

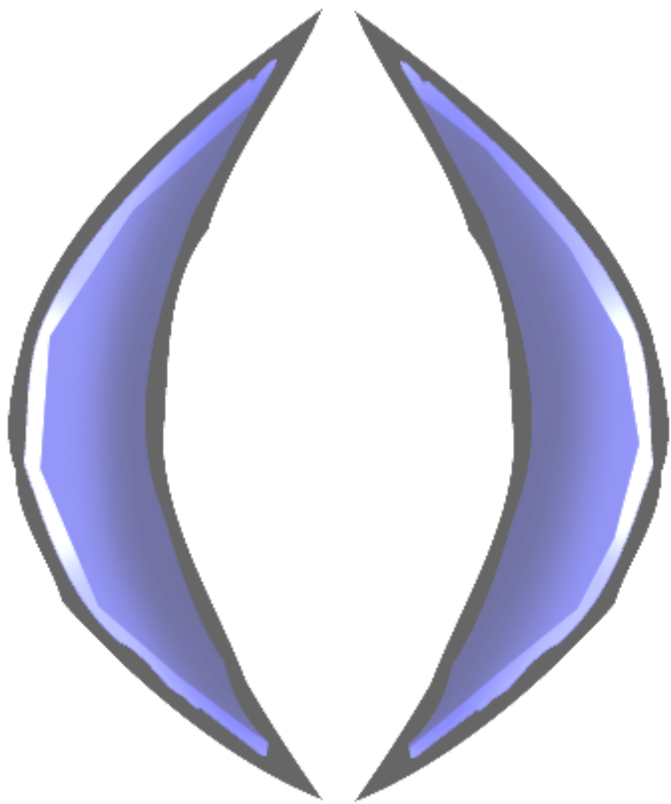
EPISODE II - STREET'S WARFARE 1
PROLOGUE - ORIGIN

Wassup? This is barely what you'd call "Once upon a time." I come from a place that you could never find. A city the people call Metal Stereo. The people there? The oldest person there is probably around 35. I know. In your point of view, that's probably a very short time to live. In mine, a person living that long is lucky as hell. Some girls here even get pregnant as young as 12. Why is it like that now, you ask? From what I've learned, it's like this: You've probably heard of that Y2K thing that everybody got hyped about. Well, something like it happened in 2099, and they decided to call it "Y2K1H." Nobody felt it coming. Some link-up between worldwide computers—something called the Internet—crashed and all technology became a bust after that. It launched a worldwide assault with doomsday weapons all over the planet. The cities became urban wastelands. Governments became scattered and corrupt. Religion was forgotten. Now, it's basically every man for himself—one reason why I always carry my two swords with me. The entire earth became 3rd-world. It's been 41 years since then, and the world's just now starting to recover, even though it's still in bad condition.

Now about me: I don't use a real name or have a real family. I was born by myself, and I hardly trust anyone. I sometimes think that I don't even have a heart because I can't even try to love anybody. It's better that way since I want to be alone. I don't even think a lot of people can keep up with me. My lifestyle is roller-skating and being the best at it. I don't wear regular shoes. Inside the soles are 2 wheels and magnets for speed. In the middle of the sole is a metal plate for grinding. I don't ever use regular transportation. I'm my own. I go from place to place racing everything on anything: rails, roofs, sidewalks, whatever. That might sound stupid to you... but I don't give a fuck if it does. I have two small garages where I live, one on the east and one on the westside. Since I travel all around the city, I usually just chill at whichever's closest. All I ever need is the city and my skates, and I always become the Fire.

This is my world, and I've been here for 17 years.

The world where I'm known only as Street Pedal Black.



ACT I - THE STREET
STREET

"Alright, Street," I told myself. "Let's do this again!" I skated as fast as I could down the skyscraper's roof.

Focus.

I jumped as hard as I could. I was about 800-something feet in the air. I was a little-bit hesitant, but I've done stuff like this before. There was a mostly-demolished building (or collection of rafters, really) below the one I jumped off. I don't even know if I should even call it a building; it was just a frame of rusty steel bars. I gonna grind its bent steel beams all the way down to the street.

