



**Prologue*****10th of February, 2020, Middleton Public Library***

'Liberty and Fraternity'. The phrase glowed in an eerie, hesitant glory as it whispered from its place on the green, stained fabric, wilting with age on the wall. Thomas peered closer at the words that began to pull him forward with a strength, which despite their age, still reigned supreme within the rows upon rows of dull, tome-like books with lines of forgotten poignance. He stood with an uncontrollable, shuddering curiosity. He crept tentatively towards the fabric that hung on the wall, as though his tumultuous yearning to peer closer into the golden, fading words that seemed to penetrate the sultry air would be cut short by the grim reality of their past.

He looked about him at the tomes of knowledge that had passed through the minds of scholars and authors, creating the building block of this tricornered library, the Middleton Public Library. Desks stood freely (but notably empty) with the marks of opened pages. People came and went with a quick nod, a word or a wave at the librarian. Liberty and Fraternity glowed about him in a renewed, unknowing glare. He turned back to the fabric and read beneath:

'This banner belonged to Thomas Redford, protester and victim at the Peterloo Massacre, which took place at St. Peter's Field, Manchester. This banner is commonly believed to be the world's oldest surviving political banner.'

He stood no further than an inch from the golden, glittering words which struck with the force of a sabre through his mind. Even beyond the glass that protected the banner with futile importance, he could almost smell the heat of an urban, industrial city which smeared dark stains over the fabric. He could hear the screams of protest and then of pain and could see, with a strange, imagined glance into the past, the jovial marching, chanting, the anticipation, then the fear, and pain.

The words protester, victim and massacre didn't fit or if they did, only in a grim, biting juxtaposition. Massacre at the plea for liberty and fraternity was a gross misconduct. News reports, photos and videos flashed by in his mind, showing protesters chanting peacefully in the knowledge of their silently agreed protection. But this citation suggested another, more brutal reality.

He was filled with trembling guilt at the idea. He had accepted protest as part of society but the screams of protest, then of pain, filled his mind with realisation. Remembering the date and its proximity to the climate strike, he sprinted past his desk, past his open book and along the rows of tomes of long sentences and words of nonsensical length. He dashed out of the library and ran home, with the words of golden importance whirling through his mind: 'Liberty and Fraternity'.

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**Chapter 1*****16th of August, 1819 - St Peter's Field, Manchester***

'Liberty and Fraternity'. The words fluttered like a mysterious butterfly into his mind. Thomas Redford had said them and had claimed that those were the words that now shone brightly on the back of his banner. The mystery of such words only prolonged their fluttering in his mind. The letters burnt through his eyes, spinning his renewed wish for more than the monotonous, exhausting, painful manual labour that paid only four shillings a week. He wished for a life without perpetual hunger, poverty and pain and for one where he could read the wings of such a butterfly's words and to understand their meaning, their glorious, shimmering, golden meaning. Why did he, Albert, have to be subjected to a life of gut wrenching starvation and splitting pain when the Prince Regent could live a life of luxury, without the burden of working class life?

He knew the road they now walked down as Windmill Street (from his hurried trips to the Cotton Mill), but today, instead of the disease ridden, impoverished people that usually lined the streets in ever deeper misery, all of Middleton were walking down the cobbled street, waving banners, shouting jovially and marching together towards St Peter's Field. A cotton manufacturer, dressed in his pompous, yet slightly rugged, tailcoat and hat beckoned Mary towards him and gingerly, cautiously as though wary of a trap, she walked towards her employer. He began to ask her something in a rather uncharacteristic, fearful manner. As Albert approached the furtive conversation, Mr Johson's (the employer's) tension released and as he passed by, he heard Mary's final words, 'All will be well.'

He remembered his mother's reaction at the news that his father had been sneaking out to speak with the Reformists; how her eyes glared with the confused irration of betrayal. She had always claimed that it wasn't their place to decide who should vote and who shouldn't. It wasn't their place to challenge, in any way, the remnants of the feudal ladder.

'My father worked in the cotton mill and his father before him. For generations our family have been workers, in fact, since the beginning of work, itself,' she had said, fervently dismayed by her husband's betrayal of their whole working lineage.

