

# FALLOUT 4: THE NEW COMMONWEALTH PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

JOHN R DAVIES

## PART ONE

It was finally over. The Institute had been destroyed and the Minutemen were victorious. The Commonwealth could now sleep easy at night now that people no longer had to worry about synths replacing them or their loved ones. "I can't believe we actually did it," Preston Garvey stated in disbelief, "The Institute has been the bogeymen for so long I never thought I'd see the day where we can be free from them." Nate didn't say anything. He simply looked back on the dissipating nuclear smoke, the second time he witnessed such destructive power. *War never changes*, he thought to himself. These words haunted him. Words that had carried over from the old world to the new. *War never changes*.

Nate had returned to Sanctuary for the first time in six months. Since helping Sturges build the teleporter that allowed him to get into the Institute, Nate had avoided Sanctuary at every opportunity. He didn't want to be reminded of the family he lost. But this time he had no choice but to pass through the settlement. Nate had something very important to do. "Sanctuary has really thrived since your last visit, hasn't it," Preston Garvey mentioned out loud. "I suppose so," Nate responded dryly. The pre-war houses had all been scrapped and in their place were new wooden houses. Instead of being spread out, the homes and shops that made up Sanctuary now sat at the old round-a-bout. The old road had been fully repaired and rebuilt and led from the fully re-built bridge up to the walled town, snaking through the farms and past the occasional home. Few remainders remained from the old world, not that it bothered anyone who lived there. "We should rest at the Minuteman HQ for the night," Preston advised. "Go ahead. I'll catch up," Nate told him.

The only surviving pre-war house that remained at Sanctuary belonged to Nate. Once upon a time, it symbolized the fresh start in the life Nate was meant to have with Nora and Shaun. Instead the dream became a nightmare made real. He entered the decrepit old building and imagined the life he should have had. Nate made his way to Shaun's old bedroom and broke down, his life and dreams finally catching up with him.

Every major settlement had a Minuteman HQ. Each one had a barracks, an armory and a radio beacon. Along with being a rest stop for the Minuteman patrols, the HQ was staffed by at least two volunteers who would take in requests for help from people and pass them onto the Minutemen. Sanctuary was no different considering the recent expansion of the settlement. Preston walked into the HQ and went straight for the barracks on the upper floor, followed by two other minutemen. "Why we going to this vault again," one of the minutemen asked. "The general has something personal he needs to do," Preston answered. "I always thought he worked alone," the other stated. "Normally he does. But this is something he needs help with." "Oh come on Preston, just tell us what the mission is." "Sorry, but he's asked me not to say

anything until he does. We'll all know more tomorrow." The three minutemen began preparing for the heavy task they would have to complete the next morning.

Nate barely said a word as he led the minutemen up to Vault 111. Neither did they say anything to him, already having sensed the misery surrounding both the man and his intentions. It didn't take long to reach the Vault entrance. In fact it took less than five minutes. "You two stay here and keep watch," Preston ordered. "Aye sir. I'll get the door," one of them said. Preston and Nate stood on the Vault elevator and waited to descend.

The walk through Vault 111 was like reliving the nightmare all over again. The skeletons on the floor, next to them the remains of the radroaches Nate had been forced to kill during his escape, the cryo-pods that contained the still frozen corpses of his former neighbors and finally the perfectly preserved body of his wife. She had been refrozen as Nate escaped the Vault after waking, preserving her every feature just as he remembered. "General... I'm sorry." Nate did all he could trying not to break down right there. He'd seen death all too much. Both soldiers before the war and too many innocent people after it. But he'd learnt to tune all that out, lie to himself by saying there was nothing he could've done even as leader of the Minutemen. But now he looked his wife in her eyes as she reminded him of the harsh truth: he hadn't done enough. Nora, Shaun and god knows how many others all dead because of him, one way or another. "Nate? Do you... need a minute?" "No," came the tearful response, "Let's get her out of here. She's been here long enough." The words still rang in his ears, threatening to destroy what little he had left: *War Never Changes*.

## PART TWO

The Commonwealth had begun a slow change into something more than it had been. For over a hundred years it had been pillaged by the Institute, held back by the shadowy organization so it could take what it wanted whenever it wanted. But now the Minutemen were in charge and the Institute was gone, leaving only a radioactive crater behind. Even the supposedly mighty Brotherhood of Steel had been forced out of the Commonwealth after the destruction of the Prydwin. To many, this represented the first time they could sleep easy knowing they were safe. After all, there was no longer any threat of being kidnapped by Synths or targeted by raiders in power armor. Now there was a hope of something greater under the protection of the Minutemen.

Diamond City had long since returned to some degree of normalcy after Mayor McDonough was found to be a Synth shortly after the destruction of the institute. If anything, Diamond City was in a far better state than before, thanks in part to the Minutemen and their protection. The city itself was not unaware of this and it proudly displayed the flag of the Commonwealth Minutemen within the city limits. It had also become home for Nate when he wasn't patrolling the Commonwealth or staying at the Castle. He'd bought Home Plate before the destruction of the Institute, but really didn't bother with it until a month after it all happened. Even then, it wasn't a permanent home. Nate couldn't bear to settle down anywhere and instead chose to patrol the Commonwealth, only returning to Diamond City to resupply, rest up or if the city called for help. Home Plate itself was less of a home, instead becoming the Minuteman HQ for the city. It didn't matter, Nate had no attachment either way. He was a drifter, nothing more, nothing less. A Sole Survivor.

"How long you staying this time Blue?" Nate thought for a moment before answering Piper. "Not long. I've got to return to the Castle after the election is over and the new mayor takes office." "You know you don't have to leave. You can manage them from here you know," Piper suggested. She was concerned about Nate, same as all his surviving companions. "I know. But I can't stay. Not even for you," Nate told her. Nate and Piper had attempted to follow through with their obvious attraction to one another, but in the end it proved too much even for her. Piper always had a reason to return to Diamond City, her home. Piper couldn't continue traveling with Nate and the pair was forced to go their separate ways. "You could at least consider it. Everyone needs a break Blue, especially you." Even as she said the words Piper knew. She had seen it so many times before. Nate had no hope in his eyes, this world had taken everything from him. He drifted from place to place because he couldn't consider any of it home. The world reminded him of the very things it took away and destroyed. He would not find peace here.

