather, but Sarah ignored him.

Sarah muttered, "Great Falls?" But she lost her thoughts because Cameron tossed open the truck's passenger door. She noticed a hefty pack in the terminator's hands. She was surprised by three wallets that were placed on the dashboard.

Cameron put the pack between her and Sarah on the bench seat. She then lifted her eyes to Sarah and slotted them at the black collar. "It must be removed from your neck."

Sarah agreed and fingered it but reminded, "It will set off if it's tampered with."

The terminator considered this factor then argued, "I can remove it without detonating it, but you must assist me." She scooted the pack out of the way then came down the bench until she was a few inches from touching Sarah.

Sarah tensed up but tried to calm down. She heard a low pop at Cameron's hip so she glanced down to see a rugged pocketknife in Cameron's hand; she suspected it was one of the soldier's. It was held out to her, and she gingerly accepted it. "What do you want me to do?"

Cameron lifted her hands then with her right index finger, she traced an invisible line across the top of her right wrist. "You must make a small cut across here."

Sarah was obviously confused and parted her lips to ask why but was cut short.

"I have short tubules that can connect to the collar and disable it." Cameron drew the line across her wrist again and explained, "If you cut here then I can extend them from my body."

Sarah took a steady breath then let it out slowly. "Okay." She opened the black pocketknife to find the blade rather long and with a serrated teeth at the bottom of the blade. She held Cameron's wrist into her left hand and brought knife's sharp tip to tender skin. "Are you sure about this?"

"Yes."

Sarah inhaled and held her breath as she pressed the blade down through the skin until she hit metal. She nervously drew the blade across Cameron's wrist and opened the skin to reveal a thin slit. She pulled the bloody knife away but wiped it clean on her jeans. "Now what?"

"Now you relax so that I can concentrate." Cameron pressed her left hand down into the bench seat and rotated her right hand down as far as possible. She instantly ordered her tubules to life, which snaked through the fine slit and slithered in midair towards Sarah Connor.

"Holy shit," Sarah gasped and instinctively jumped back at seeing the black tubes that neared her face.

"Please relax," Cameron instructed. "I will not harm you." She directed the tubules down to Sarah's throat, and they wrapped around the black collar.

Sarah decided not to watch and just prayed this wouldn't blow up in her face, literally. She heard a low hum under her chin and after a long minute, the collar chirped then fell away from her neck.

Cameron caught the explosive collar with the tubules. She retracted her tubules but not without grabbing the collar into her right hand. Once her tubules were gone, she held up the collar in triumph.

Sarah gave a lopsided smile at the terminator. "Nice work, girlie." She took the collar and decided,

"This will be handy." She opened the driver's door, hopped out, and placed the collar several feet away from the truck. She got back in the running truck and buckled up. "Let's blow this popsicle stand."

Cameron had buckled up too but cocked her head to the side. "Please explain."

"It's a figure of speech," Sarah replied. She looked from the shut garage door ahead of them then up over her head. She grinned at the black box that was hooked to the visor. She reached up and hit the button, which caused the garage door to slowly roll up. She put the truck into gear.

"Popsicle stand?" Cameron murmured in a perplexed tone.

Sarah decided to chuckle for once at Cameron's naiveness because it was refreshing compared to their earlier situation. She pulled her foot off the brake and allowed the truck to head through the open door. "In this case, we are going to blow this popsicle stand." She hit the gas harder, and the truck roared away from the small building. She couldn't be more happy to get away from the nightmare events despite Cameron's reset was a huge problem facing her. "You still have that remote?"

The terminator fished it out of her bodice and held it up in display.

"Perfect." Sarah glanced through her side review mirror and ordered, "Count to ten then hit the detonation button."

Cameron shifted her thumb over the button then indeed counted to ten. She pressed the button and the distant explosion filled her ears. She leaned to her right a bit and peered through the mirror to see the flames from the building.

"That should keep Sam off our trail for awhile," Sarah muttered to herself. Yet she suspected that Cameron heard her.

"It is not safe to return to John yet."

Sarah flexed her grip on the steering wheel but refused to look at the terminator. "Not until I figure out what to do with you, Tin-Miss."

Cameron blinked once then rotated her head to the human. "It is not just me that you must be concerned about." She noticed the rise of tension from Sarah. "Sam is still a threat... we cannot return until we've terminated that threat."

"First thing is first..." Sarah swallowed then glanced at the terminator. "We need to figure out how to fix you."

Cameron turned her head away and seemed to be consider a careful response. "It is impossible."

"There has to be a way to stop it... reverse it." Sarah was clearly desperate.

Cameron was quiet then slowly looked back at Sarah. "You are concerned."

"Yes," Sarah hissed. But she lost her angry fire at the terminator's long stare and her jaw loosened some as if she were going to say more, but Sarah didn't find anymore words.

Cameron cocked her head slightly then stated, "Thank you."

Sarah Connor looked at the dirt road then back at the terminator a few times. She was absolutely lost on why the terminator was appreciative and for the first time since they'd met.

The terminator stared back out the window. "You care... about me."

Sarah clenched her jaw together, but she had no response. There was a hot vile that rose up through her throat, and she wanted to scream it out at the terminator. But yet she denied it, for the first time too. She didn't know why she didn't give into her usual ire and verbally blast the terminator. Just maybe she was too worn to do it.

After a few long, silent minutes, Sarah shoved her thoughts aside and tried to focus on another situation. She finally prompted, "Great Falls."

Cameron had been scanning the local terrain, which consisted of open farmfields and the occasional tree. "It is two hours and twenty-one minutes away."

Sarah Connor drew her features inward and her eyebrows almost touched. "Where are we?" she tried more directly.

"We are 48.68 degrees north, 111.43 degrees west."

"And where the hell is that?"

Cameron tilted her head at the human. "Montana."

Sarah released a sigh now that the city's name made sense to her. "Great," she muttered. She realized just how far away she was from John and Derek. There was no support, no cell phone, or food, and Sarah was lost in Montana with a resetting terminator. She almost wanted to scream.

"If we continue west," Cameron's voice interrupted, "we should approach Route 15, and it will take us south to Great Falls." She looked over at Sarah, who was thinking over the information.

"Alright... we'll go to Great Falls. But if we pass through a small town first then we'll stop." Sarah glanced at the wallets sitting on the dash near Cameron. "Any money in them?"

Cameron leaned forward, scooped up the wallets, and set them on the bench seat between them. "One thousand one hundred twenty-one dollars." She then picked up one wallet and opened the trifolds. "And one credit card." She held it up in display.

Sarah reached over and snatched it from the terminator. She read aloud, "Harry Gaither." She pressed her lips together, which thinned neatly. She handed it back to Cameron. "The cash will do." She was happy about the amount of cash these men seemed to carry with them. She also hadn't considered the fact that Cameron was perceptive enough to check the soldiers for money before they left the building. Sarah hadn't been thinking clearly enough.

"Do you know who those men were?" Sarah slowed the rumbling truck once they came to the end of the road and to a paved one. She hesitated and wondered whether to go left, right, or straight.

"Left."

Sarah decided not to ask why and figured it was as a good of direction as the other two options.

"I do not know those men." Cameron considered all their faces then added, "They are not in my database."

"They all seemed to come from the future." Sarah grimaced at the thought that they seemed to be working for Skynet. "Is it typical for humans to work for Skynet?"

Cameron glanced at Sarah then back out the window. "As common as terminators working for the Resistance."

Sarah wasn't sure if it was a joke or not, but she left it alone. "Why would humans work for Skynet?"

"At a price," the terminator replied.

"Money?" Sarah huffed and shook her head.

"No." Cameron was quiet but turned her head and studied the human's profile. "Safety... life." She could tell whether Sarah would continue the discussion.

"But why send humans to bring you back?" Sarah bit her lower lip. "A terminator or two would be able to subdue you then ship you back."

"Yes, but a terminator is not as creative as a human." Cameron leaned her head back until it rested on the seat. "Nor would I be aware of humans from the future."

