



THE AXEMAN'S ENCORE

Based on true events

A novel by
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Chapter 5

Monday, January 6th, 2025 - 4:05 PM

Hub tapped the rusted time clock and slid his card into the slot, hearing that satisfying ka-chunk as it stamped the end of his shift. His boots were still damp from the docks, and the salt air clung to his clothes like static.

“See you tomorrow, Landry,” called his coworker Ray, a sun-leathered man who always smelled like engine grease and hot dogs.

“Later, Ray,” Hub said, wiping his hands on a rag and tossing it into a bin. “Try not to fall in again.”

“No promises,” Ray laughed, already lighting a cigarette with a flick of his calloused thumb.

Hub stepped out of the marina’s side gate just as a familiar, rattletrap van pulled up to the curb. It wheezed to a stop like an old man giving up on a flight of stairs. Joey leaned across the passenger seat, grinning through the rolled-down window.

“Need a lift, sailor?”

Hub climbed in with a grunt, slamming the creaky door behind him. “You’re two minutes late. I’m docking your pay.”

“Joke’s on you, I work for exposure,” Joey said, pulling away from the harbor and merging into traffic.

The inside of the band van smelled like incense, sweat, and that one spilled bag of sour cream & onion chips that no one had ever cleaned up. Posters, stickers, and a cracked pair of drumsticks decorated the dashboard like weird altars to gigs long gone.

They drove in silence for a minute, the city passing by in a blur of neon signs, potholes, and tangled power lines.

"So," Joey finally said, "you really think this place, Threshold, is still standing?"

Hub nodded. "It's listed on some old real estate map I found online. I mean, it's not on Zillow or anything, but the address checks out."

"And you just want to... look at it?"

"For now," Hub said. "I want to see how big it is. What kind of shape it's in. Try to picture it lit up again, amps cranked, Kayla double-kicking a hole in the back wall."

Joey smirked. "You're romanticizing a building."

"I'm romanticizing potential," Hub shot back. "Plus, worst-case scenario, we get tetanus."

They turned off the main road and onto Burgundy Street. The buildings got older, quieter. Most had barred windows or faded signs; New Orleans holding onto its bones.

"There," Hub said, pointing. "That's it."

Joey slowed to a crawl.

Threshold sat like a forgotten monument at the end of the block, two stories of decaying brick and boarded windows, its once-elegant facade now chipped and water-streaked. The old wooden doors were scarred but still intact. A broken light fixture hung askew above the entryway. Painted letters, barely visible through decades of grime, still clung to the arched sign above the doors.

THRESHOLD

Joey killed the engine. The van clicked as it cooled.

"Well," he said, leaning forward over the steering wheel. "It's definitely got... character."

Hub stared at the building in silence, fingers drumming his knee.

"Yeah," he murmured. "Let's see if it's got anything left to say."

Hub hopped out of the van first, slamming the door with a satisfying clang.

Joey followed, pushing his hoodie sleeves up and squinting at the building like it might bite.

Up close, Threshold was even more of a wreck. Cracked bricks, peeling paint, and vines clawing up the sides like nature was trying to drag the place back into the ground.

"I don't know if it's haunted," Joey muttered, "but it sure as hell is condemned."

Hub walked slowly toward the entrance, running his hand along the worn brick. "Nah. She's just sleeping."

The old wooden double doors were chained shut with a heavy rusted lock, but one of the side windows had a broken slat near the bottom. Hub crouched down and peeked through.

Inside, it was dark and dust-covered, but the shape of a stage was still visible under sheets and debris. A few broken chairs were scattered across the floor, and faint graffiti marked the back wall.

"This used to be something," Hub whispered.

Joey stood on tiptoe, trying to peek through a high window. "Could be again. If you don't mind asbestos."

Hub stepped back and looked at the building in full, arms crossed. "Okay. I gotta know who owns this."

He pulled out his phone and leaned against the van. A few taps later, he was on the city's online property records site. He entered the address from the flier, 415 Burgundy Street, and waited.

Spinning wheel. Spinning wheel. Loading...

Then: OWNER: LANDRY ESTATE (DECEASED – INACTIVE)

Hub's jaw dropped. "Dude. It's still in my family's name."

Joey blinked. "Wait... like, you could own this?"

"I don't know... maybe? I mean, it's probably complicated. But it never got sold. It never got claimed. That means it's been just sitting here."

Joey whistled low. "Bro. Threshold could be yours."

Hub stared up at the weathered sign above the door, then looked down at his phone again, double-checking the screen like it might change.

"If this place is really still in my family," he said slowly, "I'm bringing it back

to life.”

They didn’t hang around Threshold long after the discovery. The air was thick with the kind of excitement that made your hands itch to do something. Hub could barely sleep that night, and by Tuesday, he was already making moves.

That afternoon, Joey pulled up to the marina in the band van again, idling with one arm out the window.

“You ready to go make history, or what?” he called.

Hub climbed in, brushing the dock grit off his work pants. “Man, I can’t believe how easy this is. The assessor said the building’s still in the Landry estate, hasn’t changed hands since Joseph died. All I have to do is fill out some paperwork and it’s mine.”

Joey raised an eyebrow. “That’s it? No haunted clauses? No, like, cursed property taxes?”

“I mean, we’ll see how cursed it is later. But yeah, apparently it was never officially passed down. And since I’m a blood relative, they said I can claim it.”

“Wild,” Joey said, pulling into traffic. “You’re just walking in there and getting a jazz club like it’s a free puppy.”

“Former jazz club, now doom metal headquarters.” Hub corrected.

“Right. A classy re-branding.”

They pulled up to the Orleans Parish Assessor’s Office, a squat, sun-blasted building that looked like it had seen too many hurricanes and too few renovations.

A clerk in horn-rimmed glasses walked them through the process, rifling through faded manila folders and pointing out where Hub needed to sign.

“Joseph Landry passed in 1986, and there was no formal probate. Since you are next of kin and the estate has no competing claims, this will transfer ownership to you,” she said, stamping documents with a flat thunk. “Congratulations. You’re now the legal owner of 415 Burgundy Street.”

Hub held the deed in his hands like it might crumble.

“I... wow,” he said quietly. “This is really happening.”

They walked out to the van in silence. Hub slid into the passenger seat and

stared at the paperwork for a long minute.

Joey nudged him. "So what now, club owner?"

Hub exhaled. "We make Threshold sing again."

When they pulled into the driveway, Aunt Lydia was out back hanging laundry. They met her at the steps, Hub practically bouncing.

"You're looking smug," she said, eyeing the grin spreading across his face.

"I just signed the deed to Grandpa Joseph's club. It's still in the family. It's mine now."

Lydia froze, towel in hand. "You're serious?"

"Swear on my bass."

Joey added, "We were thinking about putting up a tribute wall to The Hammer. Photos, maybe his old records, stuff like that."

Lydia smiled. "He'd have loved that. That man had a real flair for theatrics."

Hub looked down at the deed again, a little stunned, a little proud, and a lot terrified.

Threshold was his now.

And whatever came with it.