'Why should 'they' get the vote if 'they' don't work and why shouldn't we get the vote if we work? It doesn't make sense I tell you. And what about the corn laws, eh? Do you enjoy having to buy bread with the majority of your wages? Our community is starving and if this goes on, we won't be able to work, unless 'they' get their act together and give us the vote,' replied his father on multiple occasions, the only response being a subtle eye roll and a stern expression from Albert's mother.

Despite his mother's reservations for the cause and her fear of the outcome of such a demonstration, Albert's father had managed to persuade her into coming with a flippant phrase, like the one Mary had given her employer. And there Albert's mother was, part of the protest, but still with her stern expression of reservation that seemed to repel Albert's stare.

Other curious spectators crowded the sides of the street, looking with conservative reservation at the march to 'Liberty and Fraternity', the march to the future. Even though most of Middleton, Rochdale, Oldham, Manchester and Lancashire as a whole was here, some were still stuck within the past. Such a sign of public disobedience rang their bells of cultural alarm, and so doing something of this kind just wasn't right for them. However, the oratory, the need for change and the persuasion of family members and friends had changed the minds of many into believing that this path to protest, this demonstration of dislike for their current standard of living was the right path to take.

They entered the field itself and the fear that the spectators had radiated in an atmosphere of trepidation, gave way to the glare of happiness of the crowd that now gathered. The pain and monotonous boredom of the mill which was now ingrained within Albert's every feeling and thought, now succumbed to the collective power of comfort. The field was packed full of families, who were full of joy and a faith in their unflinching belief in the cause for representation and the abolishment of the corn laws. Henry Hunt, the much anticipated speaker of the event, had said previously 'come with no other weapon but that of a self approving conscience' and, although some believed that weapons should be the cornerstone of such a protest, he could see that no one was armed.

The sultry air was painfully close and hanging in columns of mist, smoke and fog. The air smelt of people, the unforgettable, hideous smell of people packed into a claustrophobically tight space. Albert spotted (on tiptoes and straining his neck to see over the shoulders of the people in front) a sea of black, green and red banners all with shimmering gold letters. He also spotted Mr Redford's green 'Liberty and Fraternity' banner undulating like waves in a jovial breeze. His hands and arms were, by this point, involuntarily clenching without the expected effort of over exertion that he experienced at the mill; his arms, covered with bruises, scratches and half mended scars were almost trembling without the work he was expecting. He looked up at his father who was shouting 'Taxation without representation is tyranny!' in unison with the crowd, and finding comfort in the uniformity, Albert joined the chant.

Women gathered around carriages which were tied together with twine (which he assumed made up the hustings), their white dresses glowing like a beacon of hope. He looked up at his father, questioningly, and was replied with 'Must be the Manchester Female Reform Society or somethin'.'

He said that, moving his shoulders as he spoke as though proud at his knowledge and use of such a tremendously long title. Albert looked about him, still chanting, and spotted the Oldham contingent which seemed to bring with it streams of people, which, he guessed, his family's friend Mr John Lees was part of.

'Taxation without representation is tyranny!' he shouted in unison as he turned towards the left, and saw, with a deep inhalation, eyes. Scores of eyes peered out of a window above the hustings.

The eyes were fearful but yet filled with a brutal sense of righteousness, the belief that they were superior and the protesters were inferior, like mice in a cage.

St. Peter's Church's bell tremored, notifying the members of the protest that it was noon. Suddenly, the crowd froze. On tiptoes, Albert saw constables, notably Jonathon Andrews (traitor to his people), entering the crowd and forcing their way towards the hustings. The crowd surged back, their pre-reformist sentiments rising as their first port of call and then surged forward as those at the front of the crowd hurried to surround the hustings.

Someone shouted, 'Don't let them arrest the speakers!' The speakers, who hadn't actually arrived yet, were due to stand upon the hustings for their oratory and it seemed (as tiptoeing was now impossible in the surges of movement), that the constables were trying to force their way towards the hustings, no doubt in order to have a secure route to arrest Henry Hunt. Within seconds of the sounding of midday, the air of humid, yet happy, chanting had given way to the silence of fearful anticipation.