I was about 10 feet away from the top beam when I slowed down and started to fall. I hit the beam and sparks started flying as I went. When I reached the bottom of the beam, I jumped to a new one. It didn't have another at the end, so I jumped to a vertical rafter and propelled myself off it. I flipped backwards and landed on another beam, grinding backwards on it. I used my arm to hang on and swing around the corner beam, and I jumped to grind on a lower one. That began a spiral decent down the building. I jumped from pole to pole as new ones came. About a second later, I jumped off the last beam, about 15 feet in the air, and grinded to a stop on the curb.

"What were you doing up there?!"

"What?" I shouted.

I stopped and turned around and saw LaTonya, "You could've killed yourself up there!"

"You've seen me do worst stuff than that," I said, laughing a little. "I was just getting' some mornin' exercise. Why you always gotta yell at me when I do this?"

"I'm just worried that you might get hurt."

"I told ya to stop worryin' about me. I can take care of myself."

"FINE! NOBODY ELSE CARES ABOUT YO' ASS ANYWAY!!" LaTonya yelled, skating away. I didn't feel like apologizing since stuff like this always happens. I'm not bragging or anything, but LaTonya's had a crush for the longest time, and she's always trying to be as good as me. She's become a great graffiti artist, and she even has skates like mine. I felt her for a minute, but I don't wanna be with her the same way. Like I said before, I'm not able to love. We usually get into arguments like this when I do some kind of crazy shit.

I let out the wheels on my states and headed towards my west garage. As I zoomed by people, I noticed a lot of pregnant girls.

Man, I know we're not going through a rubber shortage. I mean, I need something to stop my skates! I yelled at them in my mind. Metal Stereo has enough people in it as it is. The Government of the City might start banishing people if it gets too overpopulated.

Wait, I didn't tell you about them yet. The "Government of the City", or GOTC, is basically what rules the city; a rogue police force formed by some

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desperate people about 30 or 40 years ago who demand justice, but the way they carry it out is bullshit. They kill on site if they want to. They've been after me for some time since I rescue some of the people that have minor "violations." I remember saving a 5-year-old boy from getting shot by one of their officers after he accidentally broke a window. I've even had to kill some of them. I've been fighting these guys for as long as I remember.

I saw the garage in the distance and somebody was standing at the main door. "Hey, Street," my boy Hoodo called.

I stopped in front of him and asked, "How long you been here?"

"About an hour," he answered, a little annoyed. "I told ya I needed to get that cycle chain."

"Yeah, hold on." I skated to back of the garage. I don't want any GOTC troops seeing me walk through the front door, so I put up a rail that runs up to the roof. I ran towards it as fast as I could and grinded all the way up. I undid the lock to the roof's opening and jumped inside. I fell two stories, landed on a large cushion on the floor, and went to open the front door.

"Street, you gotta get a betta way to get in here," Hoodo said.

"Maybe some other time," I said, closing the door and turning on the lights. I sat down on the couch and turned on the TV. It's a small black-and-white that only gets one channel, the Government's news (or brainwashing) channel.

<...and in local news, famed prodigy Philly Wonder has created an invention that will be another step closer to regaining mankind's original technology, the Lightning Conductor...> the anchorman said.

"BORING!!" Hoodo and I yelled, knocking the TV down with my foot. I threw him his chain, and went to the refrigerator. "Damn, I'm all out of drinks. I'm going down to the store."

I put my backpack/sword holder on and skated out the door. I looked around and noticed that there weren't any people around. I skated around the 'hood for a while and saw some guys in dark blue suits in a group. I easily recognized them—GOTC soldiers.

What're they doin'? I asked myself, watching them form a circle. I went to find out.

"...what is wrong with you?!" I heard an officer yell. I heard the others laugh. I grinded down a rail and jumped high enough to land on a balcony.

"Please, stop!" a woman yelled. The officers spread out, and I was able to see what they were doing.

"Get up or else I'll kick your baby again!" A man holding a baby boy upside down yelled. They were beating on the woman!

"HEY, FOOLS!" I yelled. They all looked at me.

"Street Pedal Black!" they yelled. The guy holding the baby stepped forward. He looked like their general or sergeant. "We've been looking for you," he said. "There's a helluva bounty on you."

"Looking for me?" I said, almost laughing. "I live right over on the main street."

"Shut up!" he yelled, kicking the woman.

"Let 'em go right now," I yelled.

"Come and get them."

