



Streets of Rage: Bare Struggle – Level 1 – Blaze Fielding

“Same to you!” Blaze yelled into the receiver, slamming it into the cradle and glaring down at it, breathing deep and counting. She was standing in her dance studio late at night, the place long since closed, but Blaze was – *as always* – awake long into the night. She'd been a damn good cop – *one of the three that had realized how deep the corruption in their city ran* – and she'd had to go rogue to expose the corruption and clean up Wood Oak City.

She'd been placed on leave without pay pending an investigation for her service.

Which, okay, *fine*. She'd broken the law, but the law was hiding corrupt people behind it and those same corrupt assholes had rigged the system. There was no other way to win. And she'd gone rogue again, while under investigation, because that same corruption had lingered on and rebuilt itself.

They'd fired her outright for that.

Well, that and punching the commissioner in the face.

So she'd opened up a private investigation service and uncovered the same group of monsters, once again planning the usual horror, now with the added threat of nuclear annihilation. This time, she and her friends had saved not just the city, not just the state, but the whole fucking seaboard from nuclear disaster at the hands of the same crime lord that authorities like the commissioner kept letting free.

Mr. X.

Fuck that guy.

He'd been a brain in a jar and she'd made sure it got smashed.

You'd think after all that she would have earned a little leeway, a little trust, but no, they took away her investigator's license and clearly expected her to just give up. And, sure, she'd opened a dance studio, she had to eat and her fighting style was basically a mix of judo, defendo, breakdancing, and vogueing. The latter two she could teach without arousing too much suspicion, though she suspected half her male clientele was there for a different kind of arousal.

Whatever.

Money was money.

And she needed to keep her studio open and the lights on because, so far as she could tell, something was happening in the city's underworld. After she and her friends had wrecked Mr. X the gangs in the city had splintered into factional infighting – the spooky Crones held sway over the inner city, while the Jewels ran the docks and uptown and the Storm Riders ruled the outskirts. The Troubles made trouble everywhere, but that was the trouble with the Troubles: they made a mess and the bomb squad had to clean it up.

The problem was that the gangs were all going quiet, like their leaders were running scared and preparing for something big. It was worrying but no one at the police force was listening, the goddamn Commissioner not listening to her like he never listened to her.

“I exposed Mr. X, you fucking bureaucrat,” Blaze swore at the phone. She'd punched the man in the face, she remembered, and thought it had cost her her license it had been worth it. She only wish she'd punched him *harder*.

She kept a pin board in the back of her studio, running thread and intel the way she had as a cop,

building her case, gathering evidence. Looking at it all revealed that someone was trying to unify the gangs again, she thought, bringing the leadership under control and rebuilding Mr. X's Syndicate. They had to be stopped.

"It's up to us," Blaze muttered. "Again."

She reached for the phone.

Adam had gone off with the feds and Axel had gone off to hide in the woods, but they shared a private number they could all check when they needed to get in touch with one another. She looked at the board, bit her lip, ran a hand through her hair.

It was time to get the band back together.

The phone rang.

Blaze checked the time, wondered who would be calling her at this time of night and let it go to her machine.

From the front of the studio came the sound of breaking glass.

"You have got to be fucking kidding me," Blaze grinned, cracking her knuckles and walking out of the back with a smile and casual confidence. "Sorry about the locked door, but we're closed."

"Oh, shit," a young emo-looking twerp said, turning to look at a girl about his age – clearly a sibling, maybe a twin. "Hey, sis, apparently this place is closed."

"That explains the locked door," the girl said, sniffing the air and poking the broken glass with her fur-lined boot. She had a sword in her right hand, a fancy fencing blade.

"If you're looking for money you're going to be disappointed," Blaze said, stepping closer, letting one hand rest by her hip, shifting her weight.

"No, no, not at all, money we've got," the twerp said. He was wearing a black pencil necktie, pulled an actual uzi out from his coat and grinned at her. "This dump we could buy and turn into a parking lot."

"We made it a trap instead," the girl said, running her fingers of her free hand down the blade like she was molesting it, which, *ew*. "Kept the rent down to keep track of a certain someone's investigation."

"Like, haven't you learned enough, bitch?" the twerp asked, raising the gun. "Hasn't your stupid little game cost you enough?"

She lunged at him, caught his wrist and flipped him. He slammed into the ground, shooting wildly while laughing, his sister coming up with her sword. Blaze backflipped away, tracking the motion of them both.