The Rangers had finally arrived in the Commonwealth after a month of hard hiking. The eight man team had heard rumors of a new type of reactor the NCR desperately needed back home and had been sent to investigate it. While the Brotherhood of Steel would normally oversee a mission that concerned advanced technology, recent tensions between the East Coast Brotherhood and NCR had led the Senate to send a Ranger team instead. Still, Captain Weimer considered the whole mission to be a waste of time considering the eggheads back in Vault City were already building another reactor based on the one that powered the city. "This is a city? Looks more like a salvage yard," Sgt. Horton complained. "It may not look like much, but it's something," Captain Weimer stated, "Let's find out if anyone can help." They came up on a large settlement, situated on an island of sorts. Well, island was stretching it. A small stream was

wrapped around a large piece of land, on which sat a small fort on one end and a large collection of disorganized buildings on the other. Had it not been lit up and busy, the Rangers would've mistaken it for a scrapyard. "Unless anyone else here has a better idea, we're going in," Captain Weimer told his team, who quietly groaned in response. Tandi only knew they'd rather go home.

Elder Maxson sat in the Citadel in anger. He was angry at the fact that the Brotherhood of Steel had been forced out of the Commonwealth by nothing more than a collection of farmers and traders. He was angry that the pride and joy of the Brotherhood, the Prydwin, had been destroyed using artillery. And he was angry that his own officers had dragged him away from leading the counter attack on the Castle where the Minutemen were based. He couldn't blame them for that as the counter attack failed, meaning it wouldn't have mattered if he had led it or not. But still, Maxson couldn't stand to bear the shame of retreating from a known enemy. A Squire entered and saluted. "Elder, I have news from Paladin Danse Sir!" "Give it to me," He ordered calmly. "The Minutemen have begun rebuilding the walls of the Castle. They've also set up checkpoints on all major roads. The hit and run tactics are beginning to take their toll on our numbers and the Paladin has asked for reinforcements," the squire told him. "Send them. Have Paladin Roe get his best men together and leave immediately." The squire saluted again and left. Maxson wasn't done with the Minutemen yet.

The Rangers received very strange looks as they walked through Sanctuary. It must have seemed odd for several heavily armed soldiers to just walk into town. "Keep your guns down," Captain Weimer ordered, "Remember we're being watched." By this the captain meant the Minutemen who allowed them entry and not the civilians that surrounded them. "Don't worry so much boss, we got this," Sgt. Tessa promised. Only Tessa, Weimer and Horton entered the town, with the others setting up camp just outside of the town itself. It wouldn't have helped them if a group of strange soldiers just walked into town. "The two bartenders at the fort said to talk to one of the minutemen at their HQ here. Tessa, take Horton and go get some supplies. I want to get moving ASAP," Weimer ordered, "I'll check out the lead."

Preston was getting ready to patrol Sanctuary again. He'd stayed at the settlement after helping the General with some personal matters and had subsequently become something of a leader in Sanctuary. Less of a soldier, more of a sheriff, Preston didn't mind the change in pace. He was where he needed to be. "Preston, there's someone here to see you," one of the local officers told him. "Really? Who is it," he asked. "Don't know. He ain't one of the normal settlers." "Alright, I'll be there in a minute."

Horton and Tessa looked around Sanctuary. It was a bustling town packed with people, but one with an overabundance of defenses. Tessa couldn't help but notice the turrets on the roofs of the various stores and apartment buildings. "Seems like defense is a big concern here," she pointed out. "Maybe they trust turrets more than people?" Horton was rather dismissive about the defenses, instead choosing to check out some of the local women. "Hey, eyes up Horton. We're not in the NCR anymore and the locals have no reason not to shoot you," Tessa barked at him, slapping him on the back of his head for good measure. "Alright, I get it. Let's just get these damn supplies."

Preston walked into the Minuteman HQ and was immediately directed to the person who requested to meet him. The first thing he noticed about the "guest" was the armor and weapons he had equipped himself with. This immediately put him on edge. The gear was obviously

military much like the gear used by gunners, but had been customized and bore the image of a two headed bear on the shoulder. The man sat next to a desk, where an odd helmet with a red visor sat and whose only purpose seemed to be was to make Preston even more concerned with the strange visitor. "I assume you're the one I'm meant to be talking to," the man asked as he stood up. A full head and a half taller than himself, Preston immediately noted the intimidating yet confident presence the man gave off. "Yes, I'm Preston," he spoke with as much confidence as he could muster, "You wanted to speak with me?" "That would be right. My name is Captain Weimer, and I need some information if you can spare it." "Captain? Are you military? I don't recognize your gear from any of the local factions," Preston asked cautiously. Weimer smiled. "I came from the NCR out west. Hence my gear," he answered honestly. "That's a long way to travel. Especially to ask for information," Preston told him. "I happen to agree with you, but I have my orders whether I like them or not." Hearing didn't help much, since Preston didn't know nearly enough about the west to know if he was lying or not. "I'll help if I can," Preston promised. Even if he couldn't trust him, Preston couldn't turn him away. He was still a Minuteman, no matter who asked for help.

## PART THREE

Nate left Diamond City merely hours after the election had been called. By now the sun had already set, though if that bothered him in any way he didn't show it. Nate just wanted to avoid the fanfare his sudden leaving would cause within the city. That was something that did bother him: Diamond City. After 200 years and this was the best he'd seen as far as human settlements went. He didn't really regret destroying the Institute, it had to be done, but at least they had built themselves something more "comfortable" as far as underground cities went. Nate knew of the NCR in the west from Kellogg and Nick, but he had no reason to believe they were in a better position than the Commonwealth. It didn't matter in the end. The NCR was on the other side of the continent and after 200 years there had to be a reason they hadn't yet made it to the Commonwealth or the ruins of Washington DC if what Nate had heard was to be believed. The Commonwealth was on its own and Nate was in a position to build something new, whatever that may be.