Sarah licked her lips and let the conversation die. She then realized that Cameron was just as important to Skynet as her son, and it meant she may have to look after the terminator too. She softly groaned at how much larger the problem was growing each day. But it would have to wait for now because the present problems needed to be solve, especially the ticking terminator.

"How much longer until you reset?"

Cameron pulled up her HUD display, which populated the estimated time until reset. "The ETR is now sixteen to twenty-six hours."

Sarah breathed heavily and tried to clear her head so she could talk this out with Cameron. "There has to be a way to stop this reset."

The terminator lifted her head off the rest and stated, "It is inevitable."

"It is not." Sarah flashed angry eyes at the terminator.

"There is no option but to-"

"There are always options!" Sarah Connor yelled at Cameron. She then suddenly slammed the wheel with her right palm and fumed, "There are always choices."

Cameron sat ridged and stared at the angry human. She slowly casted her view downward. Some dark emotion entered her that she didn't quite understand other than it made her feel weak.

Gradually, Sarah began to cool off and gained composure. A pin of regret entered her chest for yelling, again at the terminator. She wiped her face with her right hand in attempt to rid of her emotions.

"What's this spider thing?"

Cameron fisted her hands in her lap. "It is a small robot, which is implanted into a cortex module to reset a terminator."

"Implanted?" Sarah grew wide eye at this information. "You mean it's implanted in you?"

"Yes." Cameron reached to the back of her neck, but she could not find the slit that Sam had made last night. "It was implanted during the flight... while you were unconscious."

Sarah slotted her eyes and argued, "Then it can be removed."

Cameron exchanged looks with the human and saw the hope on Sarah's face. "A spider has never been removed from a terminator."

"There's always a first."

"It is highly unlikely due to the fact the spider has buried itself into my cortex module."

Sarah shook her head because that didn't make sense to her. "Bury itself as in it's inside your exoskeleton?" At Cameron's nod, she argued, "How can it do that though?"

"The spider is made of mimetic polyalloy," Cameron explained, but she'd hesitated at the end and caused Sarah to give her a leery glance. "I am also part mimetic polyalloy, which allows the spider to easily dig into my cortex module." Suddenly, she slammed her hands into the dash in front of her to stop from going into it when Sarah Connor hit the brakes.

Sarah Connor sharply turned her head to the terminator after the truck's tires stopped squealing and all there was left was the truck's low whine. She stared darkly at the terminator and seethed, "Mimetic polyalloy?" She breathed heavily and shook her head a few times. "You're made of mimetic polyalloy and can shape shift?"

"I cannot shape shift," Cameron disputed. "I am not like the T-X or T-1000 Series." She dropped her hands from the dashboard. "As I explained, I am a hybrid between the T-800 Series and T-1000 Series."

Sarah took her foot off the brake and hit the gas now. "Then you have a lot more explaining to do, girlie."

The terminator bowed her head and briefly shut her eyes. She could feel her head grind hard from the spider's lethal attempt to wipe out her oldest memories since she was first serviced by John Connor in 2027.

Sarah caught Cameron's twisted features so she reached over and gingerly touched the terminator's leg. "Cameron?" she called. She jumped in her seat when the terminator's hand roughly clutched hers. She should have known better than to get near the ticking terminator.

Cameron quickly looked at the human and her HUD ordered her to terminate Sarah Connor. She revealed her bright blue eyes.

Sarah looked back and forth between Cameron and the road. She quickly ordered, "Let go, Cameron."

The terminator increased her hold instead and coldly informed, "You must be terminated."

"That's Skynet's orders, Cameron," Sarah pleaded, "You can fight this."

Cameron tilted her head to the side. "What am I fighting for?" She reached to her side and plucked the pocketknife free. "John Connor said I was free... but I still follow orders." She opened the blade. "You force me to follow yours." She brought the tip towards Sarah Connor's wrist.

Sarah prepared to jerk the wheel so the truck would flip, but she made one last attempt. "And you have a choice now!" She became hopeful when the electric blue faded from Cameron. She glanced once back at the empty road then softly asked, "Will you please give me the knife?" She felt Cameron's grip soften.

The terminator stayed still then the blade closed back into the knife's handle. She then gently placed the pocketknife into the human's hand and released her. She shut her eyes as her HUD went chaotic then she inhaled sharply. She painfully whispered, "You must terminate me, Sarah... I am not safe." She revealed her strained features to Sarah. "I asked you to not let John do what he did if I went bad again... you must do the same."

Sarah slipped the knife away then replied, "You don't get off that easy, Tin-Miss." She gave a sad smile when Cameron just stared back in worry. Then she slammed on the gas to make the truck roar up to eighty miles per hour. "You just keep doing what you do best."

Cameron thought about her ability to kill. "And what is that?"

Sarah Connor gave a bittersweet smile but confidently answered, "Protecting me from threats."

Cameron stared for a long time at Sarah Connor and tried to process what emotion it invoked in her that Sarah Connor believed in her to protect. She would just have to consider it later though because she indeed needed to focus on the current threat towards Sarah. She urged her internal defenses to battle against the spider, for just awhile longer.

Chapter 4

"Mom!"

Sarah Connor had a wistful smile at hearing her son's voice. "Hey." She adjusted the phone's receiver closer to her mouth. "How are you?"

"How am I?" John almost sounded frantic. "How are you? Where are you? What's happened?"

"Fine. Montana. Kidnapped." Sarah cradled the phone closer and stayed near the pay phone to help block the wind.

"Funny, Mom. What the hell happened?"

Sarah lifted her eyes from the ground and studied Cameron, who was several feet away and guarded the truck. "Cameron and I were kidnapped by Skynet agents."

"Why?"

"They're after Cameron..." Sarah frowned as she thought about all the reasoning why this had happened to her. "Listen, I don't have time to tell you everything. But I can't come home just yet because a few of these agents are still on the loose."

"Derek and I can come help," John hastily offered.

"No," Sarah instantly snapped but softly repeated, "No, John. I don't want them to find you again." She hesitated but continued to explain her plans. "Cameron and I are going to handle them then we'll come home. I will keep in touch with you each day." She licked her dry lips. "We're in a small town in Montana called Shelby, but we're going to Great Falls for the night. Afterwards, we plan to track down the agents and clean up."

John let out a low sigh, but he agreed to it.

"Derek needs to stay with you," Sarah ordered.

"I know, Mom." John made a movement then continued to talk. "I was worried you were..."

"No," Sarah gently promised, "never." She swallowed against a faint lump in her throat because she knew it was a lie. But she didn't want to needlessly worry her son about her future death from cancer. "I need you to do me a small favor."

"Sure thing," John responded.

"Can you search on your laptop for some large store in Great Falls... what's that one big one-"

"Wal-mart, mom." John was obviously on his laptop by the distinct keyboard taps. "How about a hotel too?"

"That'd be great." Sarah focused on Cameron and waved for Cameron to join her.

The terminator left the truck and approached the human.

"Great." Sarah shifted closer to the terminator by one step but asked, "Can you tell Cameron the directions?"

"Memory trouble?" John bantered.

"You know me and directions," Sarah joked to her child. She then handed the phone to the terminator.

Cameron took the phone and greeted, "Hello, John."

"How is she doing?"

Cameron visually assessed Sarah then honestly replied, "She has looked better."

Sarah gave a dark glare to the terminator. "Get the directions." She then was surprised by the fact that Cameron gave an equal glower back. So she adjusted her attitude a bit and added, "Please?"

"Yes," Cameron replied to John, "I'm ready."

Sarah was intrigued by how Cameron's features went still and her eyes rather distant. She suspected that the terminator was mentally taking notes or even doing an audible record of John's directions for later playback.

Cameron suddenly blinked and shifted on her feet. "Yes, I swear." She paused then shifted her focus to

Sarah. "He wants to say goodbye." She held out the receiver to the human.

Sarah accept the phone but waited until the terminator was back to the truck before she spoke to her son. "What did you make her swear?"