Target One: Government Troops

All the officers drew their knives. The GOTC soldiers hardly ever carry guns nowadays—some kind of pride issue.

"Which one of your *crimes* did she break?" I asked. The woman's entire face was bloody. For some reason, beneath all of the dirt and dusk, she looked like I've seen her before...

"Let's just say she didn't pay her 'spur-of-the-moment' taxes," the man said.

The woman tried to get up, and then said, "I... didn't have... any money to give—"

"Shut up!" the man stomped on her. Her baby started to cry. "You, too." He slapped the baby hard in the face. That did it!

I drew one of my swords and jumped off the balcony.

"Men, ATTACK!"

The 9 other officers came at me. When they were close enough, I jumped on the rail and grinded out of their way. It was a little bit harder to balance since they all ran into the rail and shook it. I jumped off and grinded on the one across the street, heading back toward the beat-up woman. The officer with the baby was still there.

"Put the baby down, now," I told him.

"MAKE ME!" he yelled.

I raised my sword above my head, and the officer drew his knife and pointed it an inch away from the baby's head. I wasn't surprised; they always do crazy shit like this.

"Go ahead," he whispered, just begging me to make a move.

"No, please don't!" the woman begged.

"That's it! I've had it with YOU!!" he yelled. In one swift motion, he took the knife away from the baby's head and stabbed the woman deeply into her left side.

"AAHHHHH!!" she screamed in agony. I watched in horror as the blood gushed from her body. She fell motionless a second later.

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NOT AGAIN! At that moment... I had a vision, *NOT AGAIN!*

"Hmph! Disobeying your superiors," the officer taunted. "What nerve."

In my own swift motion, I brought my sword down and sliced off his thumb, the knife dropping from his hand. I caught the baby when he dropped it.

"AAHHH! What is wrong with you?!" the officer yelled, grabbing his hand. "That's more than assaulting a police officer!!"

I saw his other officers run over to us in the corner of my eye. I quickly flicked my blade over to his neck, and they stopped running. "You just killed a poor woman, and you're wonderin' what's wrong with me?" I asked sarcastically. "I didn't assault a police officer; I assaulted a coward."

"Why you!" I pressed the blade more into his neck.

"I'm not sure whether to let you go or not," I told him.

"Now-now-now... wait just a minute. We can work this out!"

"Should've thought of that before you killed that woman."

"I will do whatever I please!" he said, sounding even more pathetic.

"Corporate bullshit!" I said, seeing a small line of liquid red slowly appear. "If you wanna live, get your men to bury the body and then leave."

"First, put down your sword."

I pressed it in his neck to the point of it bleeding.

"This is my only guarantee; you'll do what I say," I said. "Plus, you've forgotten who has the upper hand here."

"You heard him, men!" he yelled. They gathered the woman's body and put it in their truck. "We'll make sure it's buried soon."

"Good," I lifted my sword and put it back on my backpack. The officer breathed a big breath of relief and slowly backed away. I held on to the baby tight and started to skate around the corner. When I did, I heard that officer yell, "Get him! Nobody makes a fool out of the Ringblads!" he yelled.

Ringblad, huh, I thought. The Ringblad family owns the Government. I think it's just a rumor, but I heard that Metal Stereo was the first city they took over. There's nothing else of worth in this decaying city, so what're they doing here? I jumped on a rail and disappeared.

I saw them come around the corner, looking around for me.

"So, he is as quick as they say," Ringblad said. "I won't rest until Street Pedal Black is dead and burnt!"

Bring it, I thought, looking down at him from a rooftop.

"Damn, man!" Hoodo yelled. I was back at my garage, and I had a crying boy in my arms. "What happened?!"

I put the baby down on the couch and sat down. "The Government guys."

"Nuff said," he told me. "So, who's the baby?"

"A woman got killed earlier and he was her son."

"Damn, man!"

"Waaaaahhhhh!!!" the baby started crying.

"Man, you take care of this, Hoodo," I yelled.

"What makes you think I can do anything?!" he yelled back.

He cried even louder. We then heard something louder than him.

"WWWWHHHOOOAAAAA!!!!" a girl screamed. The baby stopped crying. We heard a bunch of trash cans fall, too.

"LaTonya," Hoodo and I concluded.