"Hey," the twerp said. "Hey, Blaze."

"What?"

"Boom goes the dynamite."

The wall behind her exploded.



She was thrown through the opposite wall, out into the street, where she rolled across the asphalt, slamming into a limo and fell still. Her studio and the building went up in flames and the siblings stepped out of the ruin, walking towards her. She forced herself calm, forced herself to breath.

Her hand was shaking as she found the limo tire and used it to prop herself up to her knees, riding the limo as she pushed herself to her feet. The twerp raised his gun but it was the sister that flew at her, driving the guard of her sword into Blaze's guts and driving the air out of her again.

Blaze gasped, managed to stay standing as the twerp aimed the uzi at her.

“Hey, Blaze.”

She managed to look at him, look down the barrel.

“Boom. Headshot.”



The bullet was rubber.

She'd used them on criminals back when she'd been a cop. They weren't lethal most of the time but they still hurt; her head swam, her vision blurry. It was hard to think. She probably had a concussion.

"Hey, Blaze."

She did not like those words from his mouth.

He didn't say anything this time, or maybe he did and she didn't hear it. He put the uzi next to her knee and pulled the trigger and she fell, her whole leg going numb. When she tried to kick him with her other leg he grabbed the ankle and put a rubber bullet into her thigh, then stepped between her legs.

He said something she didn't hear and then shot her right shoulder, then her left.

She tried to move.

Couldn't.

The sister helped pick her up and shoved her in the trunk of the limo, and then they closed the door.



"That was easier than I expected."

"I think she expected us to fight fair."

"Why the fuck would we do that?"



The light in the trunk was a dim angry red, barely enough to see by even once Blaze's eyes had adjusted. They hadn't tied her up, so she could move around with what little space there was. She flopped on her back, fought her way through the pain to consciousness, relocated her knee and shoulders with effort. She bit her coat to muffle her screams, slowly worked some of the kinks out.

Limo is specially made, she thought, investigating it as best she could. No release hatch. Might be a problem if they want to drive this thing into a river... Blaze fought back the image of slowly drowning in this enclosed space.

"If they wanted me dead, I would be," she said. Her voice was raspy; it was hot in the trunk and she was sweating even if her teeth were chattering. It took her a minute to admit that she was afraid.

The limo slowed down, came to a stop. She adjusted herself as best she could – when the trunk opened she'd have one chance to get out and grab someone. The twerp had a gun, so her plan was to jump him, take the gun, and use it to take him hostage long enough to escape; injured as she was, she needed to get away, regroup, get in touch with the others before coming after these two.

A knock on the trunk hatch. She poised, tensed, was ready.

Behind her a panel opened.

Grinning, the twerp rolled an electrocution grenade into the trunk with her and closed the hatch.



Blaze regained consciousness in what looked like a church. Daylight streamed through a stained glass window, painting her in whites and reds. She'd been stripped and dressed in the halter and miniskirt she'd killed Mr. X in, though her boots and hose had been removed.

The villain himself shone in stained glass, glaring down at her.

"What the fuck," Blaze grumbled. Her head hurt but she was otherwise alright. A pair of bracelets and anklets had been added to her outfit, and a long cable trailed away from her neck towards some sort of massive generator. She looked at the bracelets and anklets, failed to take them off, felt around her neck and found a slim metal band locked around her throat. "What the fuck?"

The wires didn't seem to react to her moving, so she stood and began pacing, taking stock of the world around her. The light culled her vision but she eventually noticed a large mass of people in the pews, sitting quietly, waiting.

"She moves like a predator," a voice in the audience said. A slim figure rose up out of the crowd, smiling at her.

The twerp.

"It won't save her," answered another voice, the girl with the sword.

She was closer, close as peril, well within striking distance. Blaze lashed out with a kick and took pleasure in the girl's surprised yelp, the way she scrambled backwards.

The twerp snickered.

"Hey, Blaze," he said. She hated that she cringed. "Heel."

A surge of electricity washed through the leash to the collar around her neck, connected to the bracelets and anklets, making her spasm across the stage. She screamed, pulling at the collar, the bracelets, but the electricity still came, sent her twitching for the amusement of her audience. They catcalled, whistled, laughed.

When she fell, a Garsia shoved a twenty in her halter, leaned down and licked her cheek.

Breathing hard, she tried to hit him, but every muscle ached.

She closed her eyes, imagining everyone there coming for her. She whimpered; she couldn't fight them, not like this.