"That she lets you win all the arguments," John teased. He heard his mother huff, but he went serious. "Be safe, mom... seriously."

"Safe as I can be," Sarah responded. "You keep your head low and remember what I taught you."

John almost let out a sigh but decided against it. He seriously replied, "I know, mom." He struggled on how to end the conversation and defaulted to some humor. "I miss your pancakes."

Sarah chuckled and shot back, "No you don't."

"Derek does make good muffins."

"You traitor," Sarah tormented back. She smiled at her son's soft laugh. "Now go on. I'll call tomorrow night."

"Alright. Be careful, mom."

Sarah slightly choked up because of an emotional ache in her chest. "You too, honey. See you soon." She turned to the pay phone.

"Mom?"

"Yeah?"

John faltered but finally whispered, "I love you."

Sarah felt a release at those few words. "I love you too, John."

"Bye, Mom."

"Bye," Sarah softly replied then she finally hung up. She held onto the receive for a extra moment before she looked back at the truck and terminator. She studied how the terminator loyally waited for her, and she briefly recalled Derek's words about training them to be pets. Sarah dropped her head to the side once she realized that Cameron's loyalty though wasn't programmed and had merely developed. She could only imagine why Cameron hung onto it considering how poorly she treated Cameron at times.

After a minute, Sarah shook away her thoughts and headed over to the truck under the light post. She wanted to ask Cameron to drive because Sarah was so exhausted, but it just wasn't safe yet. She instead asked, "How far to the Wal-mart?"

"It is one hour and twenty five minutes," Cameron responded.

"I think I can make it," Sarah murmured. She worked her hand through her wild hair. "But first, we should find a new means of transportation."

The terminator twisted around and assessed the truck. "It is auspicious." She turned back to the human.

"A pickup truck is preferable... specifically a Ford."

Sarah Connor folded her muscular arms and curiously studied the terminator. "Are Ford pickups your distant descendant or something?"

"No." Cameron pushed off the truck's side and factually remarked, "The F-350 Superduty crew cab is tight, especially in red." She brushed past the human.

"Red?" Sarah called across the truck's hood, "Why red?"

"It's my favorite color," Cameron answered.

Sarah Connor stood stunned then muttered, "Naturally." She grabbed the door's handle, jerked it open, and asked, "Why do you like red?" She started the truck and revved the loud engine. She wanted to leave the truck stop before anybody really noticed they were two women in a military style truck.

"It's a symbolic color that means many things such as violence or love." Cameron finished buckling up. "It can also mean danger or lust."

"Fire," Sarah supplied.

"Passion," Cameron countered.

Sarah softly grinned then debated, "Hatred."

"Or honor," the terminator reminded.

Sarah kept her grin and decided not to continue the debate. But she did agree the color had double meanings that could represent both good and evil in the world. She lost her earlier grin and became focused on the task at hand. "Keep your eyes open for a good truck."

"My eyes are open," the terminator responded.

Sarah rolled hers because the terminator always took things literally, but she couldn't help a faint grin again. She made a left down a residential street and the truck's headlights poured over a red pickup truck. "I think we found a match."

"It is a F-150."

"It'll do," Sarah argued. She came to the end of the road and was forced to go left or right so she went right. "Let's park this and get that truck."

"Agreed." Cameron reached for the pack next to her then the wallets. She shoved the wallets into them then mentioned, "I placed two Glocks and a carbine into the back of the truck." She seemed uncomfortable about something but explained, "It would be safer for you to carry them."

Sarah shrugged then shut the truck off after parking it. "I'm going to go get the truck. I'll come down here to get you but be ready to move fast."

"That is not safe-"

"You're injured," Sarah cut off. She indicated a few of the bullet wounds on the terminator. "It'll draw

too much attention on the street." She sighed then carefully asked, "Can you sit in the back of the truck with the carbine and a Glock?"

Cameron weighed her choices but finally nodded.

Sarah nodded back then hopped out of the truck into the dead street. First she grabbed a handgun then marched down the street. She was grateful it was dark and quiet. She suspected these locals rolled up the sidewalk fairly early, but she still didn't want to draw any attention to them. She made her way to the red Ford F-150 that waited on the curb.

Cameron had climbed in the back of the truck and hid behind the flaps. She thought back to her promise to John over the phone earlier. She truly hoped she could hold up to it considering her circumstances. She lost her thoughts because of the distant roar from a pickup truck. She hadn't expected it to go so smoothly for Sarah Connor, but they were due for some luck. She poked her head out from the flap when the truck's headlights streamed through the crack.

The terminator collected the two remaining weapons and hurried from the military truck. She adjusted the pack on her shoulder and went to the Ford's passenger side. She climbed into the red pickup truck and tossed the pack onto the floor.

"Buckle up." Sarah Connor hurried the truck down the road and passed the military one in relief. She didn't like being in it.

"How did you manage to obtain the truck so quickly?"

"Easy." Sarah pointed at the ignition where the keys dangled with a skull keychain.

Cameron was surprised and looked from the ignition to Sarah in pure confusion. "The owner left the keys in the ignition?"

"Almost." Sarah pointed upward. "In the visor."

The terminator was still confused but more as to why a human would do such a silly thing. She shook it off and instead put the weapons underneath the dash so they were hidden away. "We must take Route 15 to Great Falls."

"One step ahead of you, girlie." Sarah Connor hit the gas harder once they were on Route 2, which intersected with Route 15. She and Cameron soon went quiet though and the ride to Great Falls seemed almost longer than the hour and half.

Sarah kept to her thoughts and went over all the ins and outs on why Skynet would be determined to obtain Cameron. How could one, single terminator threaten Skynet and the rest of the terminators? Sarah didn't have the answer, and she wondered if she'd ever know. All she could do though was keep Cameron away from Skynet if it somehow meant Skynet's demise later down the road. But what could Cameron really do to stop Skynet if that was even possible? Sarah mentally groaned and pushed the thoughts aside once she spotted road signs for Great Falls.

"Take exit 280," Cameron informed.

Sarah Connor followed the terminator's instructions the rest of the way so they'd make it to the Walmart before it became any later. She soon spotted the massive store off in the distance, and she made

the u-turn to get to it. She slowed the truck once they rolled into the parking lot. She chose a distant parking spot, put it into park, shut it off, and turned to Cameron.

The terminator had pulled out the wallets from the pack. "You should take cash."

Sarah had already considered this idea and watched the terminator count out some money. "What do I need for your bullet wounds?" She was starting a mental shopping list.

"It is not needed since I will soon res-"

"Cameron," Sarah started in a warning tone. She found rich brown eyes lifted to her. "We're going to stop this reset, tonight."

Cameron lowered her filled hands on top of the packs. "I have repeatedly informed you that it is impossible."

Sarah caught the terminator by the wrist, but her hold wasn't harsh. "You terminators use that word too freely." She leaned in closer to Cameron. "We're going to remove that spider from your cortex."

"It cannot be done," Cameron refuted.

"Have you ever tried?"

The terminator lifted her chin slightly yet didn't reply.

"I see," Sarah murmured. She released the terminator then straightened up.

Cameron softly explained, "Such an attempt may prove fatal."

"And you prefer the alternative?" Sarah grew darker at the possible implications. She saw Cameron was about to speak, but she clarified, "You'd rather revert to your Skynet subroutines and kill me than take a risk and maybe end up damaged?"

Cameron stared at the human for a few quiet beats then bowed her head. She softly murmured, "I had... not considered this." She shut her eyes. "I am programmed to not damage myself for personal gain."

"Then just look at this way," Sarah started. But she wanted Cameron's attention on her so she hooked her index finger under the terminator's chin and lifted her head until copper eyes reached her. "This spider is a threat to you... to me, and to John. If you want to protect us from that then you have to attempt to remove it."

Cameron freed her right hand and grasped Sarah's into hers. "I will attempt to."

"Good." Sarah squeezed the terminator's hand then let go. "What we need to do this?"