In what seemed a decade of constant, staring silence from the unmoving eyes of the mysterious men beyond the hustings, the crowd's dread rose and bubbled. People fidgeted, forgetting their chanting and waiting for the moment when Henry Hunt would arrive. From the direction of Mount Street, chanting started saying 'No Corn Laws!' This seemed to be followed by the emergence of Henry Hunt. He saw, to his surprise, (and amongst many unfamiliar faces), Joseph Johnson, a well known cotton manufacturer and Richard Carlile which he knew (as his father had told him) as the editor of the Manchester Observer. The atmosphere of fearful anticipation subsided to renewed happiness, as people, dazed, turned their heads towards the speaker who now (with a wary glance at the constables) stood upon the hustings. The chanting resumed and 'No Corn Laws!'; whistles; and clapping applauded Henry Hunt's entry.

Looking among the eager faces who looked at Henry Hunt with a loving appreciation of his oratory, Albert saw Jonathon Andrews mount the stairs to the eyes in the building at the edge of the field. The eyes in the building all turned and after a brief moment, Jonathon Andrews reemerged with something in his hand. Albert's body, despite the empowering oratory, wretched with terror at the knowledge that something was going to happen. Someone ran out of the building of eyes and dashed down Peter Street. Albert began to search frantically for an escape route, to no avail. All around him he was surrounded with the bodies of people cheering, unaware of the imminent danger. Shouts rose at the end of Henry Hunt's speech as a sign of the crowd's unflinching admiration. Then, a scream of pain rose and wailed in high pitched distress and then, as though throttled, ended. Then the screamed sobs of loss penetrated the happiness consuming the crowd in terrifying fear.

Hooves resonated as they galloped over cobblestones and burst into the field, melting, in seconds, the frozen crowd who now rushed out of their way. Screams of terror leapt into the air as the horses reared their way towards the hustings, knocking down protesters in deliberate defiance of the protest. 'Liberty and Fraternity' crumpled at the sight of the horses, collapsing in its golden

glory and becoming part of the surging crowd. Albert (and the rest of the crowd) ran forward, sideways, back and forth like cattle at the sight of a predator. With a quick glance back, Henry Hunt was apprehended and the men on horseback moved towards the crowd. Still running in frantic, heart thumping fear, he looked and screamed for his family. The men on horseback seemed to multiply in seconds, as they slashed with sabres at the inferior mice below like predators hunting.

'Albert! ALBERT!' The voice was unmistakable. Albert, almost tripping over another dying body in his sprint to freedom, turned towards the voice. He ran to Mr Lees who was now lying, having crawled to the side of the field (away from anymore agony), with a large, sabre wound across his stomach. He was breathing rapidly, panting, sweating, almost spitting blood in streams from his wound and his mouth. He whispered in strained syllables, 'This is worse than the Battle of Waterloo.'

Mr Lees had been a soldier at the Battle of Waterloo and for many years was deeply stricken by his memories. Albert looked about him with a wrench of grief and panting denial. Dead bodies lay trampled; blood soaked the ground in renewed filth; and the herds of bodies threw themselves towards the exit of the field, stumbling away from the inhuman sabres, horses and cavalymen as they slashed at their cattle. He looked down and Mr Lees lay dead in his arms. He took a deep breath and, as loud musket shots resounded in the air, sprinted as part of the stumbling cattle herd towards Windmill street where the pain and misery continued. As he looked at the now emptying field behind him, he saw a woman, being thrown into a cellar and stabbed on the spot, her white dress now stained with a growing pool of scarlet, extinguishing its beacon of hope. Panting with frantic fury and fear, he sprinted towards Middleton, leaving the bodies and the blood of what had been a peaceful protest behind him.

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**Chapter 2*****18th June, 1984 - Orgreave, South Yorkshire***

The air blew with an added importance as Michael cycled out of the village and crossed the railway line. The sun beat down upon the coarse tarmac, the rugged tufts of grass in the fields and the freely growing trees that were scattered about the field. The sun's warmth strengthened, as though soldering his confidence of success. How dare the coking plant, against his community's best efforts, ignore all agreements and order more than the permitted amount of coal? He was sure Margaret Thatcher had something to do with it. She had come pledging economic strength, yet threw on the community a bombshell, an explosive pledge to shut down the coal mines. Like the wings of a butterfly on a dark day, the strike gave him hope.

As Michael cycled further up the hill to the coking plant on his fake Grifter, his mind shuddered to a humiliating halt. He realised that he had never actually been to a picket before and, knowing that, although claiming to protect public order (as the TV so often said), the Police stood between the strike and success.