The Brotherhood strike team knew exactly where to hit their target. The Gunners were making themselves cosy inside an old military bunker, the same bunker intel suggested they were storing advanced weaponry. If the intel was correct, it would go a long way to supporting the remaining Brotherhood forces held up at the Cambrian Police Station. For his part, Knight Reese wished to go after the Minutemen instead, but he didn't give the orders. He simply followed them. Without saying a word, he motioned for the strike team to move. With their trained eye for precision, each member moved towards the bunker and quickly eliminated the outer guard. The swiftness of the strike team was to be expected. Gunners were well trained and ruthless, but they lacked the dedication and military skill of the Brotherhood of Steel. Still, the Gunners inside the bunker would put up a harder fight and casualties were expected. Again, Knight Reese silently motioned for his fellow knights to enter the bunker, leaving the two scribes and a knight outside to guard their rear.

Nate walked through the ruins of Boston, ruins that seemed to cry out in the collective pain of the thousands who had died here. Each building was a grave stone to countless dead, a monument to never-changing war. Could anything be built from this? Was there any point to it

all? As much as he wanted to believe something could be built, after everything he had already done, Nate doubted anything could be built from these ruins. It seemed like an impossible feat. Before he could think any more of it, a signal flare rose up in the night sky, turning it red. Some minutemen needed help. He may not be able to rebuild the world, but Nate could help those who needed it.

Had it not been for the clanking sounds made by their power armor, the knights would have been totally silent as they moved through the bunker, eliminating the incumbent Gunners room by room. The task of clearing the bunker proved easier than initially expected, raising the suspicion that the intel had been wrong. That was until the strike team came to the final room – the armory – and dealt with the remaining few Gunners. Knight Reese looked through the window of the steel door and caught a glimpse of the prize. Behind the door was a large room full of military crates and what appeared to be several heavy weapons stored away. Indeed, from what little he could see, Knight Reese smiled at the potential hoard of supplies the room promised.

The sounds of the battle could be heard long before the battle itself could be seen. But the combatants were clear: Super Mutants were fighting Minutemen. Nate immediately rushed to help his fellow Minutemen. Coming up behind the Super Mutants, he pulled out a grenade and threw it at three of the hulking brutes who had stupidly clumped themselves together. The grenade exploded, instantly killing two and heavily wounding the third. Using his modified 10mm handgun, Nate quickly finished off the wounded mutant before quickly reloading and firing at the Super Mutant Hound that had spotted him. It fell almost as soon as Nate began shooting it, while the remaining Super Mutants fell to the combined fire of the other Minutemen. Within minutes the battle was over and the Minutemen were, for a brief moment, safe.

“Thanks, General,” one of the Minutemen said as he approached Nate, “We needed the help.” “You’re a little far from the settlements,” Nate asked curiously. “Yeah well, we’re out here looking for someone,” the Minuteman told him. “Out here? No one’s this deep in the ruins except Super Mutants and Raiders.” “Then I guess you didn’t hear? A little girl found her way to The Castle and asked us to find her parents,” he told Nate. “Have you found them yet?” The Minutemen all looked at each other nervously and Nate instantly knew why. “We were on our way back to The Castle when the Super Mutants surprised us,” came the reply. “Well, we might as well go together, in case there are more in the area,” Nate told them.

The squad of Rangers looked out towards the Commonwealth from their overnight camp. While the heartland of NCR territory had been heavily redeveloped since the founding of the country, no such development could be seen by any of the Rangers. If there was advanced reactor technology here, it was well hidden. “Did the Minutemen say anything,” Sgt. Todd asked. “No. They don’t know of any reactor in use. They did mention that an organization called the Institute had a reactor, but it was destroyed when their base was blown up,” Weimer explained. “That’s rather inconvenient,” Todd stated blandly. “The guy I talked to said there wasn’t much choice in the matter. Sounds like the Institute was full of itself.” “So we came all this way for nothing,” Tessa complained out loud. “Calm it ranger. We do have a lead. Apparently the Minutemen issued some sort of evacuation order before they destroyed the Institute so a lot of the people who knew about the Reactor might have gotten away in time,” Weimer explained, “One such person might be living in Diamond City.” “Who is it,” Tessa asked, slightly surprised

by the fact that the trip might not have been a complete waste. “Dr. Madison Li. A Robotics expert. If anyone knows about the reactor then it would be her.”

It didn't take long for Scribe Evans to hack the controls that opened the armory door. Once the strike team was able to get in, both scribes began to take inventory of the precious supplies. “This is more than we thought we'd get,” Scribe Evans noted to Knight Reese. “How long do you need to complete your inventory?” “At least a day. The Gunners weren't very organized and without an inventory at hand I can't say we'll be able to get everything before shipping it back to HQ,” Scribe Evans answered. “Right. I'll let Paladin Danse know. But work quickly. I don't want to wait around for the Gunners to send reinforcements,” Knight Reese ordered. The sooner these weapons got back to the station, the sooner the Brotherhood could focus on the Minutemen.

Nate and the squad of Minutemen returned to The Castle, which had been fully rebuilt and new defenses added to it following the defeat of the Brotherhood of Steel a year prior. By all accounts The Castle was the safest place in the Commonwealth, with the debatable exception of Diamond City. Yet Nate felt uneasy as he entered the fortified home of the Minutemen, as if somehow expecting an attack from some malevolent force at any moment. The walls weren't defenses; they were a cage that trapped him in a world in which he didn't belong. “I'll go inform the girl General,” the Minuteman squad leader told him, “Thanks again for your help.” “It was nothing, I was more than happy to help.” Truth was, it was all Nate could do to try and stop thinking about all that had happened. Sometimes the pain became too much to bear and he had to get his mind off things. But Nate knew the cruel truth: he had to confront his pain sooner rather than later.

