

Terry kicked open the front door and peered down the hallway in front of him. From the outside the building had looked like a military warehouse, but from the inside it looked like a military hospital. There were all kinds of medical supplies and objects strewn around and scattered on the floor or otherwise. There was a reception desk near to the doors, and the words "Sacred Heart Hospital" shown on the wall behind it. Terry did a quick perimeter check of his surroundings, then he listened with his attentive turtle ears for any sounds of misdoing or ill deeds, but he heard nothing.

He saw a stack of clipboards on the desk. Shuffling past them he read some names; Dr. Reid, Dr. Dorian, Dr. Turk... These names meant nothing to him, yet it felt significant to him that he remember them. He reached into his shell and pulled out a notebook upon which he could write the names he had just read. Stuck to the notebook by way of a "Way To Go!" sticker was a sheet of paper with a curious emblem on it. He folded it up and put it back in his shell without really looking at it. Then he scribbled the names, reading them out loud as he did.

"Dr. Reid... Dr. Dorian... Dr. Turk..." He scribbled the names hurriedly and then returned the notebook and pen to his shell which he wore all the time. "I have a bad feeling about this place," Terry moaned.

He continued to make his way slowly down the hallways in front of him, deciding at random to take a left or a right or a straight ahead. He clutched the Uzi in his hands tightly, preparing his body eternally for conflict. If a bad guy should happen to jump into sight in front of him, he would simply lower his Uzi and pump their body full of three pounds of lead. That should be enough to drop a mega-elephant.

He turned a corner and saw that he was mere meters from the maternity ward. He had still seen no sign of Holli Gregg nor of any further bad guys or enemies. And Terry had a lot of enemies. In fact, the hospital was so quiet that it made him more and more sure that this was a trap. He knew, though, that he had no choice which is what he told Carlton outside before he came in. He wished Carlton was here now to look around corners for him, but he supposed that having Carlton (who is a ghost) do that for him was a violation of

his treaty with the Ghost Master which said he could not help with Terry's case which he is on that involves figuring out who murdered Carlton in the first place.

Suddenly Terry felt a crippling pain in his head. He heard a painful, intense sound that made his head feel like it would burst. He collapsed to the ground, moaning and groping at his head. "Can't you hear that?" he shouted to no one in particular.

"Oh, I can hear that. At least, I can imagine what you must be hearing. We put an explosive charge in your shell. It's been activated," came a deep voice from somewhere behind Terry. Terry tried very hard to stand up, but he couldn't, the pain being so great in his head. He simply slipped back down to the tile floor of the filthy, abandoned hospital. He saw black, military-style boots step into view. The boots came up and pushed down on Terry's head. He tried to pull his body into his shell, but the intense pain made it impossible for him to do any sort of movement, regardless of his deep-seated emotions to do so.

"The charge will detonate in ten minutes. I figure that's enough time to get what I want from you, then I can leave you to die right here on this filthy tile floor in an abandoned military hospital. How does that make you feel?" The booted man took his foot off of Terry's head, allowing Terry to thrash uncontrollably for a short bit, but then he bent down and took Terry's head in his hands to look him right in the eyes.

Terry didn't recognize the man. The man had a military outfit on, like a Corporal, and a smug expression. He wore a pith helmet and a thick, black mustache which covered his liver-colored lips. He spoke with a German accent, and he wore a monocle, and the name on his uniform read "Floyd".

"Now, Mr. Turtle, tell me why you are here." Corporal Floyd let go of Terry's head, and Terry's head clunked hard against the filthy tile floor of the abandoned military hospital. Terry felt sick thinking of how many germs were left over from all the sick people who had last been in the building. He also felt sick from the excruciating pain of the detonator in his head. He had to think of a way to get out of here or to defuse the detonator.

"I... I'll... I'll never tell you... anything... you stupid... face..." gasped

Terry, writhing and spinning on the floor. Terry felt that a small victory had been won, but Corporal Floyd answered by kicking Terry in the face with his heavy, steel-toed boot. Terry screamed in pain as his face wound that he got from the explosion tore open again, only having recently (and not quite noteworthy) healed over. Then Corporal Floyd picked Terry up by his shell and threw him down the hallway. He smashed into a long-forgotten and blood-stained gurney which sat against a defibrillator panel. The gurney travelled with Terry on it for a short distance, knocking the defibrillator handles off the panel and causing them to hit the ground. Then Terry slid off the gurney and onto the ground, inches from the defibrillator handles, which had suddenly become active and live.

Terry thought about what he knew about explosive charges. Obviously, the charge was radio activated, which meant that it had a working infrared receiver. A working infrared receiver needs a battery or some sort of powering device to keep it in receive mode. If he could just find or figure out a way to short out the charge in the explosive device, then he remove it at his leisure. But how could he short out the obviously powerful battery? He would need a very powerful, very sudden shock-burst of energy directed right into his body. What could produce that significant of a pulse in this filthy tile-floored hospital?