Arthur Scargill's words, however, still floated in his mind, like waves lapping at the edge of the beach, foaming their way further and further towards the top. He remembered how, with crushing, piercing, heart wrenching blows, his father had destroyed his cupboard and his desk, collecting the wood for firewood, nothing more than a burnt memory.

As he rounded the top of the hill (being careful to avoid the police's ever staring gaze), he cycled, speeding towards the edge of the coking plant where, by peering round the corner, he would be able to see the traitorous trucks with their Polish coal arriving, betraying the NUM's every warning. He would also see the pickets gather, awaiting the truck's arrival.

As Michael dismounted, he, with a stern eye turned to the future, could foresee a BBC report in which Margaret Thatcher had resigned at the demand of the pickets, his friends, his family, his community, leaving their lives and livelihoods in peace. He also, with an even sterner eye, remembered the coking plant's betrayal which would arrive today in many truck loads of coal. Arthur Scargill and the NUM had allowed some coal, but to completely betray the NUM and order more was unthinkable. He also imagined, as though the butterfly wings had been dimmed, that the coal mines had closed and that all coal for the steel industry came from Poland or wherever. What would happen to them then? He shuddered at the idea and turned his attention back towards the five thousand gathering pickets, bringing hope to his small village at the edge of Yorkshire, a renewed faith that their current sacrifices would give way to success.

Blocking the road and choking the air in shouts of protest, some pickets edged forward for a front row spot whilst others backed down towards the coking plant. He turned towards what must have been the Police command post. Their eyes glittered with confidence but their gaze darted through the crowd, searching, questioning, planning. He blinked, forgetting (or trying to forget) the police

and turned his mind towards the pride he held towards the pickets who were now cheering and preparing for the trucks' arrival.

A whinny from a horse and a bark from a dog resparked his trepidation as he, unlike the pickets, realised that the police were preparing for battle, tentatively hiding his dread. Policemen gathered around the crowd as they usually did, this time clad in full riot gear. Their blue visored helmets covered their faces with the sun's reflection, masking them, taking all their responsibility, leaving them with their anger and hatred.

They surged forward, intimidating, towards the pickets, forcing them down the hill and into the field. Angry shouts of protest leapt into the air, calling for help against these masked men, who holding truncheons, corralled them into the field.

Fear wrenched Michael into a frozen onlooker, witnessing his friends, family and community being rounded like cattle into the field below. Noises overwhelmed his senses as policemen shouted through megaphones, pickets shouted at this gross injustice and dogs barked and horses neighed. Again fear made him almost wretch at the realisation that they were confined, the railway line behind them with policemen in riot gear guarding it. On both sides mounted officers paced, waiting from their haughty heights. On the other side, he saw dogs, straining at their leads and barking violently through their muzzles, aggressively waiting for their freedom.

Worry seized him, almost to the point of trembling, as he feared for his fate. With another wretch, this time of guilt, he saw his father below shouting and waving his arm in anger at the police in anger that had blatantly taken this protest from him. Shouts rose and fell, filling the field and the surrounding area in a profuse cacophony, each shout barely audible as others clambered in painful dissonance.

He saw a railway train pass on the railway line below, adding to his fear for his family and friends, confined and trapped with no escape as though wild animals. He heard a growl, a low, painful, traitorous growl over the cacophonous shouts, neighs and barks. Shortly after, the trucks emerged, piled full of Polish coals. Like the angry bile rising within Michael, the crowd of pickets surged forwards towards the trucks. Through the gaps between trucks, Michael could hear and see, as though with strobe lighting, the police, the 'protectors', charge angrily towards the pickets, filling them with brimming fear, making them disperse across the field.

Scrambling towards the southern edge of the field, the pickets gathered in peril rather than protest, as the horses charged towards them, as though part of a medieval battle. Still rearing with anger at this gross overreaction, the pickets scrambled forward, grabbing stones and hurling them towards the policemen on horseback, the invaders. The horses reared their heads, despite their meticulous training, as stones fell about them, some hitting them and their riders.

As though bouncing back, the policemen charged onward, driving the confined pickets deeper into the field, intimidating the pickets and filling them with an existential terror. This was no longer



a matter of the miners' strike; this was a matter of avenging the gross misconduct that had been waged against the pickets and protecting their lives.

Michael again twisted as he saw protesters stumble and fall, only to pass under the moving wall of mounted horses. Anger and hatred rose in order to match the police's actions and it seemed infectious, spreading to Michael, willing him, against his sense, to join the battle as it unfolded into chaos.