## PART FOUR

The loss of the Prydwin had been a major blow for the Brotherhood, and Paladin Danse struggled with the loss of morale it had cause among the men and women under his command. The attack by the Minutemen had come out of nowhere, with many on board the airship dismissing the range and capabilities of the artillery the enemy held. Had Paladin Danse not dragged Elder Maxson off the Prydwin in time, the Brotherhood of Steel would've been doomed to fail. It was his leadership that allowed the Brotherhood to rise from disgrace and it would be the Elder who would ensure the Minutemen would no longer be a threat to the Brotherhood of Steel ever again. Unfortunately for Paladin Danse, while Elder Maxson was able to retreat back to the Citadel in the Capitol Wasteland, it was up to the Paladin himself to secure a stable foothold here in the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, the Prydwin took the majority of the resources Paladin Danse needed to accomplish his new mission down with it. Short on ammo, weapons and personnel, the remaining Brotherhood members had scavenged what they could from the ruins of the airport before retreating to the Cambrian Police Station. It wasn't all bad news: three Vertibirds had been left behind and many more were being found abandoned throughout the area. But even this was a low number. Out of the nineteen Vertibirds that were assigned to escort the Prydwin, only six managed to survive the destruction of the Prydwin and the immediate counter-attack. It was a huge blow, especially since the Minutemen was simply a collection of farmers.

“Paladin Danse, I have word from Knight Reese,” a scribe informed him. “Have they found the supplies?” “Yes sir. They're requesting back up and another two scribes to prepare for retrieval.”

Paladin Danse had several options available. He knew from experience that the Gunners would try to take back the weapons and ammunition, as well as the bunker itself if they could help it. He could send reinforcements to garrison the bunker, which would mean less people to defend the police station. Or he could send in a Vertibird to start bringing the weapons and ammo back without the proper inventory before hand. "Send a Vertibird with the extra knights he's requested," Paladin Danse ordered, "tell Reese to begin shipping the ammunition and heavy weapons back to the station." The scribe saluted and left Paladin Danse to his thoughts. There was a risk of the Gunners shooting the Vertibird down, but he hoped for it to make a few trips between the station and bunker before that happened.

The Rangers made good time hiking across the Commonwealth. Compared to many of the wastes they had to cross getting here, the roads of the Commonwealth were relatively safe from the normal threats the Rangers had to deal with. Of course, Super Mutants and Feral Ghouls made some poor attempts at attacking the trained soldiers but were quickly driven off. "For Tandi's sake how long will it take," Horton complained. "As long as it takes," Tessa snapped back angrily. "Calm it down back there," Weimer ordered calmly. "Where are we anyway," Tessa asked the captain. "If the directions that Minuteman gave us is good, we should be coming up to a settlement called Greygarden any time now," Weimer answered, "We'll stay the night there and get back to it in the morning." "At least we're not camping out in the middle of nowhere," Todd thought out loud. Tessa was about to respond when a flair shot up into the sky. Fallen silent, the Rangers began to move quickly towards the source of the flair.

Jack Cole and his squad of Minutemen were doing well against the rampaging Super Mutants attacking Greygarden. That was, until a Super Mutant Behemoth came charging in and began decimating the defensive line. Without any heavy weapons, the Behemoth would be near impossible to take down. Jack did the only thing he could and sent out a flair before ordering a retreat back towards the settlement. Too late, three of the Minutemen were taken out by the giant monster with one strike of its over-sized arm. Another of the Minutemen took two to the chest as he tried shooting at the Behemoth, not seeing the Super Mutant rear its ugly head from behind an old rusted out car. Jack for his part dived behind some cover before that same Super Mutant could get a clean hit. He peered over the edge of the rock cover he was using, only to see that none of his men were fighting. Three more Super Mutants had come out of nowhere and he was now being surrounded while the Behemoth turned towards Greygarden.

The Rangers approached the fight with weapons raised and ready to use the full range of their training and experience. Weimer silently motioned for the squad of Rangers to engage the Super Mutants, with Torres and Malarkey engaging the Behemoth with their grenade launchers. With precision found only among the elite of the NCR military, the smaller Super Mutants quickly fell under the combined fire allowing the Rangers to combine fire on the Behemoth, very quickly overwhelming it before it finally toppled over. Weimer again silently motioned for his team to spread out and secure the area. Torres and Malarkey carefully approached the fallen Behemoth, took out their service rifles and shot it six times each in the head to ensure its death. Tessa checked the Minutemen who had fallen during the battle but none of them had survived their wounds. "Captain, looks like we're clear," Todd shouted, still checking the area for any remaining threats. "Fall in, reload and do an ammo check," Weimer ordered.

Jack watched in awe from the cover of his rock as the strange group checked their equipment. They had not only taken out the smaller Super Mutants in minutes but had also very quickly



killed a Behemoth as if it were nothing to them. The speed at which they had taken out all the Super Mutants was unlike anything he'd seen before and he couldn't believe it had even happened.

"Looks like we're too late," Tessa mentioned as she pointed at the fallen Minutemen. "Yeah, looks that way. Check for ammo and stimpacks we can use," Weimer told them, "See if there's any way we can identify them as well. We'll have to talk with the people at Greygarden to see if they can come retrieve the bodies." Tessa and Horton nodded at the order and went to inspect the bodies. "This is a real mess captain," Torres commented unhelpfully. "No need to say it sergeant. Giles, take Javier and scout out ahead. I want to know if we can expect trouble at Greygarden." "Yes sir," the sniper confirmed and the two men left for the ridge. "Everything okay sir," Todd asked. "My guts telling me there's something wrong with this picture. Keep your guard up and look for survivors."