"Everyone back off, give our bitch some breathing room," the girl said. She's swapped her sword for a stiff length of leather that ended in what looked like a taser.

Blaze pushed herself to her knees, stood on shaking legs. It was hard to stand but she managed, trembling as she locked eyes with the girl, with the twerp.

"I deserve this," Blaze said.

She blinked. Her words echoed over loudspeakers.

Why had she said that?

"You're a dancer, right?" the girl said, the taser pressing against Blaze's belly. Blaze flinched, tried to brush it away and got a quick slash to her thigh for the effort, a red welt blossoming for everyone to see. The next time the girl touched her with the weapon Blaze did nothing, too tired to fight effectively as it travelled up to her breast, coming to rest at her throat. "Are you going to answer the question, my bitch?"

"I'm a stripper," Blaze said.

And then she giggled.

It wasn't her. Blaze Fielding didn't giggle, hadn't giggled since she'd been a child. The giggle didn't come from her throat, but it was her giggle moving through the loudspeakers, her voice, her simpering little sound.

She gaped, staggered, leaning on the weapon at her throat. She wasn't saying those things. She wasn't meaning to say those things. What had they done to her?

"You certainly dress like one," the girl said. "Show us."

Music started and the electricity returned.

Her muscles spasmed and she shook, bouncing as her jewelry made her shake. She screamed, trying to lash out, falling and rising as she was shocked everywhere, her limbs going numb, one song to the next. She wanted the pain to stop but her cries were wordless, agonized, the shocking washing through her lungs, her heart, her throat until she could not speak in more than meaningless syllables. Her audience laughed as the twerp and the girl sat side by side on matching thrones, holding hands.

Lovers? Blaze thought. *No... siblings... siblings...*

She spun, caught in electric agony, her eyes moving to the stained glass, to

No.

She knew how to make the pain stop.

Blaze had to fight her own spasming limbs. She had to cry through the pain, force her numb fingers to fumble with the halter, push it up and over her tits, over her shoulders, off her body. It was held in place by elastics but her fingers barely worked. It didn't matter. Using her knuckles, she got the halter to her mouth, bit down, pulled up with everything she had left in her. The halter snapped against her tits, then her throat. She got it up, up and over, up and off. Cold air hit her and she shook, her audience hooting and hollering and enjoying her humiliation.

"Look," she said, her voice on the loudspeakers. "Me bouncy."

She shook, jiggled, bounced, her chest tight and taut even without the halter in place.

With the amount of exercising she did she had never needed a bra to be perky.

The skirt was harder, so much harder. The belt alone took most of three songs to get off, the electric current forcing her across the stage, her thighs twitching, her hips bouncing, her bare chest exposed as she fumbled and stumbled and crashed, falling to her knees, crying, but she was Blaze Fielding and she was not going to be beaten by a belt.

It fell off, finally. Her fingers stung, her nail polish wrecked from her faltering efforts, but it was off her hips. She fell on her ass, hooking fingers between skirt and skin, pushing down her shaking thighs, down her calves, off her bare feet.

The electricity stopped and she collapsed.

"Thank you for watching my show," Blaze said.

Panting, covered in sweat, she tried to get up off the floor and fell on her chest, on her face. The twerp got up on stage with her, kicked her ass, started moving his shoe up and down the slit of her cunt.

Her hips twitched. It felt good. It felt like the only good thing in her life.

She hated it.

"The pleasure was all ours," the twerp said. He kicked her legs open, kneeling behind her. His hands were on her hips, pulling her backwards.

She sank onto him with a whimper.

The girl shoved a foot by her face. Blaze's whimpering protests pressed against the girl's shoes like kisses, like she was begging. That wasn't what she was doing but she knew what it would look like, what everyone here would remember.

"Very good, our bitch," the girl said. "We're going to cherish you forever."

The twerp thrust into her and Blaze cried out, arms circling the girl's ankle, her lips on the girl's shoes, the girl kneeling down and running a hand through Blaze's hair.

"When my brother's done with you," the girl said, "you're going to make a phone call."



Blaze had sounded strange over the phone.

Axel had gone into seclusion after Mr. X's death. The trauma of betrayal, of constant fighting, of everything he had been forced to do to stop a madman and the punishments he had endured for it had been too much for him. He craved isolation to put himself back together, to get stronger.

Like Blaze, he suspected that the fight wasn't over.

The streets would rage again.