I picked up the baby, and we went out the back door. I'd have to grind back up to the roof to get back in since the door automatically locks when it closes. We saw LaTonya lying on the ground motionless.

"LaTonya!" I yelled, running over to her. I gave the baby to Hoodo, and gently lifted her head up.

"...mmm..." she stirred, slowly opening her eyes. "What? Street?"

"Girl, what happened?" I asked her, picking up her glasses. One of the lenses was knocked out.

"I was grinding up your wall," she said. I sighed when she that, "and I fell off when I lost my balance."

"How many times have I told you to just call me on the radio?!"

"I wanted to get in by myself!"

"Well, don't try to," I told her, helping her up. I saw her blush as I picked her up. I dropped her at that point.

"Hey, jackass! What was that for?!" she yelled.

"For actin' stupid," I said, helping her up again.

"Why you..." she then looked at the baby. "Oh, how cute!" Hoodo handed him to her. It started to laugh. "Where did he come from?"

"Street saw a woman get killed, and he was her baby," Hoodo explained.

LaTonya gasped and looked down at me. I just kept trying to fix her glasses. As I was about to give them back, she looked at me with her best pair of sad eyes. I hated it when she did that. It always makes me think that I'm supposed to do something for her. Fortunately, it only works when her glasses are off—one reason I wanted her to put 'em back on.

When she did, the baby started to tap at them.

"Easy," LaTonya said, moving his hand away. "What's his name anyway?"

"We don't know," I said. "I never found out when I rescued him from those Government guys. Damn, I should've got the woman's ID before they took her body."

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"Well, I guess we'll have to name him."

"I'll let you do that."

"Well, since you found him, I guess that makes you his dad, and he can be named after you!" LaTonya said.

"WHAT?! No!!" I shrieked. She glared at me. "Fine, name him after me, but I'm not his dad!"

"You found him, Street," she told me. "You have to be his dad right now. And don't worry. I'll be his mom!"

"Be his mom. He just doesn't need me to be his dad."

"Hey, if you're his dad and I'm his mom, then that makes us..."

"Absolutely nothing," I finished.

"C'mon, Street. You know that if the baby doesn't have both a mom and dad, they'll try to send him to the Child Pound," Hoodo half-joked.

I shook when he mentioned the Child Pound. It's an orphanage organized by the GOTC. They basically teach the children there how to work for them. I was only there for a month, and it's worse than any orphanage you can think of. Hoodo and LaTonya were there for most of their lives, and we all escaped together about 6 years ago. We were supposed to be four people escaping together, but another one of our friends, a boy we called Steeler, got lost in the process. After the rest of us got out, we made a pact: We would never go back. We'll definitely keep it now since we're all 16 or older—the time you're supposed to get out. We said we'd never go back to the Child Pound, but we couldn't send anybody there either.

"Fine, I'll be his dad, I guess," I said. "But he'll have to stay with you, LaTonya."

"Alright, but we still have to give him a name," she said.

"I thought you were gonna name him after Street," Hoodo reminded.

"Oh yeah, that's right, but I just don't want to call him Street Pedal Black Jr." LaTonya said, laughing a little.

"Please don't call him that," I said, laughing a little myself.

"Steet....ped-ped.....blaaaa," the baby tried to say.

"Oh, that's so cute," LaTonya said, tickling him.

"How 'bout we just call him Ped," Hoodo suggested.

They looked at me, asking for approval. The baby was looking at me, too. He was reaching his arms out for me and giggling.

I took the baby into my hands, and said, "I guess we can call him that."

"Ped-ped-ped!" he squealed.

"I guess he likes it," LaTonya said.

Ped started to poke at my goggles.

"I'll buy you your own someday," I told him.

"You see. He's growing on you already," LaTonya said.

"I already told you he's staying with you," I reminded her.

"I know, I know. But can we stay at your other garage tonight?"

"Why not? You stay there every night," I said, rolling my eyes.

"Good, because you have to come with me tonight," she said.

I raised my eyebrow at that, "Why?"

"You think you're not gonna be there the first night we take care of him?" LaTonya told me. "Recognize, Street! You're still his dad, and you're gonna help out."

"She told you," Hoodo whispered.

"Tryin' to get alimony already," I sighed. "Alright, I'll go. I need something to do anyway. Hoodo, you comin'?"

"Nah, dawg! You're his dad. I'll gotta go to my basement and try to fix this bike I'm workin' on."