Jack watched as the orders were given out, unsure if they were friendly. But as afraid as he was he knew he couldn't stay there forever and he made the decision to reveal himself.

"Stop right there stranger," Tessa ordered the stranger. Jack put his hands in the air, unaware that one of the soldiers had found him cowering behind the rock. "Easy there, I ain't doing anything," Jack trembled. "Keep your hands up and make no movement," Tessa ordered him, "Captain, we have ourselves a guest!" "Bring him over here," Weimer shouted back in response. "You heard him, start moving." No longer having any choice, Jack stood and started walking towards the man in charge of the remarkable group of people. "Tessa, put the gun down," Weimer ordered, "Were you with them." He pointed to the bodies of the fallen Minutemen. "Yes," Jack said simply, regretting being unable to save any of them. "I'm sorry we couldn't help sooner." "They knew what they were getting into," Jack tried to hide the fact that he was upset over the loss of his friends. "Perhaps. We're heading to Greygarden, if you care to join us," Weimer chose his words carefully. He knew the feeling of losing your entire squad all too well. "It wouldn't hurt. Besides, the settlers would like to know that their mutant problem is dealt with," Jack replied after a sullen moment. He took one last look at the bodies of his fallen Minutemen, knowing there was nothing he could do for them, before turning away. "Come on, we're losing light," he told them, no longer wanting to stay there.

Paladin Danse counted his blessings as the Vertibird made the final run from the bunker Knight Reese and his team had captured. It wasn't just the fact that no one had attacked the Vertibird, but also the fact that it had brought back more than any of the scribes thought the bunker held. On top of the normal ammunition and medical supplies, the Gunners were also in the habit of collecting fusion cores and a large supply had made the journey into the hands of the Brotherhood. This alone was a blessing as the Knights were now having to use the fusion cores they did have sparingly. They would still need to micromanage the power usage, but finding a large supply of fusion cores certainly helped. And now he had just received word of reinforcements from the Capitol Wasteland were just about to arrive. Six Vertibirds with enough supplies and fellow Brothers to turn the police station from a barely running mess into the center for major operations throughout the Boston ruins. Paladin Danse waited at the helipad for the lead Vertibird to land and offload perhaps the most precious member of the arriving reinforcements – Paladin Roe. A natural leader, even Elder Maxson respected him and that was respect not easily earned. The door of the Vertibird opened as soon as the vehicle landed and out came the legend of the Brotherhood. "Paladin Roe," Paladin Danse asked, raising his voice

over the sound of the Vertibird engines. “Quick eye you have there,” Paladin Roe responded in an unexpectedly informal manner, “I assume you’re Paladin Danse?” “That’s right sir.” Paladin Roe inspected the younger paladin. The power armor was dirty and worn down, the weapon heavily used but carefully maintained. It was clear that the paladin had been involved in significant fighting during his time in charge. “The elder has ordered me to take command of the local forces here. I assume I won’t have any issues?” Paladin Danse was relieved to hear that, a fact that Paladin Roe noticed but didn’t comment on. “I’ll help in any way I can. Just say the word.” “Relax my friend. No need to be so formal. I’m not here to relieve you of duty, simply take command,” Paladin Roe promised, “But our first task should be to secure the area. Then we can focus on finding more accommodation for the reinforcements,” Paladin Roe stated confidently. “More reinforcements sir,” Paladin Danse asked. “You didn’t think this was it did you,” Paladin Roe told him, “This is just the first wave. You’ve done an excellent job Paladin, but now we need to secure our presence across the Commonwealth.” For the first time since the destruction of the Prydwin, Paladin Danse felt a rush of pride in the Brotherhood of Steel. “Outstanding sir. If it helps, one of my squads captured an old military bunker to the north of here. It’s got a clear sight in all directions and is easily defensible,” he told his superior. Paladin Roe smiled. “That’s exactly what I like to hear. Tell your squad to maintain a defensive barricade and wait for two Vertibirds to reinforce the position.” With enough time and coverage, she may yet be found he thought to himself. If not, then at least it would help the main objective. In time.

## PART FIVE

Ronnie Shaw, the myth, the legend, the woman in charge. After the Brotherhood failed in their counter-attack on the Castle, the General had decided to make her commander of the Castle, in charge of running the whole darn show. Ronnie didn’t mind – she was basically running things at the Castle as is. She had to admit, Commander of the Castle was a step up from simply being Quartermaster. But it did make sense. Very few of the old guard had bothered to come back, for their own reasons, and experience was in short supply. The General wasn’t an idiot like some of his predecessors were and had spent a lot of time reorganizing the Minutemen from the ground up. There was a clear chain of command now, with patrols reporting to Minutemen HQ offices located all over the Commonwealth. The HQ offices would then radio back to the Castle for orders and to share information and messages from the various settlements and farms they helped to protect. Ronnie was impressed by the system. It allowed everyone to talk to one another and quickly get patrols to settlements who needed help while also keeping an eye on any potential threats. It made the patrols more organized and the Commonwealth safer, much like a professional army. The idea of the Minutemen becoming a professional army used to be such a foreign concept to Ronnie. When she was younger, there was much talk of building a Government with all the Settlements working together. The Minutemen would act as the peacekeeping forces, making sure everyone was safe while the Government organized trade and laws. But those ideas died with the CPG Massacre and soon after the Minutemen fell apart. Now, those ideas had started to reappear. People were starting to hope again. Thanks to the General and his Minutemen. If only he could look past his grief and see that.

Nate sat in the office that doubled as his home at the Castle, looking over some reports detailing several raider attacks near Somerville Place. There had been six attacks in the last month, all apparently by the same group of raiders. No one knew where these raiders were coming from until scouts located them at Cutler Bend. There were two reports on the size and ability of the

Raider camp, another on three plans of attack and finally a report on the success of the attack. There were around seventy Raiders, most of whom were wiped out in the assault. Around a hundred Minutemen were involved, however sixteen were killed and another twenty one were injured. Nate cursed the fact that so many had to die. Though he knew it could've been worse, Nate also knew that there was very little he could do to avoid it.