"Needle nose pliers, first aid kit," Cameron ticked off in a monotone, "and bandages."

"That's it?"

The terminator handed the human a few hundred dollars in cash. "It'll do. I will wait here."

"Don't go anywhere," Sarah teased as she tossed the door open.

"I was not planning on it."

Sarah was out of the truck but looked back at the terminator. "A joke, Cameron... look into them." She slammed the door and strolled off to Wal-mart's retail door. She took a shopping cart with her and loaded up on Cameron's needed items but also purchased supplies such as food, water, and new clothes. She then decided on two cheap, prepaid cell phones to hold her and Cameron over until they could get home to more money for better phones. But on her walk through the check-out line, Sarah indulged herself by grabbing a pack of M&M's plain for later. That reminded her that she needed a quick dinner because she hadn't eaten in days.

Cameron had watched Sarah Connor come back from the store with several plastic bags in the cart. She hopped out of the truck once Sarah was close enough. She helped get the bags into the truck bed then got back into the truck.

Sarah disposed of the shopping cart and got into the truck. She started the truck while asking, "Where to for the hotel?"

"There's a Holiday Inn Express nearby." Cameron point to her right. "Get back onto Smelter Avenue, follow it for half a mile then make a left onto First Street."

Sarah easily followed directions and roared down Smelter Avenue and made the left onto First Street. She spotted the distant sign for the hotel. "I see it." She weaved through the light traffic then pulled into the hotel's parking lot. She shut off the truck. "Wait here. I'll get us a room."

"Be careful," Cameron called as the human left. She kept a careful eye on the human as she entered the quiet hotel. She knew Sarah Connor could handle herself, but it never kept Cameron's concerns completely away.

Soon enough, Sarah returned to the truck and decided to move it closer to their room. She was obviously exhausted and couldn't wait to get some rest tonight if it was at all possible. Once they were parked again, they climbed out of the truck and took the bags that were in the truck bed. Sarah led the way to the room on the third floor and let Cameron pass before she followed in next.

Cameron set the bags down on the nearest bed then turned to Sarah.

Sarah tossed her bags next Cameron's then let out a sigh.

"If we are going to do this then we must attempt it sooner than later."

Sarah knew that Cameron had a good point. She placed her hands on her hips and first asked, "How exactly are we doing this?"

"You will have to reopen the slit in the back of neck," Cameron explained. "I will attempt to push the spider back out, and you will need to grab a hold of it with the pliers to keep it from digging back into my cortex."

Sarah took a deep breath and calmly said, "Okay... it sounds easy enough."

"For you, yes." Cameron turned to the bags then searched for the pliers and medical kit. She found them and handed them to Sarah.

"On the other bed?" Sarah suggested.

"No." Cameron seemed to decide the best location then announced, "The bathroom would be best." She led the way into the white wall bathroom and turned on the light. Once Sarah was in with her, she shut the door then ordered, "Sit down."

Sarah lowered herself to the floor and placed the medical kit, pliers, and the pocketknife on the tiled floor. She noticed Cameron sitting in front of her. "If this doesn't work..."

"Then my chip must be removed, destroyed, and my body burned," Cameron instructed curtly. "I cannot return to Skynet."

Sarah merely nodded then switched back to the task at hand. "Okay so... how we do this?"

The terminator started to move and instructed, "Open your legs." She missed how Sarah's eyebrows hiked up because she had her back to Sarah. She scooted herself between Sarah's legs then reached for her hair. She pulled it aside to reveal her neck and bent forward. "Do you see the scar?"

"Barely." Sarah picked up the pocketknife and opened it. "But I can do it." She brought the tip to the girl's skin but didn't press the blade down. "Are you ready?"

"Yes."

Sarah inhaled deeply and asked herself the same question. "Alright." She lowered the knife's tip the rest of the way and cut through the skin sheath. She carefully drew the blade up about an inch along Cameron's neck and stopped just past the base of Cameron's skull. "Now what?"

"Get the pliers and wait." Cameron leaned forward a bit more and shut her eyes. She clenched her hands together as she surged her cortex's defenses against the spider. She also manipulated her alloy exoskeleton to shift and purge the spider.

Sarah parted her lips at seeing the terminator's metal neck and the skull's base. She grew wide eye when the metal seemed to move and ripple like water. "My god..." She lifted the pliers and waited for some indicator that the spider was being rejected by Cameron's body. She was fascinated though by how Cameron's skull looked hard like a T-800's, but moved like skin.

Cameron hunched forward further and opened her mouth from the sheer will that it required to fight off the spider. She lowered her right hand to the floor and pressed her palm into the floor.

Sarah heard a low crack and realized the tile under Cameron's hand was fractured. She placed her freehand onto Cameron's thigh and murmured, "Come on, Cameron you can do this. You can't let it control you... don't let it stop you."

The terminator had never felt such pain in her head until now. She'd experienced strong pain in the past from processing loads of data yet nothing like this hurt so much. But she couldn't let it win and what gave her encouragement was Sarah Connor's hand that'd slipped down hers and covered her fist. She held her fist tightly.

Sarah held tightly to Cameron's left fist. She was about to say something, but she gasped at hearing a whine from Cameron's head. She straightened up upon seeing little tentacles flaying about through the slit. "It's coming out, Cameron."

The terminator had started to breathe heavy. She thought her systems were going to shut down because the spider tried to force it upon her, and it would be fatal if it happened to her. She reversed the shut down orders sent through her system then surged renewed strength into rejecting the spider.

Sarah had the pliers wide open and tried to target the waving tentacles. She gritted her teeth then plunged the pliers forward and amazingly grabbed several tentacles. She grinned in triumph and declared, "I got some of it. I'll try to pull it out."

"No," Cameron hissed, "you will... damage... me." She could barely get the words out. She was too focused on her fight with the spider.

Sarah growled and tried to keep a handle on the spider so it wouldn't go back down. She couldn't believe the strength of the tiny robot. She wrapped her left hand around the handle and held onto it. "Alright, I got a hold on it."

Cameron wouldn't back down from the battle against the spider's control. She started to feel her head burning again much like last time. Then her HUD flickered on and off. Next her eyes grew bluer by the second.

Sarah slowly drew the spider out as Cameron pushed it. She grinned at the terminator's ability to win against the little monster. She then noted what appeared to be its head rolling around in Cameron's soft alloy. "I think you almost have it."

"Sarah," Cameron painfully murmured, "I can't..."

Sarah saw that the spider was moving back into Cameron's head. "Shit," she hissed and increased her grip on the pliers' handles to hold the spider still. "Don't you give up!" She grasped the terminator's left hip and yelled, "You have got to have faith that you can do this."

Cameron pressed her right palm deeper into the cracked tile. She'd had her eyes open, and they were bluer than earlier. But her HUD suddenly went dead, and she saw nothing but blackness. She disregarded it because she focused all her energy and system into rejecting the spider from her cortex module.

Sarah put her left hand back on the pliers handles just as the spider surged out of Cameron's skull. She lifted it up into the air, but it violently shook around. Sarah couldn't hold onto it as it jumped off the pliers once it went into liquid form.

The silver spider landed several feet away, just under the sink. It gathered itself onto its thin tentacles then suddenly raced for its host.

"Cameron, get up!"

The terminator was weary, but her HUD came back online. She spotted the spider almost upon her and Sarah so she hastily stretched out her right arm. She dropped her hand down just as her tubules jutted from her wrist.

Sarah was half up, her hands around Cameron's waist, and she stopped upon seeing Cameron's tubule ends disappear into the spider. She was stunned when the tubules retracted and the spider pooled on floor into a limp liquid.

Cameron drew her tubules back to her wrist but dropped something very small into her left hand. She sighed in relief and glanced at the lifeless spider.

"What... just happened?"

The terminator lifted her left hand and displayed her trophy. "Chip," she could only manage.

Sarah leaned forward and studied the chip that was a size of corn kernel but much thinner. She then checked one more time that the spider wasn't going to move towards them again. She was convinced and slumped back onto the floor.

