

Vol. 1 The Streets of Stverneri K'aghak

“Some debts can only be paid in blood.”

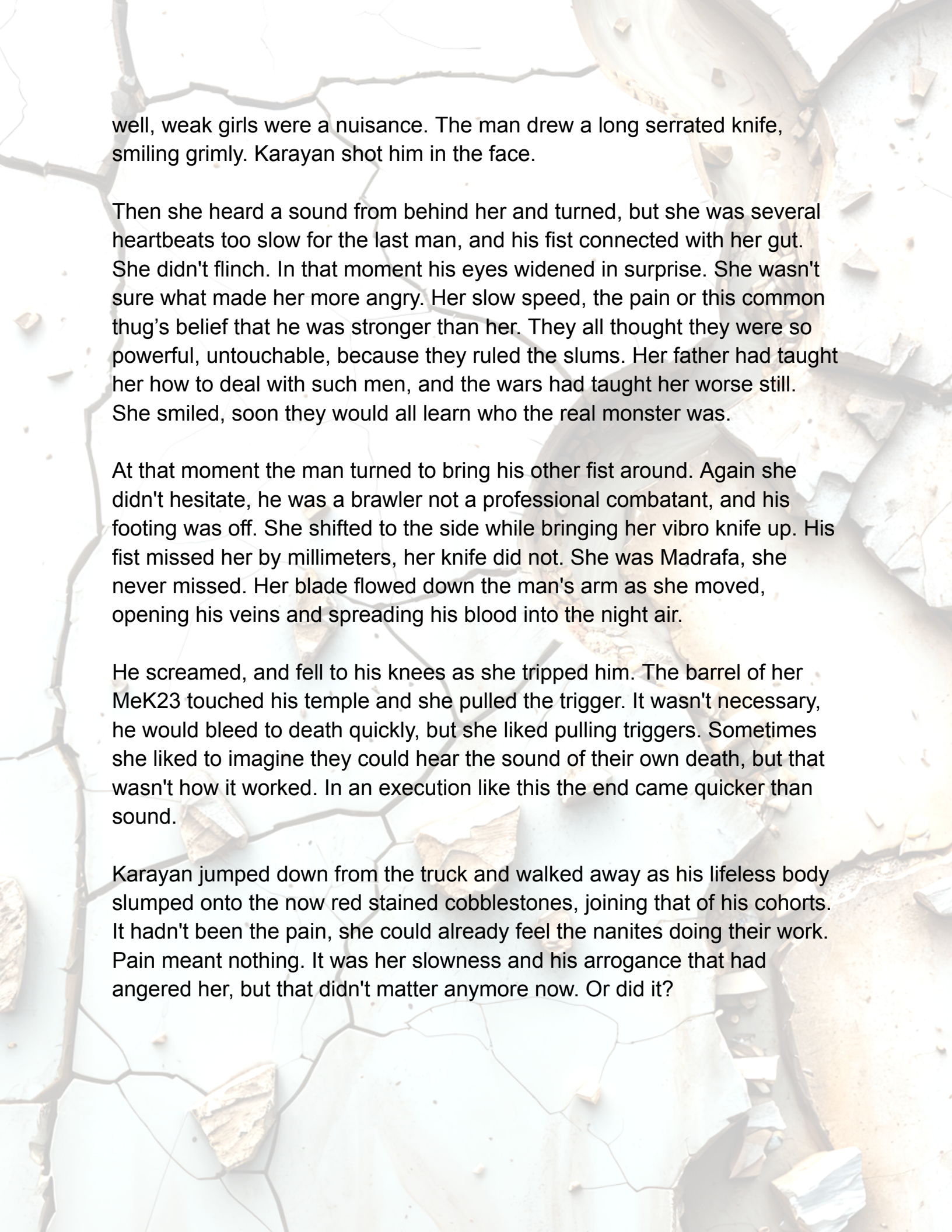
-Saint Kerasunkeru

Karayan swayed gently on her feet in an ambling shuffle, and waved her arm in the air. The canister she was holding rattled as she did so, but they only saw what they expected to see. A drunk woman in a tattered cloak waving around a bottle of alcohol. As she ambled in their direction the five men pulled their chosen girl for the night forcibly into the back of their cargo truck, the girl fought and screamed of course; not that it did much good against five larger men, they covered her mouth and pulled her inside anyway.

As the last man was preparing to climb in and close the tailgate she drew close enough. The “bottle” flew as she threw it, hitting him in the face and ricocheting into the truck. The loud bang, flash of light and small burst of flames followed by an expanding cloud of smoke made him stumble back in shock; disorientated. Flash bangs did that to a person, the smoking cloud was her own special addition of chaos.

By the time he would have recovered he was already dead, gutted by her vibro knife. The girl inside started screaming in terror and two of the men came out, coughing but alert and angry. They saw her, and expecting a lone woman to retreat came for her. Why were so many criminal men so stupid? She lept between them, slicing the throat of one with her vibro knife while drawing her MeK23 auto pistol. The other man started turning towards her as she landed on the truck's open tailgate, she shot him in the side of the head at point blank range. It was a better reward than men like him deserved.

There was only one man left inside, and she noticed an opening to the truck's cabin; one had gotten out. He forcefully shoved the girl away from him, she hit the cargo hold's wall and collapsed, going quiet. Which was



well, weak girls were a nuisance. The man drew a long serrated knife, smiling grimly. Karayan shot him in the face.

Then she heard a sound from behind her and turned, but she was several heartbeats too slow for the last man, and his fist connected with her gut. She didn't flinch. In that moment his eyes widened in surprise. She wasn't sure what made her more angry. Her slow speed, the pain or this common thug's belief that he was stronger than her. They all thought they were so powerful, untouchable, because they ruled the slums. Her father had taught her how to deal with such men, and the wars had taught her worse still. She smiled, soon they would all learn who the real monster was.

At that moment the man turned to bring his other fist around. Again she didn't hesitate, he was a brawler not a professional combatant, and his footing was off. She shifted to the side while bringing her vibro knife up. His fist missed her by millimeters, her knife did not. She was Madrafa, she never missed. Her blade flowed down the man's arm as she moved, opening his veins and spreading his blood into the night air.

He screamed, and fell to his knees as she tripped him. The barrel of her MeK23 touched his temple and she pulled the trigger. It wasn't necessary, he would bleed to death quickly, but she liked pulling triggers. Sometimes she liked to imagine they could hear the sound of their own death, but that wasn't how it worked. In an execution like this the end came quicker than sound.

Karayan jumped down from the truck and walked away as his lifeless body slumped onto the now red stained cobblestones, joining that of his cohorts. It hadn't been the pain, she could already feel the nanites doing their work. Pain meant nothing. It was her slowness and his arrogance that had angered her, but that didn't matter anymore now. Or did it?