"General, do you have a moment," Ronnie asked, poking her head into his office. "Sure thing Ronnie. Come on in." Ronnie confidently entered and sat down. "I wanted to ask if you'd be willing to support an idea me and a few of the other troops have been discussing," Ronnie asked. Nate looked at her, not expecting her to ask for a favor. Ronnie tended to be rather self sufficient when it came to needing things. "Sure Ronnie, anything," he told her, "What did you need?" Ronnie prepped herself for what she was about to ask. "Well, many of us were thinking it was time to try to form a new Government among the various settlements from around the Commonwealth," she told him, carefully watching for his reaction. Nate hesitated as he heard the words. He had heard of the CPG Massacre, the infamous first attempt at forming a Government which had ended with the Institute slaughtering the representatives from the other Settlements. What would stop something similar from happening? "Are you sure about this Ronnie," he asked with uncertainty, "I mean, is this really a good idea?" "Don't get me wrong General, this wouldn't be an easy task. Goodneighbor may not bother even considering it and Diamond City are unlikely to agree to anything without serious concessions," she explained, "But many of the other settlements wouldn't even exist without your help. From Star-Light City down to Vault 88, many of them would at least send representatives if you ask." Nate was still unsure about the idea. It was true that a lot of the settlements held him in high regard. Many of them started off as a few people trying to survive, while many of the settlements he himself founded during his long search for his son and the subsequent Minuteman-Institute War. Was it really as simple as asking them to consider forming an entire Government? "It does sound like a good idea. Have you talked to any of the settlements yet?" Ronnie smiled. She had him. "Preston says Sanctuary is fully supportive of the idea. I've also had the people over in Star-Light City and Scrap City ask if the General will hold meetings for a Government, now that the Institute is gone," she noted happily. Nate considered it. The Institute was long gone, its survivors scattered across the Commonwealth. The Brotherhood were too busy regrouping their remaining forces and had shown little interest in attacking the Minutemen-aligned settlements. With the right security, representatives could realistically meet without fear of being attacked like before. "I assume you have a plan for representatives to meet?" "Sure General. We can use the Castle as a meeting ground. It's neutral ground as far as representation goes and it's a powerful symbol for us Minutemen. Easily defendable against any attacks, it would show everyone that we mean business." It was an important decision to make. The fate of the Commonwealth depended on making the right call. Nate looked down at the stack of reports he had been reading. The Minutemen were doing what they could to protect everyone. Perhaps a formal Government could help support the Minutemen? "I suppose....," he spoke thoughtfully, "It would do the Commonwealth a lot of good if a Government was formed. Make the call Ronnie. Let me know how many agree to the meeting." "Will do General. And don't worry about the meeting. It'll go far better than last time." Ronnie smiled and left to make the call, leaving Nate to consider whether or not he made the right choice.

The call went far and wide: the General of the Minutemen was asking the various farms, towns and cities to support a new Commonwealth Government. Many were scared, remembering what

the Institute did the last time a Government was being formed. Some of the smaller settlements were hesitant to agree to the meeting, while both Goodneighbor and Diamond City refused to send representatives. With Goodneighbor, it was expected. They valued their independence more than anything and the town itself had a bad reputation among the people of the Commonwealth. Diamond City was another story as many of its people supported the idea of a Commonwealth Government, but distrusted the direction it would take. They had enough politics to consider without outsiders making the rules. But the majority of people actively supported the idea of a Government and soon many had agreed to the meeting. Over twenty settlements agreed to send representatives, hoping to have their own say in the future of the Commonwealth.

The Brotherhood heard the same call as everybody else. A call for the people of the Commonwealth to finally come together as a nation. This was a concern to many within the ancient order. The Brotherhood of Steel did not fare well against nation-states. If the Commonwealth were to fully unite now, they would lose the precious foothold Paladin Danse and his forces had struggled to hold onto for so long. "Has the Elder been informed yet," Paladin Danse asked Paladin Roe. "We sent a communication as soon as we got the news," Paladin Roe confirmed, "Along with permission to attack their precious Castle." He couldn't hide the contempt he had for the Minutemen. As respected as he was, Paladin Roe was a staunch loyalist, with a deep hatred for anyone who would dare to oppose the Brotherhood. "Have we got the response back yet," Paladin Danse asked. "We have. Elder Maxson has ordered us to attack the Castle as soon as we're able," Paladin Roe lied, "This time, however, we will do things differently. I want scouts to locate a weakness in the defenses. Have seven squads of knights move through the city and another eight occupy the old airport. Send two squads of scribes with them and give them stealth boys." Paladin Danse was momentarily confused by the order. Even with the reinforcements, it would mean taking knights off the frontline for the assault on the Castle. "And what of the Vertibirds, sir?" "We can't risk losing any. Besides, if we go in with Vertibirds they will spot them long before we can get close to them." "Yes, sir. I'll start deploying the squads," Paladin Danse agreed, albeit with some concerns. As much as he wanted to strike back against the Minutemen, his gut told him something wasn't quite right with Paladin Roe. He was hiding something. Paladin Danse just didn't know what.