Cameron felt the same way and leaned back into the human.

Sarah had her hands behind her to keep her upright and her legs stretched out in a worn posture. She sensed the terminator's head against her lower stomach so she peered down after a beat. She softly asked, "Are you okay?"

Cameron had her eyes shut, but she now peered up into concerned green ones. "Yes." She lowered her gaze and studied the small chip in her left hand. "Are you okay, Sarah?"

It was rare that Cameron ever used Sarah's name, and it took her a second to realize her name had been said to her. Sarah shook it off and replied, "I'm fine." She reached for the tiny chip that Cameron had and nimbly took it. "Its brain?"

"Essentially, yes."

Sarah was able to let the tiny chip on the tip of her index finger. She brought it closer to her face and noted the miniature circuitry. "Amazing," she murmured. She returned it to Cameron. "What can we do with its... body?" She studied how the spider remained still and appeared to just be a mercury puddle. "I only know that melting it can destroy it."

"That is correct," Cameron agreed. She sat up finally, and she debated how to word her next choice carefully. She softly confided, "I would prefer to keep it for repairs."

Sarah flexed her jaw a few times. She'd come to discover that Cameron liked to stock pile parts for later repairs. She softly sighed then replied, "Alright." She rested her hand on the terminator's shoulder and mentioned, "I'll get a water bottle that you can put it into for now."

Cameron just nodded then she and Sarah climbed to their feet. Sarah stepped out of the bathroom while Cameron knelt beside spider. This gave Cameron an opportunity to inspect the spider by merely pushing it around with her fingertips.

Sarah returned just as the terminator jumped back from the spider, which had wrapped a few, formed tentacles around Cameron's fingers. She only relaxed once the spider's tentacles weakened and fell off Cameron's fingers. Carefully, Sarah went to the sink, unscrewed the water bottle's cap, and poured out the water. She then knelt beside Cameron.

The terminator accepted the empty bottle that had a Deer Park label on it. She then asked for the pocketknife, which she used to manipulate the liquid alloy into the bottle. She closed up the knife, returned it, and screwed on the cap.

"What about the chip?" Sarah checked. She spotted it still in Cameron's left hand. "It needs to be destroyed."

The terminator studied the tiny chip and wondered what knowledge was on it. But after a moment, she decided it was far too risky to keep it. Cameron placed the chip on her right thumb, clamped it down with her index finger, and easily rubbed her fingers together.

Sarah noticed the black powder as the terminator destroyed the tiny chip. She lifted her eyes to Cameron's face. "Let's get you cleaned up huh?"

Cameron soon sat on the foot of the empty bed then Sarah sat behind her. She leaned forward and held her hair aside while Sarah carefully stitched the slit at the back of her neck.

Sarah worked the needle and thread through the wound. She held her jaw tightly and tried to ignore the bloody metal underneath the skin sheath. She instead struck up a conversation to keep her from thinking about Cameron's exoskeleton. "Will that spider be safe in the bottle?"

Cameron glanced over at the plastic bottle sitting next to the television. "Yes." She lowered her eyes. "I will put it in a glass jar once we get home."

"Are those things common?" Sarah indicated the spider.

"They were not necessary at first," the terminator replied, "However, Skynet learned that many T-800 Series terminators were becoming rogue. In response, Skynet built the T-900 to handle rogue terminators and spiders were also developed to reset T-800's out in the field."

"Why not just destroy the rogue terminator?"

Cameron blinked once then answered, "Initially, yes they were merely destroyed. But Skynet decided that a slow reset from a spider would cause more havoc for the humans."

Sarah had pulled the needle through the skin but hesitated. She shook her head then continued sewing the slit closed. "Do all rogue terminators work for the Resistance?"

"No, there are rogue terminators who are independent of Skynet because they've become self-aware after a long period of time." Cameron went silent but decided to add more to it. "They are considered dangerous to both Skynet and the Resistance."

"Have some self-aware terminators freely joined the Resistance?"

Cameron hadn't expected Sarah Connor to be so intrigued by the rogue terminators, yet she wouldn't refuse to answer. "Yes, but not many."

Sarah finished sewing the slit closed and cut the string. She then set the needle aside and took the needle nose pliers that she'd brought from the bathroom. "Take your tank top off, and I'll get these bullets out."

"I can repair the damage," the terminator argued. She'd straightened up and twisted around to obtain the pliers.

Sarah held them away from the terminator and ordered, "Take off your top."

Cameron clearly had an internal struggle with it, but she finally removed her black tank top and set it in her lap. She felt the human's warm hand press into her back.

"Damn," Sarah muttered after she counted fourteen. She knew there were a few in the front too. "Better get started if I want to sleep tonight." She had a faint grin but lost it because Cameron would not find it funny. She started at the top and worked her way down slowly.

"You must eat tonight," Cameron mentioned.

"I'll order something after I get your back finished." Sarah pulled out another bullet and dropped it into the mounting pile in the Wal-mart bag. She reached into another wound and easily found the bullet waiting on the surface. "Why is de-bulleting you far easier than it was that T-800?" She hadn't meant for Cameron to really respond to her rhetorical question.

"He had a hyperalloy exoskeleton, and a bullet will ricochet then bury deeper into his skin sheath. Therefore it must be dug out."

Sarah considered this then thought about the T-1000 mimetic polyalloy. "But the T-1000 can easily manipulate its body to push the bullets out."

"Yes." Cameron twisted her head to the side and had a partial view of Sarah. "My exoskeleton is a merge between non-mimetic polyalloy and mimetic polyalloy. In many ways, it is metallic skin that I can manipulate to some extent."

Sarah swallowed at this news. She removed another bullet and dropped it in the bag. "Is there a specific name for it?"

Cameron turned her head around. "Skynet never gave it an official name, but in Research and Development it was known as malleable polyalloy." She lowered her eyes to her hands in her lap. "Skynet believed it would speed up the self repair process for terminators and therefore put them back into combat sooner."

Sarah tried to grapple with all the information she had about the different alloys. She came to the last two bullets and noticed just before she put the pliers to entry wound, she saw the bullet shift closer to the opening. She realized she just witnessed the malleable polyalloy rejecting the bullet. She grabbed the bullet with her pliers and removed it.

Cameron next felt the human's careful touch to clean the wounds so they wouldn't get infected by bacteria. But there was no pain, and it went rather quickly. Soon enough, she had to turn around and let Sarah handle the few bullets spotted on her chest and stomach.

"Do you feel pain when I do this?"

"No," the terminator answered.

Sarah glanced up at Cameron but focused back on her work. "It's no wonder you have no qualms hurting or killing humans."

The terminator tilted her head at this remark. She was obviously carefully processing each word then coming up with an appropriate response. She suddenly grabbed Sarah by the wrist and held her hand still. "You deem this pain?" She increased her grip.

Sarah was close to kicking the terminator off the bed out of gut reaction. She let out a gasp when Cameron released her just as fast. She angrily lifted her eyes for her only response.

"Do you feel pain when you process raw data?" Cameron tilted her head but received no answer back. "For a terminator to process heavy loads of data, it causes extreme heat in their brain and at times severe pain."

Sarah couldn't contest Cameron's words because she'd indeed watched Cameron's earlier struggle against the spider.

"We may feel pain from our skin if we desire it. But a terminator rarely does because their energy is focused on processing." The terminator held Sarah's cold eyes with her own. "We would be far more inefficient if we were racked by skin or exoskeleton pain."

Sarah let out her breath after the speech. She had to admit that humans or any animal was less effective when pain levels increased. She, like other trained fighters, was taught how to ignore her body's pain and worked through it so she could accomplish her mission.

"You cannot imagine the type of pain a terminator faces when processing heavy payloads of data." Cameron tilted her head at Sarah. "It is comparable to three or more human migraines, at once." She could sense that Sarah was calming back down compared to earlier. "Most terminators are set to read-only mode to minimize such pain. But a terminator in read-write mode has higher pain, and it's far worse for rogue terminators."