The riot police joined the horses in their charge, making Michael pant with anticipation and fear as they ran downhill beating the protesters as the horses dispersed them. With shields and truncheons in hand, the police beat down upon the harmless protesters, blatantly missing their bodies and attacking their heads. Blood poured like fountains of clear water, staining the ground and covering the policemen. As a panting hatred rose within the protesters, some retaliated by attacking the policemen, aiming a kick, a punch, a stone throw at them, met only by the weight of a police officer being flung upon him, pinning him down, beating, restraining, striking.

Many succumbed to the horror, as they sprinted over the railway lines towards their homes. Some, however, stayed, inflamed by their confinement and their beatings. The policemen arrested some of the pickets, taking them, bleeding, bruised and deeply hurt to the command post. The other policemen regained their positions, confining the pickets.

Michael flung himself down, panting after the exhaustion he had suffered after watching such an enraging, frightening event. He stayed, fearing for his friends and family, sitting, watching and remembering half memories of cavalry charges spoken of in history classes; how they charged upon the innocent, unjustly. He wrapped his jean jacket about him for comfort, reflecting on such a sight, the sight of battle.

As the terror of the morning began to subside, many protesters started games of football, some lay down to sunbathe, and Michael began to leave, picking up his drawstring bag and the would-be Grifter.

As he did so, he spotted a policeman ordering the horses into position. The horses rounded over the edge of the field and entered the field at a canter, chasing the football playing protesters down the field and towards the railway line. The protesters' desperation flung them over the railway line and out of field, followed closely by the mounted police.

Michael mounted his bike, wanting to ensure the protesters' safety. The cacophony was reignited as shouts of fear rose from the sprinting protesters, who, dreading further action, scrambled home as villagers darted out of the way, dodging the onslaught of hooves and terrified men.

As the butterfly's wings fell silent in the cacophony, he spat his disgust at the policemen's cowardly desire to teach the miners a lesson, to want to show why their strike (the community's

only hope) should stop. The police had planned, from the outset, to lead an offensive, to start a battle and to defeat the protesters: his family and friends.

Michael sped home, his anger at the police greatly incensed. His nerves convulsed at the knowledge that his father or his brother could be missing or injured, or both.

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**Chapter 3*****28th August, 1819 - Middleton, Greater Manchester***

Blood gushed out, spitting, spilling from his body as the wound across his stomach bit down, consuming his body in wrenching pain. The look on his eyes was the look of unexpected fear; the fear for life; the fear for his family; the fear for his community. Albert looked down at his friend, his mentor. He saw, as though a copy of the scenes spotted from the protesters' tripping, splashing, cattle-like sprint to safety, a man on horseback yelling and slashing, slashing down at his inferiors, at his cattle, his mice. He spotted, as an adapted memory teased into reality, how the sabre ripped at John's stomach; how John screamed in pain as blood gushed in fountains from his wound; how he fell, begging for mercy as the horses jumped over him as though a hurdle, an inanimate object, a pile of unimportant flesh and blood. The sabre stuck in his mind as the horse rode away, still slashing, still wounding, still killing.

He turned the knife he was holding towards him, peering down at the glaring red rust that covered the knife, as though a disease, and staring down at the quarter of the loaf that still remained, stale and moulding at the edges. His hands quivered in trembling exertion after sixteen hours in the mill. The bruises, the scratches and half healed scars running up his arm, still glared in frustrated red as he held the knife, ready to cut the bread.

The cellar was cold and dark, but darker still was the sight of the man on horseback, edging further towards her in the dark. His self-righteous tailcoat and hat were glaring in fiery superiority as he drew his sabre and threw her further into the dark. The darkness grew as he jumped off his horse and lunged towards her, plunging his sabre into her, mounting and riding off. Blood stained her dress of white hope as she fell, gulping for air, and gushing blood, her wounds consuming her and killing her. The beacon of hope was extinguished.

With a leap of courage, Albert pierced the bread with his knife, cutting, sawing downwards through what seemed to be rubber. He managed to cut off three cubes of roughly one inch edges and passed it over to his mother, his sister and himself. He looked around to see if anyone had noticed his cowardly cutting of the bread but his mother seemed consumed in worry; his sister seemed consumed in her longing for extra food; and his father (to whom he was passing a cube with edges of two inches) was sweating profusely, hiding his groans and pleas for help as his wound continued to exasperate his growing fever. Along with the hours at the mill, his father's body had become consumed in pain and illness.