The Ranger Squad had yet to leave Greygarden when the news came in. Everyone was debating whether or not to agree with the meeting, and the morning had proved to be rather newsworthy to the Rangers who had not yet seen the birth of a nation. "Shouldn't we get moving Captain," Tessa asked impatiently. "Hang on Tessa. We have more than enough time before we need to leave. Besides, Jack could show us the way to Diamond City," Weimer told her. From what he understood, Diamond City was built inside an old baseball stadium in the heart of the Boston city ruins. He figured having a guide who could show them the safest way there would make the trip a bit easier than simply going alone. The Rangers waited impatiently as Jack left the town meeting and headed towards the team. "Captain. I'm afraid I have a bit of a favor to ask of you," Jack spoke rather shyly. "I hope I'll like what I'm about to here," Weimer joked sternly, leaving Jack to laugh hesitantly. "Well.. um... it seems the settlers here want me to represent Greygarden at the meeting that's happening in the Castle. I'm afraid that the roads may be a little dangerous for me to go alone," Jack asked, assuming the worst but hoping for the best. Weimer considered the favor. "The Castle. Is it close to Diamond City?" Jack looked on nervously. "Not... quite. But some of the patrols from the Castle make the rounds up to Diamond City," Jack answered, "If I

had another option I'd take it, but I sort of need to get there quickly and the fastest route avoids the city ruins." Weimer considered it for a moment. Tagging along with a squad of Minutemen would be better than going in with one person, especially with how dangerous the city ruins were supposed to be. "Alright, we'll escort you to the Castle," Weimer told him, "Just make sure we get there quick." He ignored the protests of his sub-ordinates. His gut told him this was the right move, and Weimer had long ago learned to listen to his instincts.

## PART SIX

"This is complete BS captain," Horton once again started complaining. "Funny, I don't remember asking for opinions," Weimer snapped back at him. "He's right though, sir," Tessa interjected, "I don't know why we're going to the other side of the city only to go back into it." In truth, Weimer didn't really know himself. Any dangers the city ruins presented wouldn't be too difficult, so long as they were careful. Perhaps there was some guiding force that had made the decision for him or perhaps Weimer just felt sorry for Jack. "How much longer till we're there," he asked. "Not long. The river will meet the ocean soon enough and then it's just a short sprint to the Castle docks," Jack answered. When Jack asked Weimer to escort him to the Castle, Weimer accepted on the assumption that they'd be walking to the location. Instead, Jack had found an old river boat and had gotten it running. What would've been a days long journey was now a couple of hours, something which Weimer was grateful for. "So what's this about forming a Government? Considering the roads, I would've thought the different towns would've formed one by now," Weimer asked the Minuteman. "You're really not from around here are you," Jack laughed, "That huge crater we passed? Used to be an underground settlement called the Institute. Back before I was born, the Minutemen and the Institute tried to form the Commonwealth Provisional Government. Any town or farm worth their weight in Brahmin shit sent people to help, but the Institute turned on everybody and killed them. This was about the time those Gen 3 Synths started replacing people. Nobody could trust anyone else and it all fell apart." "If the Institute was helping to set this government up, why did they kill everyone involved," Tessa asked. "Who knows. Maybe it was just another experiment, or maybe they had no intentions of ever helping us," Jack went on to explain, "But after that no one dared speak about trying again. Raiders, Super Mutants and even Gunners we can deal with. But until the General took over there wasn't anything we could do about the Institute. I guess people just stopped trying." The idea that an entire Government could be wiped out by one of its own was unsettling. Back home in California, the NCR had been thriving for over a hundred years. Sure, corruption was a huge problem and it often took a while for the politicians to actually decide anything, but there wasn't any question on whether or not it could be wiped out. "This is an important event then," Weimer asked. "You could say that. Dunno what it's like out west, but this will be the first chance any of us have to actually work together," Jack commented hopefully. "You think it's possible," Weimer again asked. "Sure, why not. It wasn't long ago the Minutemen were done for. The new General rebuilt us from the ground up and even destroyed the Institute. Who knows what else we can do together, so long he's around that is." "Who is the General?" "The guy whose in charge," Jack told him, "You'll probably meet him when we get to the Castle, if he's there that is."

The Castle was starting to get busy. Ronnie had the Minutemen stationed there building new defenses and patrolling the surrounding ruins. There was a fear that some outside force would target the Castle, hoping to eliminate the new Government before it ever got a chance to start.

So far, no sign of any trouble had been found but Ronnie didn't want to take any chances. The artillery was being supplied, new turrets were being built along the two paths leading into the Castle and even some missile turrets were being built along the Castle walls in case the BoS remnants attempted to attack with their Vertibirds. To boost the automated turrets and artillery, Ronnie had called in every available Minutemen patrols from the surrounding areas. Many of the towns and farms had their own militias and were more than happy to bring a few small teams with them. Some had already arrived and had started digging trenches to provide cover while others were fortifying the inside of the Castle. Some of the patrols had even managed to bring a few old Power Armor sets with them, which were being held in reserve at the Castle itself. Should the BoS or Gunners attack, they'd find a large army of well-equipped Minutemen waiting for them. "How's it going Ronnie," Nate asked as the pair looked out towards the ruined city of Boston. "As good as we can make it General," she told him, "There are still some delegations to arrive from the distant settlements, but most are already here." "Any news on the Brotherhood of Steel or Gunners yet," he asked with concern. "Not yet, but I'm betting they'll make some sort of appearance. Some raider groups have been harassing some of the delegations on their way here but were quickly dealt with." Nate looked out towards the wasteland, expecting threats from all directions to suddenly attack. "What about our food supplies? If we're forced to defend for an extended period, I want to make sure we're not being starved," Nate questioned. "We just received several shipments of that old world food from Diamond City. I'm also ordering a small farm be set up inside the walls and any food outside be brought in," Ronnie explained, "Don't worry General. It won't get that far." This was something Nate found hard to do. It seemed at many times that the world was against him, even though he'd survived the worst odds. "Make sure to keep an eye on the water. Don't want any Mirelurks causing issues," Nate again worried. "If any hungry crabs decide we're a good meal, they'll get a mouth full of mines," Ronnie joked, bemused by his constant worrying. Truth was, no defenses were impenetrable. Both knew this, no matter how well the defense were built. "Keep me informed," Nate asked, "If anything happens..." "I'll let you know General," Ronnie told him, "One more thing, you have three visitors waiting in your office." "Visitors? I thought I wasn't meeting any of the delegations until tomorrow?" "They're not one of the delegations. They just came in with the Diamond City supplies and have offered to help with the defense."