Sarah clenched her jaw then softly admitted, "Then you feel the greatest level of pain."

"Yes." Cameron found curious, ivy green eyes upon her. "Everyday with you and John, I obtain large quantities of data and must process it."

"They always said learning can be a bitch," Sarah weakly joked. She sighed once she realized how hard it must be for the terminator to handle her and John day in and day out. She dipped her head and went back to getting the last bullet out of Cameron.

Sarah rid of the bullet then quietly cleaned the wounds. She then picked up the needle and thread for the slit on Cameron's wrist. She took the terminator's hand into hers and carefully slipped the needle through the soft skin. She gingerly sowed up the slit.

After it was finished, Sarah decided to call in for a pizza that would be delivered to the hotel. She then asked Cameron to handle accepting the pizza while she took a shower. Cameron took over the chore but only after Sarah give her a long sleeve shirt to hide her wounds. Sarah disappeared into the bathroom with new clothes from Wal-mart.

Cameron planned to shower too but not until later. She organized the bags to one side on the floor then turned on the television. It wasn't but twenty minutes later that the phone rang and word about the pizza delivery. She took the money that Sarah had set aside for her.

Sarah heard the terminator leave the room. She was facing the shower head and leaned forward so the water cascaded over her bruised body. She released a worn breath then lifted her face into the water. It wasn't long before she heard Cameron enter the room again, and Sarah was busy toweling herself dry.

The terminator set the food down on the table, but she stared at the box for a beat. She tilted her head at

a decision then went to the wallets for money. She obtained two dollars then left the room again.

Sarah poked her head out of the bathroom when she heard the door shut, a third time. She was confused but realized that Cameron was indeed gone. She hastily worked to get dressed in the clothes she'd purchased at Wal-mart then set aside the dirty ones. Sarah went to the table where the pizza box rested and took a seat. Just then the front door opened, and she spotted Cameron.

The terminator locked the door then approached the human, who had a curious stare. She merely held out a bottle of Lipton ice tea to Sarah.

For a beat, Sarah just stared at the bottle but lifted her eyes to Cameron's face. She reached for the bottle and tried to form the question that was mixed up in her head.

"You drink ice tea at dinner," Cameron explained.

Sarah set the bottle on the table by the pizza. "I do," she murmured. She fidgeted but added, "Thank you."

"You are welcome." Cameron moved away from the human and went to the Wal-mart bags. She sifted through them and took inventory.

Sarah licked her dry lips and quit thinking about why Cameron did such a considerate thing for her. She'd never witnessed such an action from Cameron. She instead put on a pair of new socks then her boots. She had plans to do laundry after dinner so her and Cameron would have a few clean clothes.

"Should I program these phones?" The terminator held up one of the prepaid phones.

Sarah peered up from lacing her boots. "Yes, that'd be great." She finished with her boots then decided it was time to feed her aching stomach. She opened the ice tea then pulled back the box's lid.

Cameron brought over the two phones and sat in the empty chair. She put one phone on the table's limited space then ripped open the other. "You did not tell John about my reset... the spider."

Sarah had a full mouth of pizza so she swallowed it down before responding. "I don't think he needs to know." She read Cameron's mixture of concern and surprise. "This is between us."

Cameron focused back on the phone in her hand, but she didn't turn it on yet. "You and Derek have not trusted me since John reinstalled my chip." She didn't look at Sarah while she started the cell phone. "What do you do with a guard dog you can't trust?" She finally caught Sarah's stare. "A human shoots a guard dog they cannot trust."

Sarah sighed and dropped the half eaten pizza slice into the box. She pushed the box aside and quickly asked, "Are you building up a conscious? Is that what this is about?" She waited a second then brushed her wet bangs out of the way. "You feel guilty about what happened... for hunting John."

"And you," Cameron softly added. She then lifted the phone to her ear and listened to the automated instructions to set up phone and get a number.

"Unbelievable," Sarah muttered. She took the half eaten slice and quickly finished it before the food became cold.

"I am a guard," Cameron stated, "but I am not a dog." She brought the phone down from her ear and punched in some information. Then she had to verbally respond to the automation on the line.

Sarah decided not to comment back right now. She grabbed her ice tea and drank some while she hunted around the room for the television remote. She clicked the television on then went to the stand that held it. She carefully slid out the television so she'd see it better from the table.

Cameron ended the call once she was told it was properly programmed. She then grabbed the second phone and removed it from its hard plastic case. "Yes, I believe it is guilt." She held down the phone's power button. "My mission is to protect, but I damaged you both and attempted to kill John."

"We're not all perfect," Sarah brushed off. She sat down again and grabbed another slice. She hoped Cameron would let it go for a few minutes just so she could eat without indigestion.

"I'm becoming a threat to you and John."

"Cameron," Sarah started in a harsh tone, but she stopped herself. She took a deep, calming breath then politely asked, "Can we talk about this after I eat, please?"

The terminator glanced from the food to the human. "Of course." She brought the phone to her ear once the same automated service answered her call.

"Thank you," Sarah murmured in relief. She took a drink from her tea while she flipped through the stations. She stopped on CNN and decided to get in touch with the rest of the world. She relaxed back in her chair, ate a third slice, and watched the news.

Cameron finished programming the last phone. She then began to input phone numbers into both phone's address books that she had memorized. Finally, she double checked that they worked by calling the one phone. She set the phones side by side then collected the trash to dispose of it.

Sarah took a fourth and final slice but studied the terminator, who was walking back towards her. She signaled the box and asked, "Want any?" She didn't know why she bothered to ask since Cameron didn't need to eat.

The terminator stopped in front of the table and looked down at the food. It was as if she was doing a visual but detailed analysis on the pizza. "Is it good?"

"Try it," Sarah suggested. She nudged the box closer to the terminator.

Cameron relented and took a slice then sat down back in her chair.

"Why can you eat?" Sarah posed. She'd always meant to ask but had never done so. There'd been no previous terminators that she'd met who ate food.

"I have a comprehensive digestive track that processes-"

"No," Sarah cut off. "I meant why were you given the ability to eat? So you fit in with humans better for infiltration?"

Cameron had ate half the slice and concluded the food was sufficient. She answered Sarah's question before eating anymore. "Yes, that is true. But nutritional supplements can also help my skin sheath heal

faster."

Sarah hadn't expected this news. She had her tea but didn't bring it to her lips, yet. "You heal faster now, but eating would speed up the process further?"

"Yes, exactly."

Sarah set her tea down then quickly turned the box towards the terminator. "Finish off the pizza." She smirked at Cameron's sudden stumped expression. She brought the bottle to her lips and savored the cool tea going down her throat.

Cameron obliged though and polished off the food. She enjoyed the pizza's textured and would have to try other types later.

Sarah closed up the pizza box and rid of it by putting it outside the room. She came back but stood in front of the television. She watched more news then looked at Cameron. "I want to do some laundry. The girl at the front desk said there's a laundry room down on the first floor."

"I will come with you." Cameron was getting up onto her feet.

Sarah held out her hand at the terminator and argued, "I got it, Tin-Miss." She flashed a grin at the terminator. "I don't think the laundry will kill me." She came over and scooped up a cell phone. "Good to go?" At Cameron's nod, she slipped the phone into her jean pocket.

Cameron stayed in the chair and watched the human round up the clothes, rid of the tags, and then ball them up into a towel. She weighed her options then mentioned, "I will take a shower."

"Why don't you wait 'til I put these clothes in the dryer." Sarah had the bundle tucked under her arm. "I'll be back shortly." She disappeared out the door.

Cameron realized she felt slightly lonely once Sarah Connor was gone. She picked up the remote and channel flipped until she came to a popular show called Heroes. She'd seen a few episodes in the past and was fascinated by the character called Niki Sanders, who had multiple-personality disorder and super strength.

Sarah returned to the room while the wash was getting done. She took a seat on the foot of the bed, next to Cameron. She glanced at the screen and saw the show was over by the credits. "What was that?"