Hoodo lives in an underground basement of an old building. He usually spends his time making BMX bikes and skateboards out any kind of metal he can find. He has about 21 bikes and 36 skateboards so far, including the board he's had since he was a kid.

We shook hands (where we pounded the undersides of our fists and "snap" our little fingers to the side), and he took off. It's just a special handshake the three of us use. We really do need to get a name for it though.

"You ready to go?" LaTonya asked.

"Yeah, I guess," I said. She handed Ped to me. "What're you givin' him to me for?"

"So you can put him in your backpack."

"But I felt like grinding on some roof edges on the way."

"Well, I'm going to try out some tricks, so you have to carry him," she said.

I just gave up on the argument. I went back inside to get my swords, and I put Ped in my backpack. He kept hitting my wave cap as I skated. LaTonya was grinding on rails and curbs as she went. She didn't look like she was losing her balance or anything, so I guess she's been getting better lately. I remember back when she fell every time she tried to grind.

"C'mon, Street," LaTonya called. "You're too slow!"

"Why don't you carry him then?!" I yelled.

Suddenly, I heard a group of people marching around the corner.

"The Fire of Metal Stereo and can't even keep up with me?!" LaTonya taunted. "I haven't even--"

I grinded onto the rail she was on and grabbed her before she reached the intersection.

"Street, you shouldn't be doing tricks if you have a baby in your backpack!" LaTonya said.

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"Shut up and look over there," I told her. There were about 30 men and women in GOTC uniforms.

"What do you think's happenin'?" LaTonya asked.

"I don't know, but if they see us, we're dead," I looked around until I saw a dark alley. "Let's go in there."

We skated inside and I set my backpack down.

"What're you doing?" LaTonya asked.

I handed Ped to her and took out my blue spray paint and graffiti stencil. I looked outside the alley and saw that the Government troops weren't at the corner yet. So I ran out, pressed my stencil against the wall and tagged it.

At least the people will know, I thought. I usually graffiti on walls to warn anybody who's around that the Government is up to somethin'. I use certain colors for certain types of warnings:

- Black or white: regular graffiti - it's all good.
- Blue: GOTC warning - watch yourself.
- Yellow: GOTC attacks - take cover.
- Red: GOTC terror - evac now.

The symbol I use for tagging is a flaming roller blade wheel rolling right with the word PEDAL under it. Hoodo and LaTonya made the stencil since I just want to tag a wall with my symbol quickly and just leave.

I ran back into the alley and pulled out my black spray paint.

"What're you gonna do?" LaTonya asked.

"Listen, go straight to the east garage. As much as I don't want to tell you this, there's a key to the back door inside the wall rail." I shook up my spray paint. "I'm 'bout to play a game of tag."

"Street, I wish you wouldn't do this. I don't want anything to—"

"How many times have I told you not to worry about me?"

"Fine, be that way!" she turned around and skated out the other end.

Just when I was about to run out, I got a call on my radio.

<Hey, Street Pedal,> It was Hoodie-Bo, Hoodo's older brother. We work at his marketplace downtown, and he always got information we can use. <We got troops near on 4th street, ya'boy.>

"I know. I'm already there," I said.

<They're after that Philly Wonder guy. Y'know that guy that made the Lightning Conductor?>

"I saw somethin' on TV, but I didn't really give a shit."

<Man, you better get all the info you can get. That thing is powerful, ya'boy! They say it can generate and make at least a hundred volts from a static shock touchin' it. If the Govern-guys get it, they got their selves one helluva weapon. If you're on the corner of 4th and Climb, they're just outside his building,> he told me.

I looked at the street signs, "Alright, get Hoodo down here. I'm right on that corner. I'll need some help takin' out these guys. And tell him to hurry up. I think they about to do somethin'."

<Right on, ya'boy.>

I hooked my radio back to my belt and drew one of my swords. We weren't some kind of vigilante group, but we really don't like the GOTC. I just don't want them to get any worse than they are now.

I'll just have to take out what I can, I thought, shaking my spray paint. I looked over to the corner and saw that they were about to charge inside.

"Alright, troops!" the commander announced, "Your mission is to go in and retrieve the Lightning Conductor plans and the inventor named Philly Wonder! Move in!"

"Move away," I said.