He remembered his arrival home, having sprinted with the crowd down Windmill Street. As the protesters' anger had begun to settle down after having been attacked by their righteous, superior predators, they began to retaliate, picking up bricks, stones and hammers and taking to the

streets in anger. Their realisation at their lost friend, father or daughter, their lost opportunity and the suffering that the men on horseback had inflicted upon them had overwhelmed them in an unmatched hatred, inciting them to violence. He ran home, hiding in dark alleys as rioters and men on horseback confronted one another, throwing bricks one way, shooting the other.

After the greater part of a day, with musket shots and screams of protest, pain and terror still ringing in his ears, he crashed into his small house, flinging himself onto the table, panting after hours of frightened flight. His mother and sister both stood and ran to him, their silent worry half released at the knowledge that at least two of their kin were alive.

The next day, the city was in chaos. Workers frantically searched the streets for loved ones before another day of fourteen hours of hard work. Albert did the same, wheezing through streets, crossing St Peter's Field where bodies lay, pale and stiff in death or groaning and bleeding at the door to death. Other sons, daughters, husbands and wives were doing the same, searching the dead (or near dead) for loved ones. They all stayed apart, as though having developed a severe claustrophobia at the proximity to other people. All was silent and people became nervous, anticipating, anxious of a repeat of the day before. All that could be heard was the sobbing, the whimpering, the church bells and the shouting of those looking for loved ones

The events of the day before loomed upon the workers as they hurried into the mill where news awaited them that they would be working sixteen hours from there on (with no extra pay), due to, of course, the people who were either missing, dead or injured and so unable to work.

That evening, his father returned, limping, his face a godsend after the hardship of only three quarters of the usual pay for the family. He flung himself down upon the chair and gasped. His clothes were drenched in blood. Lifting his trouser after many sharp inhalations, Albert's mother found a gaping wound awaiting her.

Albert's father had to continue working for his family, despite his wound and was forced, also, to hide it, so as to avoid the same fate as Mr Arthur Neil who had been thrown in prison and, as rumour had it, was now dying. The family needed to avoid arrest, imprisonment and added poverty and that meant that his father had to hide his wound.

'Peterloo Massacre! Number 1 price: twopence for news of the Peterloo Massacre, containing a full, true and faithful account of the inhuman murders, woundings and other monstrous cruelties.'

'Peterloo Massacre'. The phrase trembled through the streets outside their house as the grim reality of their peaceful protest was released at last. As he passed the bread cube to his father, he recognised that, since the bloodbath of the protest, he would never consider protesting again for the cause of representation and the abolishment of the corn laws (which still continued). Reformist meetings, the Manchester Observer, the Manchester Female Reform Society and every threshold to higher future standards of living would be stopped and banned in due course. The

community's beacon of hope in protest had been extinguished in a blood bath. It had been destroyed and crushed. This protest (the first he had seen and one of the first the community had experienced) would be the last, he was sure.

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**Chapter 4*****30th June, 1984 - Orgreave, South Yorkshire***

Even here, in the safety of his home, the screams of protest could be heard, whistling like a train through the community's minds, offsetting their thoughts onto a different track, a track of unanimous loathing. Never before had the pickets shouted with such force, which, Michael assumed, came from their abhorrence, their disgusted detestation at the authorities, the establishment which had brought the community crashing down.

Two empty chairs sat, expectant, at the round kitchen table, one waiting in trepidation and the other waiting with forgotten hope of its owner's arrival. Michael's father, as with many of the other strikers, remained picketing at the coking plant, the now infamous site of the 'battle', as many villagers called it. The community's unflinching resentment at the authority's treatment of their protesters had led to an open, blatant fury that had now, like a butterfly rising from a cocoon, risen to the added force of protest.

His brother, unlike his father, hadn't been so lucky. Indeed, he was decidedly unlucky. Michael's mind swirled in thought as he conjured in his mind's eye the adapted memory of his brother, a member of the crowd, as he was struck once, twice, three times whilst he fell bleeding from his head. The policeman hauled him up as he strained forward, trying to flee from the invader, the offender, the policeman. Strengthening his grip, the policeman hauled him towards the command post where he was taken, still bleeding, to the police station. His brother had been arrested, one of the many miners from the village who had been thrown into custody, awaiting a trial.