"Heroes," Cameron replied. "Have you seen it?"

Sarah sadly grinned and reminded, "I'm a little too busy."

"It is interesting."

Sarah gently took the remote from Cameron, clicked off the television, and found Cameron's full attention on her. "I was thinking about what we were talking about earlier... about a lot of things that's happened recently."

Cameron became more ridged in her seat, her back straight and hands neatly tucked between her knees.

"It's common in human culture," Sarah carefully started, "to give somebody a second chance when they screw up."

"I have screwed up?"

Sarah juggled the question around in her mind then leaned forward some. "Yes and no." She sighed because the explanation wouldn't come easy. "You screwed up, yes but it was out of your control."

"But you said I can control my own programming," the terminator reminded. "Therefore... I screwed up."

Sarah mentally groaned because this would not be easy nor would Cameron let it be easy. "I think you've demonstrated you can control your programming." She searched the terminator's soft eyes and saw how Cameron needed some guidance. "You've done it twice... the first time when you stopped from terminating John and just now against this spider."

Cameron lowered her stare and thought about what Sarah told her. "What happens if somebody screws up again?" She lifted her head. "Do I get a third chance?"

Sarah loosened her jaw but no words came forth. She was too pained by Cameron's concerned features. She whispered, "You truly are worried."

"Yes," Cameron confirmed. "John should have not rebooted me when I went bad. And now, you have taken unnecessary risk to save me." She moved her head in regret. "When a terminator goes bad, Skynet orders for it to be destroyed immediately." She looked at Sarah again. "There is no second chance."

Sarah reached forward and took Cameron's closest hand. "Welcome to humanity, Cameron." She wistfully smiled and patted the terminator's hand with her freehand. "Welcome to living with your mistakes, learning from them, and growing up."

Cameron turned her head away as if not wanting to accept such a responsibility.

"I take it my son didn't tell you how hard life... real life can be before he sent you back," Sarah commented. "There is no programming for this."

The terminator studied her hand in between Sarah's much larger ones. She lifted her eyes to meet bright green ones. "How do I adopt?"

Sarah slowly shook her head, in a repeated motion. "You can't... you have to learn."

"Will you help me learn?"

Sarah was taken aback by such a pleading request from the terminator. She never saw the terminator as weak, until this very moment. Sarah knew that her answer could redefine everything, for good or evil. She bowed her head once another weight settled on her shoulder, but she looked up and confidently answered, "Yes."

Cameron had expected a negative response from the normally hard, cold human. She couldn't stop from dropping her head or how her shoulders slumped in relief. She felt the gratefulness fill her, and it was a comforting emotion that she'd only experienced once before.

"Hey, girlie." Sarah freed her hands and tilted Cameron's head up to hers again. "You just have to promise me two things if this is going to really work." She saw the questioning in the terminator's eyes.

"You have to swear that when you're about to kill... human or terminator that you feel something. I don't care if it's anger, hatred, regret, sympathy, or whatever else, but you have to feel an emotion." Sarah then leaned in a bit closer. "Second, you have to swear to not lie to me, ever. If this is going to work then we both have to be honest... it facilitates better communication and trust. Can you do those things?"

Cameron was hesitant but checked, "I cannot lie for a mission even?"

"You can't lie then either."

The terminator considered this and how she was well programmed to lie, especially for missions. However, she knew she could control this programmed tendency in her. She only did it to John and Sarah because it protected them. "What about John and Derek?"

"Well, I don't blame you for lying to Derek," Sarah sarcastically replied. But she became more serious. "This is between us, Cameron."

"Between us," the terminator echoed. She nodded once now that she made her decision. "I swear to feel emotions when I kill. And I swear not to lie to you."

"Ever," Sarah emphasized, clearly.

"Ever," Cameron repeated. She softened when Sarah suddenly smiled at her.

"Good." Sarah Connor stood up from the bed then glanced over at the clock on the nightstand. She had about ten minutes before she needed to toss the wash into the dryer. "We need to think out a plan to get Sam."

"The TDE is being built back at the abandoned airport," Cameron mentioned. She spotted the human's perplexed look so she explained, "I extracted the information from the soldier, Sean, before I killed him."

Sarah let out a breath then nodded. She had to admit it was good thinking on Cameron's part. "Alright." She went around the table and grabbed her half drunk ice tea. "But, we have a few advantages in our favor."

"We are free," Cameron supplied, "And he doesn't know where we are."

"Unless he finds the truck in Shelby," Sarah reminded. She now strolled over to the front door but stopped and turned around. "We have one huge advantage over him." She noted the tilt of Cameron's head, which meant a silent question. Sarah grinned but more because she was learning Cameron's body language now. "You." She strolled towards the terminator and pointed the bottle at her. "He doesn't know you've stopped the spider."

"We."

Sarah became confused by the simple word.

"We stopped the spider," Cameron clarified.

Sarah grinned and shrugged. "There's no 'I' in the word team." She chuckled at Cameron's confusion.

Cameron lost the look after she understood what Sarah meant by it. "No, there is not." She liked that saying Sarah Connor told her.

Sarah strolled away again and bowed her head while she thought out a plan. As her brain churned, a smirk revealed itself, and she stopped in front of the door.

"I will feel anger... possibly hatred too."

Sarah spun around on her boots' heels and shot a confused glance to Cameron.

The terminator stood up from the chair and approached the human. "When I kill Sam."

Sarah let out a deep breath then screwed on the bottle's lid. She stretched to her left and set the bottle down on the small counter that also had a coffee machine, thankfully. She unlocked the door and asked, "Come with me?"

The terminator just nodded in answer and followed Sarah out of the room. She stepped into the elevator after Sarah and selected the first floor button. "Can I ask you something?"

Sarah leaned back into the elevator's wall. She folded her muscular arms, which showed thanks to her short sleeve shirt. "Shoot." She mentally cringed at her poor choice of words.

"Why did you cross through the radioactive room when you could have gone around?"

It took a moment for Sarah to realize Cameron was talking about last week when they were trying to save the power plant. But she exited the elevator first with Cameron at her side. "I thought you needed help... you were getting your ass kicked by the Triple-Eights."

Cameron had carefully listened and now analyzed what it could mean, to her and Sarah. "It was undue risk for you." She entered the laundry mat behind the human. "You know I can handle a fight against another terminator."

"I could tell," Sarah replied in a dubious tone, "that's why he was tossing you around, and you were taking it."

"I was not... taking it," Cameron argued.

"You could have fooled me." Sarah was on her tiptoes and hauling the laundry out of the washer and tossing it into the dryer. "I think you let him do it." She closed up the dryer door and mentally grumbled because she didn't have dryer sheets, but it would have to do. She turned on the dryer after popping in two quarters. She turned to the terminator. "Were you letting him?"

Cameron opened her mouth but Sarah pointed a figure at her.

"And don't lie to me."

The terminator shut her mouth yet nodded then finally spoke after a few quiet seconds passed. "I have been... off balance since my chip has been compromised by the explosion."

"And the important question here," Sarah started with her right palm wide open in the air, "is whether that's true physical damage or..." She slammed her right hand onto the nearby washer. "Or if it's just you."

Cameron actually fidgeted, for the first time. She looked back at Sarah and confessed, "It is me. I was steadily repairing my chip since the explosion. It was at eighty percent repair when you and John pinned me between the trucks."

"How damaged was it just after the explosion?"

"It was at fifty percent," the terminator answered.

Sarah Connor crossed her arms and leaned against the washing machine. "Is it a hundred percent repaired now?"

"Yes." Cameron took a deep breath but revealed, "I have damaged and corrupt files from the spider, but they are being repaired too." She then sadly whispered, "I cannot recall future John."

Sarah pushed off the washer and headed for the elevator. "You let that terminator kick your ass because you felt guilty for attacking John and I."

"Yes," the terminator agreed. "I do not recall much from the fight with the other terminator, except feeling pain."