"I believe I asked you a question, Mr. Turtle," roared Corporal Floyd as he walked down the hallway towards the grounded turtle. He picked Terry up and set him on the gurney. He pulled out the straps and such and strapped Terry down fast against the gurney's urine-soaked mattress. "Now, tell me why you are here, Tear. Did that birdy-bird, Holli Gregg, put you up to it? Are you looking for your parents? What's going on inside that thick shell of yours? How much do you know about the Gorgolon Conglomerate and its genetic experiments?"

But, again, Terry was faced with many more questions than answers. In fact, he was feeling a bit inundated with all the heaping collection of leads and possibilities. He began to think that he could never solve this case in time, at least, not before Chapter Thirty, and he started to wish that the ten minutes of life he had left would simply end. Then the horrible screeching would be over with and he could go on with just plain dying.

"I... I don't know... anything... about... your... stupid face..." breathed

Terry, running quickly out of time and energy and frankly he was getting just a little bit tired of the whole hospital scene stuff. At first the Corporal seemed poised to smack Terry in the face with his hand, but then he stopped and made a strange face. He quickly glanced at his watch, and then he looked back up at Terry. Then he smiled.

“Time’s up, turtle,” he grinned. In that split second the sound ceased. Terry, with a sudden burst of clear-headedness, pulled his entire body into his shell. Once inside the surprisingly spacious space, he gathered into his arms all of the stuff he could and that he thought was important: his other Uzi, his set of pistols, his autographed picture of his father, his curling iron, his mace, his GPS system, his car keys, his wallet, his maps of foreign countries and important buildings, his copy of *The Works of Edgar Allen Poe*, his doormat (which says, “Don’t Tread On Me” with an American flag as the background), his Apple MacBook, his George Forman Grill, his important case notebook, and, after pausing for a second, that folded sheet of paper he’d had before but never really looked at. With all those things tossed in a stylish black duffel bag, he hit the secret backdoor latch to get out of his shell. The secret door opened behind his shell, so that the shell was between Terry and Corporal Floyd. Terry pushed the gurney toward Corporal Floyd, then he took off down the hallway. He barely had gotten a meter down the hallway when the charge blew. The explosion wasn’t spectacular, but it did shatter Terry’s shell. Terry heard Corporal Floyd scream and hit the filthy, tile-lined floor.

Terry was now in control. He reached in the duffel bag and pulled out one of his pistols. He padded slowly down to the fallen Corporal, who had taken shell shrapnel in his legs rendering him lame. He was sputtering and crying, begging for mercy. Terry aimed the pistol at the Corporal’s head, but then he noticed the defibrillator off to the side, armed and live. He bent over Floyd, tore open his uniform shirt, then he grabbed the paddles and placed them firmly to his chest. Then he flipped the “DANGER” switch on the unit to make the paddles really really live because they were only kinda live before.

“No, don’t!” screamed the church-proud house mouse, thrashing against the paddles, but unable to move.

“This is a live charge. It’s being held against your heart. And it goes off at whatever random damn time I want it to,” said Terry, with a smirk. Then his

smile faded. He noticed, high on the Corporal's breast a symbol. He noticed that it was the same symbol he had seen before, on Carlton. It was a symbol that looked like an "s" with two notches sticking out of it at the top and one notch sticking out of it on the bottom. It looked kinda like DNA and it was really really really super-obvious once again.

"I.. I don't... Okay, I'll tell you"- But a gunshot silenced him. His eyes got wide, then they glassed over, and his head fell to the side, eyes open, mouth agape. Terry turned and looked down the hallway. There was Holli Gregg at the end of the hallway, a sight that would have made him laugh - a bird holding a handgun - if he didn't have so many questions that needed answering. But then, in a burst of feathers, she was gone, and he was left with nothing.

"Holy hockeysticks. Are you okay, man?" came the familiar voice of Terry's former partner, Carlton.

"Well, thanks for finally showing up, Casper. I nearly freakin' died. This guy put an explosive charge in my shell, and I don't know when that happened-" shouted Terry angrily at the floating visage of his former best friend.

"That happened right after the explosion. When she pushed her gun into your back, that was really sticking the charge to your back. But, I don't know how he got the receiver. If anything, Corporal Floyd was working against Holli Gregg."

"Well, I could have used some of your brilliant knowledge before I got my shell blown to smithereens., thank you very much," said Terry, kicking a spare piece of his shell down the filthy, tile-lined floor of the hallway.

"I really wish we could argue, but you're about five seconds from needing every piece of firepower you salvaged. Just trust me, Tear. This whole being a ghost thing is harder than it looks. I'll be there for you when I can, but I can't make promises," said Carlton, his voice cracking with emotion and love for his still-alive friend. He felt like he'd let Terry down.

"Don't start getting all female dog on me. How long do I have?"

"A minute. Maybe less. That little firework display of yours sent quite the

'Here I Am'."

"Well, I say, bring 'em on. I'm feeling fully armed and lucky." And Terry reloaded.