All of the troops looked towards me.

"STREET PEDAL BLACK!" they all yelled.

"I'm that well known?" I asked sarcastically.

"Troops, GET HIM!" the commander yelled.

Target Two: Government Troops

5 of them came right at me. On average, they were about 4½ to 5½ feet tall. It's unbelievable how old the GOTC soldiers were nowadays.

Is this all they got? I thought.

They all drew switchblades. When they were about ten feet away I held out my sword with the blade facing them.

"Knives vs. swords, y'all," I simply said. They backed up a little. I brought my spray paint to their height, and sprayed across.

"Ahh! My eyes!"

"I can't see!"

"Where is he?!"

They all had a huge, collective black stripe on their faces. I let the wheels out of my skates and went to the next soldiers. 10 more ran at me. I charged as fast as I could through them, tagged some of their faces and backs, and pierced some of their sides with my sword. I jumped on the rail on the side of the street and grinded down back to them, tagging their faces along the way. I jumped off and skated around their commander, runnin' circles around him.

"What are you doing?!" he yelled.

I pointed my sword at his forehead. "Y'all after the Lightning Conductor?"

"WHAT?!!" he yelled. "How do you know about Code: Blade Governor?!"

"Man, you just told me," I said. *What the hell is a Blade Governor?*

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"Men, go inside and get that Wonder kid!"

"Fool, you better call them back."

I pressed my sword in to the point blood was drawn. The troops went inside the building.

"Damn!" I started to skate towards them, but the commander got me in a headlock at knifepoint.

"Oh, this is too good," he said. "I'll get a promotion for killing you!"

I saw something zoom by his head and hit him. He let me go to grab his head in pain.

"Whasup, Street?!" Hoodo yelled.

"Nothing much, man," I said, jerking my thumb towards the building. I tossed a spray can to him. "Time to play tag!"

Hoodo and I skated towards the building. As we passed the troops, we tagged their faces, and Hoodo kept jumping on them with his skateboard. We came to a wall of soldiers blocking the entrance, and some more were coming from behind. I handed a sword to Hoodo, and all of the soldiers drew their own.

"MAN! Do you guys always have those?!" Hoodo yelled.

They each drew another sword.

I simply said, "You just had to piss'em off, didn't you, Hood?"

"GET THEM!!!" they yelled.

They all charged at us. I dodged their swords as they kept trying to slice me. I raised my sword and swung it when they came close. The results were 4 people with their fingers cut off.

"AAAAHHH!!!" they screamed.

Hoodo was busy trying to dodge them himself, but he was having a harder time. One of the soldiers knocked his sword back to me.

"Hoodo, duck!" I yelled. I brought my swords back as he hit the floor. "I call this the STREET WINDER!!!"

I brought my swords behind me and threw them sideways as fast as I could towards their upper bodies. The troops held still, just staring at me.

It was very quiet at that moment. I could even hear the wind blowing. Everything was perfectly still.

About a second later, blood leaked from their necks. And then... their heads collapsed when they hit the asphalt. Hoodo went and picked up my swords.

You guys left me no choice. Forgive me, I told them in my mind.

The commander's radio came on.

<SIR! We have the Wonder boy in the rear of the building, SIR!> A soldier announced.

"What?!" Hoodo and I yelled.

<Unfortunate setback, SIR! The Lightning Conductor unit is missing some of its parts, SIR!>

"What?!" the commander yelled.

<We only have the plans, SIR!> the soldier yelled, <but they seem to be incomplete.>

"That's impossible!" the commander yelled. "How could they build the unit without the actual plans?!"

"Good question," Hoodo commented.

"You stay out of this!"

<Awaiting further orders, SIR!>

"First, LOWER YOUR VOICE, SOLDIER!" the commander yelled. "Second, report back to Headquarters with the prodigy and plans in tow."

"Not if we can stop it!" I yelled, turning around and skating towards the back. The remaining troops blocked me. Hoodo skated towards me and handed back my swords.

<Everything is secured, SIR!> the soldier yelled.

"Aw, too late, Fire of Metal Stereo," the commander told me. "Troops, move out! We can destroy them when we have the unit!"

They moved inside their trucks and drove away. I looked around at the entire scene. There was blood running down the sewers, and lifeless bodies were in the street.

"What happens next?" I asked myself.