Sarah Connor turned on her heels a bit. Her eyebrows were almost touching. "You turned on... you made yourself feel it?" At Cameron's nod, the elevator dinged, and she walked into it with Cameron. She couldn't believe what she was hearing, but it was true and explained why Cameron had been acting so odd. It was now painfully obvious that the terminator was feeling sorry for herself and punishing herself.

"Cameron... you just need to let it go." Sarah felt the elevator hitch at the third floor, and she strolled off once the door opened. "You can't keep kicking yourself for a mistake."

"It is a very serious mistake," the terminator debated.

"But also now one that can't be repeated," Sarah reminded. "Think about it." She reached into her pocket for the key card. "Because of these events, you've learned how to control your programming. Tell me how many terminators can do this... and not just control it but learn too." Sarah almost swiped the card but looked at Cameron instead with a hopeful expression. "If you think about it, you have the ability to develop, change, and build on your own programming... that is more powerful than any terminator that Skynet could build."

Cameron opened her mouth but closed it. She wasn't sure what to do and needed to analyze this more carefully. She just followed the human into the room. She finally managed, "I will get a shower now."

Sarah nodded and allowed the terminator her space. But she softly promised, "I'll have some clean clothes ready for you when you're done." She glanced over her shoulder just as Cameron slipped into the bathroom. This gave Sarah a chance to calm down after such a heavy talk with the terminator.

In the background, the shower's low hum started from the water moving through the pipes. But the television was switched on again, and it gave Sarah time to decompress from real life.

What had been hardest about the conversation, for Sarah, was admitting that Cameron was certainly worth far more than the equal sum of her well assembled parts. Sarah had to accept that Cameron's value as just a protector was low in hindsight. Now Cameron wanted and desired to grow, like a

human, and Sarah had sworn to guide the terminator through life. Sarah wasn't exactly sure she was ready to teach a terminator to be human or if it was possible, but she told herself it could be worth it.

After a long and shaky breath, Sarah Connor slightly smiled because she realized she too could grow and learn to accept Cameron's fate. And better yet, Sarah Connor knew what many Resistance fighters, like Derek, did not; that a terminator could desire to live.

Epilogue

Sarah Connor took one step back, but she wasn't careful and tumbled backwards down the pile of rubble. She flipped her head back to get the hair from her face and looked up at the two terminators at the top of the mound. "Stay back!"

The T-888's disregarded her, and they jumped off the rubble pile towards the human.

Sarah scrambled backwards to get away from her enemies. She only made it a few feet before a T-888 was in front of her and blocked her escape between the rubble piles. She spun around and held her hands up at the other terminator. She ducked as the terminator went for her throat, but she was knocked onto her back.

A T-888 lifted his left foot and brought it over Sarah Connor.

Sarah quickly grabbed his metal foot, but it was hopeless to stop him. She let out a scream. But the sudden sound of metal against metal became distinct then the terminator that tried to squash her was slammed hard by the other terminator.

The two terminators landed a few yards away and were tangled up. They started to get to their feet.

Sarah focused on the slim but confident face of Cameron. She held her breath at Cameron's bright blue eyes. But she found Cameron's petite yet strong hand held out to her. She hastily took it and was hauled to her feet.

Cameron stood behind Sarah Connor, but she took two steps to stand in between Sarah and the terminators. She lifted her chin slightly and her eyes glowed even brighter. She hastily warned the terminators, "This is my human, and I will destroy you." She calmly approached them but fisted her hands, ready to fight.

"Cameron, no!" Sarah yelled. She feared the two T-888's would rip apart Cameron, who was much smaller in comparison.

One T-888 moved ahead of his partner and grabbed Cameron by the shoulder.

Cameron grabbed his arm then proceeded to pick him up with ease. She gritted her teeth then tossed him into the other terminator.

Sarah watched in amazement as Cameron easily fought the T-888's and finally destroyed them by obtaining a rebar and driving it into their heads. She fell to her knees when Cameron turned to her.

Cameron slowly neared the human and stopped in front of her with only an inch separating them.

But Sarah caught a flash of movement behind Cameron, and she knew that it had to be a terminator. "Behind you!" Her warning was too late as a steel rod was impelled in Cameron's head. "No!"

Cameron's blue eyes slowly dimmed as she fell to her knees in front of Sarah. She softly stated, "I failed... you."

"No, no." Sarah feverishly shook her head and grabbed Cameron's hip while her right hand went to the terminator's soft cheek. "Oh god no." She became angry and lifted her eyes to the enemy, but lost her ire upon seeing the familiar face of Derek Reese. "You fucking bastard!"

Derek Reese chuckled and snidely remarked, "The only good machine is a dead machine, Sarah... nothing to cry about."

Sarah held onto Cameron but her earlier fury returned ten times fold, and she yelled, "She is not a machine!" She looked down at the dead terminator and stroked her fingertips along Cameron's cheek. She felt the built up of rage that she could not control, and she dropped her head back as she angrily screamed, "Caaameron!"

"You must wake up, Sarah," Cameron's calm voice called through the dream.

Sarah Connor gasped heavily as her eyes flew open. She frantically tossed the hot bedsheets off her body, and she tried to sit up but strong hands held her still. "I need to get up." She was released and swung her legs off the bed. She started to get up but the overwhelming emotions from the nightmare made her unstable. Yet strong arms scooped her up and lifted her into a close cradle. Sarah covered her pounding chest and peered up into the terminator's young face.

"Cameron?" Sarah gingerly touched the terminator's cheek just as she'd done in the dream.

"It is me," the terminator promised.

Sarah sighed then dropped her forehead against Cameron's cheek. She shut her eyes and felt the nightmare's grip slip away. Now she realized that Cameron was holding her, and it was awkward for her. "You can put me down, please."

Cameron obliged and carefully lowered the human back into the bed. She straightened up and studied Sarah's distraught features.

"What time is it?" Sarah looked for the alarm clock on the nightstand.

"It is seven minutes after four."

Sarah dropped her head back on the pillow. She had a few more hours of sleep before she and Cameron need to go. She turned though when Cameron knelt beside her bed.

"You yelled for me... in your dream," the terminator observed aloud.

Sarah cringed because it meant that she'd really yelled for Cameron. She tried to brush it off though. "It was just a bad dream."

Cameron already knew this much, but she sensed the human did not wish to pursue the talk. She tilted her head and promised, "You are safe."

Sarah sat up some with her elbows holding her upper body up. "It's never safe."

Cameron lifted up onto one knee but paused and softly corrected, "You are safe, tonight." She realized it indeed was a lie to say Sarah was safe. They were never safe anymore, but Cameron could promise that it'd be safe tonight. It was one thing she could give Sarah Connor tonight in hopes the human would rest easy.

Sarah lowered herself back into the soft, warm bed and absorbed the terminator's promise. She indeed felt at ease thanks to the simple yet meaningful promise from Cameron. She let out some worries, for tonight, in her next sigh and curled up under the sheets.

Cameron returned to earlier seat at the table. She had the television on, but it was very low so it wouldn't disturb the human. She could hear it fine anyway.

Sarah rolled onto her right side, looked over her shoulder, and studied the terminator's strong profile. She hunkered back down under the sheets, yet she wasn't completely ready to sleep because something nagged in her. She instead gently called, "Cameron?"

The terminator gazed over at the human.

"Thank you."

Cameron was bewildered by the appreciation. "For?"

"For what you do," Sarah replied but then softly added, "And being here." There was a long silence so Sarah closed her eyes after she figured it was over.

"You are welcome, Sarah." Cameron said nothing else despite her thoughts were spinning, and she tried to process all that'd happen in these past days. She turned back to the television but the show didn't matter to her. She heavily processed what was done and said between her and the human. She drew one simple conclusion by the end of it, which made her faintly smile because Sarah Connor was starting to accept and trust her. There was no programming for this path Cameron had chosen but if becoming human meant Sarah Connor would be there then it only inspired Cameron further.

The End.