So when Blaze called, he came. And when the Garsia gang emerged from the shadows with knives in their hands, he was ready. They cut him. They stabbed him. He bled and bled and they fell at his hands, all the training and all the time alone paying off. They came at him from behind, from the sides, from everywhere, but he stood strong and proud, unbroken.

Nothing could have prepared him for the explosion.

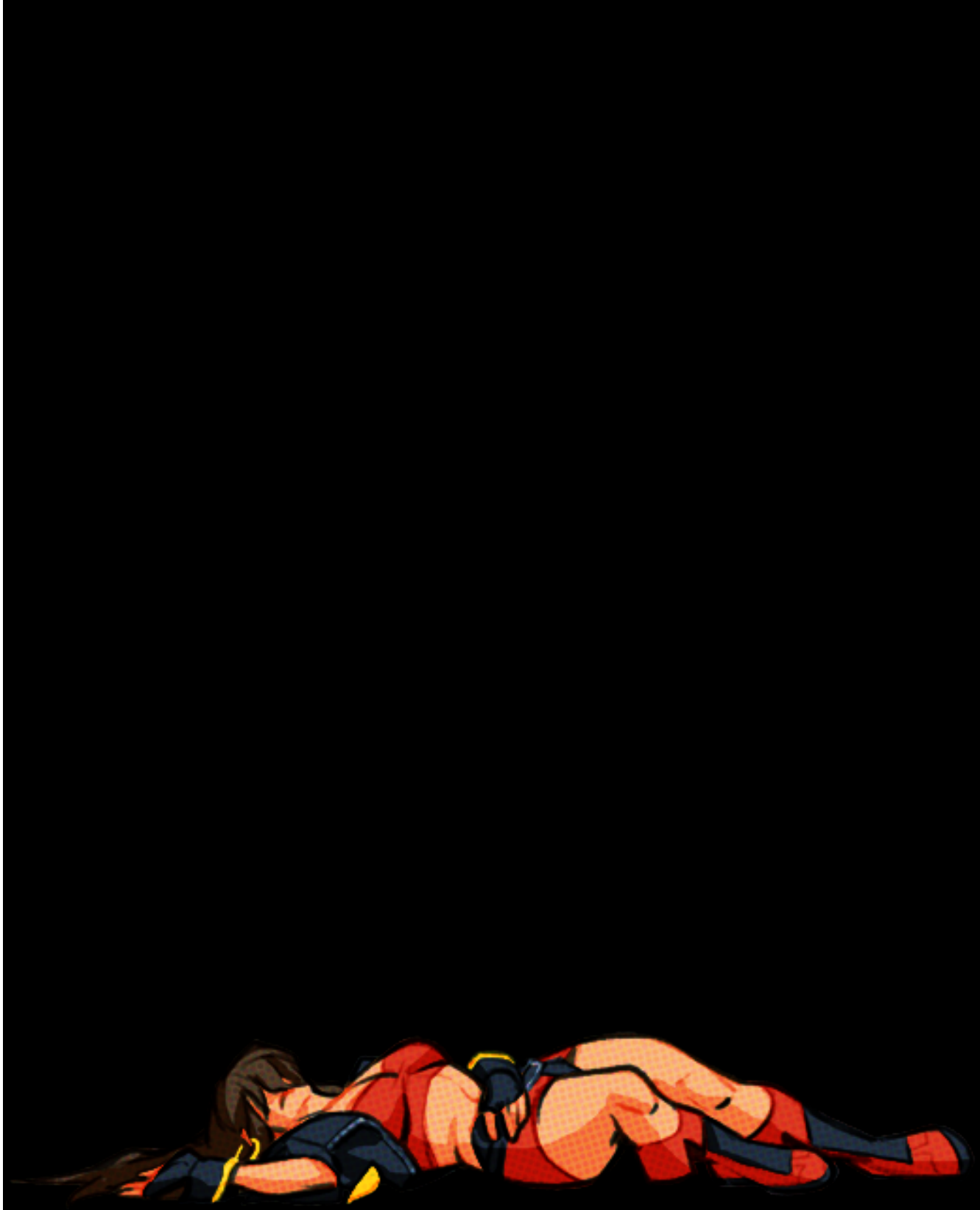
He lay, one body among many.

Mr. X tried to nuke a city, he thought, lying on the ground and looking up at the stars. Why wouldn't whoever followed him do this...?

There were more members of the Garsia gang closing in, but he was already bleeding out.

The fire of his rage was embers, then cinders, and then nothing at all.

Closing his eyes, Axel slept.



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