The loss of his brother to an undoubtedly long sentence in prison would deepen the family into what Michael had to assume was poverty. Unable to buy much food or coal, his family was cold and hungry and struggling to keep up with the financial demands of the strike. Without his brother and his father's disappearance to pickets, Michael began to forget the once glowing and singing butterfly wings that had filled his mind with hope; a hope for a better future; a hope for success.

Michael brought his attention to the baked beans beneath him, which must, by now, be beginning to get cold. He began spooning them into his mouth slowly, chewing each bean in deep contemplation. He looked tentatively at his mother and smiled gently, easing his mother's concerned look and changing her focus back onto her dinner. He sipped his water and looked back into the baked beans below.

Terror seized his body as screams of protest leapt into screams of pain. Magnified by his horror and fury, he could see the horses charge forward, leaping among the miners who dispersed in horror, met by truncheons which flew down upon them, smashing, cracking, crushing. Unwary of the blood that poured ever mercilessly from their wounds, they kept flying downwards, onto the heads and bodies of the miners, striking, beating. Seeing the destruction and sensing the fear within, some of the protesters targeted a punch, a kick, a stone at the police, met by blood and a

cracking sensation. The instincts of the protesters drove them to flee to the village and away from danger: the ever crashing blows of the truncheons.

The horror distorted faces stared back at him as he looked down at his beans. With the memory of the 'battle' still burnt upon his mind, an ever growing rage had been built within. The government had brought this upon the community, had used the police as their instrument, playing their pompous, triumphant melody. Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister, must have asked for such a thing to happen; to destroy the community's resolve; to destroy the union's power; and to close the mines.

It seemed as though the country had sided against the pickets, against their community, seeking only to destroy the mines, not caring for those they would cast aside along the way. He thought back to the BBC report his family (without his brother, of course) had watched after the 'battle'. The reporter had mentioned how the police had retaliated after riots had broken out in the village of Orgreave. Michael was filled with confused anger at the assertion beyond all doubt that this had been a riot. To add to that, the report showed a clip from the 'battle', or riot, as they called it, showing protesters throwing stones at the police, provoking the police to start the mounted charge.

Never before had he believed that the BBC could be wrong: that they could blatantly lie and cover up the blow that had been struck against his community. He was plunged deeper into ever growing confusion. Why would the BBC lie?

He began to yearn for more than baked beans; for more than the half remembered screams of pain; for the life of luxury that Margaret Thatcher and her government must have enjoyed. The ever beating truncheons had leapt downwards at the hands of the police. The horses had neighed; the dogs had barked and had strained at their leads; the blood had poured from the heads of the protesters, all because of the police. They had started the riot. They had started the battle. The so called protectors of public order were, in his eyes, the perpetrators, the bringers of pain and poverty upon his community.

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## **Epilogue**

***14th February, 2020 - Manchester***

The protectors of public order shone in shimmering, golden glory through his mind as their bright jackets reflected the sunlight. The warmth of their presence shone hope upon the protesters, the backbone of society. Policemen and policewomen lined the street, flanking the protest, not in battle, but in protection. Images of history struck him like a sabre: the horsemen; how they slashed at their prey; how they corralled them into the field; how they waged war against the protesters.

Thomas, loving the air of peaceful, unanimous calling for climate reform that surrounded the protest, peered curiously at the protest unfolding around him and within him, the pinnacle of democracy. The procession marched and chanted in unison, one of the hundreds that took place each year in Britain alone. He marched on, glowing with pride at his fulfilment of his rights and his place in democracy.

Two hundred years of history had passed since the day 'Liberty and Fraternity' had unfolded in its golden glory, chanting and protesting in crowds of hundreds, met only by sabres, horsemen and the righteous staring of eyes. Despite the battles, the public had continued to protest, even if it had ended in the same fate. As a result, a revolution of centuries of political development was played out steadily, out of sight: the walk to democracy. Now, today, children, teenagers and students took to the streets in protest, the cornerstone of further democratic development, bringing hope upon the community and the planet.

The screams of protest, and then of pain, seemed to ring in triumphant fanfare at the knowledge that their brutal sacrifice had, at last, brought Liberty and Fraternity.

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**THE END**