The three turned out to be none other than Nick, Piper and Curie. All three had decided to stay in Diamond City, for their own reasons of course. "I didn't realize you were all coming," Nate told them, shocked they would make the journey here. "Didn't think we'd leave you to do this n your own did you Blue," Piper asked. "I'm glad you're all here. It helps having people I know and trust backing me up," Nate told the three friends. "When you're ready, just tell us what you need doing," Nick offered. "I was hoping to have your help. We could always use someone with the medical skills you have Curie, and there's something important I need checking out you and Piper are ideal for," Nate explained. "Anything Blue, just say the word." Now more than ever, Nate was glad to call these people friends.

Jack and the Rangers finally arrived at the Castle, only to be greeted by the over-sized defenses Ronnie had ordered into place. "Hold up, before I let you dock here you need to give the password," one of the Minutemen guards demanded. "United We Stand, Apart We Fall," Jack said to him. "Alright, come on up." After docking the boat, everyone made their way into the Castle itself. The Castle had changed a great deal since the last visit Jack had made here, though presumably for the better. "It's busier than I expected it to be," Horton commented on the work

he saw. "This is a big deal for us," Jack told him, "If we can organize beyond the Minutemen, perhaps we can make the Commonwealth a safer place." "You sound almost optimistic," Malarkey said. "I grew up here. It's my home. The same is true for the rest of us." The Rangers looked around. Everybody was tired, but still they worked. There was a drive in these people, something that possessed them to work as hard as they could. "Come on, I'll show you to the General," Jack offered. "Tessa, see if you can get your hands on some supplies. Do an ammo check and double check your weapons," Weimer ordered, "I want us ready to leave ASAP." "Yes sir."

Nate was just finishing up with Piper and Nick when Jack walked into his office with a stranger beside him. "General, I have someone who wishes to see you," Jack asked respectfully. "Of course. We can finish this up later," Nate replied, first to Jack then to Piper and Nick. "I'll hold you to that Blue," Piper told him humorously before the pair left. "I assume you're the one in charge here," Weimer asked. "That's right. Is there something I can do for you?" "I was hoping for directions, or maybe tag along with one of the patrols that's passing through Diamond City," Weimer asked him. "Why would you need directions? I'm guessing you're not from around here?" "No sir, I'm from out west." "Go get some rest," Nate motioned towards Jack. "Come have a seat. You don't look like a normal wastelander." Weimer sat across from Nate. "I don't suppose I do. I grew up in the NCR, joined the military the day I turned eighteen." Nate perked up in surprise. "The NCR? That's the other side of the wasteland. What brought you all the way here," Nate asked, suddenly becoming very curious of the strange visitor. "My superiors heard rumors of some new reactor technology being developed here, so they sent me and my team to find out more," Weimer answered honestly. Nate suddenly went from being curious to being weary, as if he was reminded of something he'd rather forget. "That might be a bit difficult," Nate told the Ranger, "The reactor was destroyed when the Institute was destroyed." "So I hear. However, it appears one of the scientists who worked on the reactor is in Diamond City." "You mean Madison Li?" "You know her?" "Of course I do, she's here at the Castle working on the defenses," Nate told Weimer, both surprised to hear what the other was saying. "Respectfully, my orders are clear. I'm to bring back any information in regards to a reactor, whether it be paperwork or someone who worked on it," Weimer said. Nate considered this. "I'll be happy to introduce her to you," Nate promised, "But I hope you know it won't come free."

Weimer returned to the Rangers. "We good to go," Horton complained. "We're not leaving yet," Weimer told the other Rangers, "Our VIP is here currently working on the defenses the Minutemen are setting up. The guy in charge is willing to hand her over to us, so long as we help them secure the Castle." They all fell silent upon hearing the news. "Sir, with respect, we didn't come here to get involved in the local matters," Tessa told the Captain. "This isn't up for debate, Our orders are clear: do whatever it takes to get information on the reactor," Weimer told her, "If that means getting involved, then so be it." It was hard not to spot the concern in their faces, even though they were all trying to hide it. "Once we have the VIP, we're out of here. Until then, we're sticking around. Besides, with all the defensive work going on I doubt we'll see any real action while we're here," Weimer told them optimistically, "Chances are it'll be the occasional raider or Super Mutant raid. A few days then we can get back home."

Madison Li didn't like being told what to do. She'd only been in the Commonwealth because the Institute offered her the freedom to pursue her research however she saw fit and because the BoS were too overbearing. But even the Institute didn't last. They'd made some dangerous enemies, who proceeded to make good on the dangerous side of things. Had she not escaped in

time, Madison knew she'd have been dead by now. In a way, helping out the Minutemen was her way of trying to make things right. She had her part to play in making enemies. She remembered James and his murder at the hands of the Enclave, the subsequent work she did on Liberty Prime and her abandonment of the Brotherhood after the assault on the Water purifier. Even if she didn't intend to, she made enemies wherever she went. "Make sure the wires are underneath the laser turrets. Last thing we need is for some sniper cutting the wires," she told the Minuteman helping her. She was working on the electrical systems for the turrets, making sure the wires were properly connected and then buried for the added protection. She wasn't much good in a fight, but she knew machines better than most everyone at the Castle. "Doctor? One of the Minutemen needs your help with their power armor," a runner quickly told her. This was an annoyance she knew would happen. Ever since the Minutemen got their hands on the power armor they needed someone familiar with it to help them with repairs and modifications, alongside given them the training they needed to actually use it.

The power armor stations were unusually quiet. Located in the storage rooms below the Castle, they had been quickly installed in order to support the military grade equipment. At the moment, only one of the sets was in the bay, along with its user. "I assume you're the one that asked for help," Madison asked, walking up behind the person working on the chest piece. Both of them froze as they began to recognize one another. The woman turned to Madison, who instantly recognized the former Paladin standing in front of her. "Sarah? I... wasn't expecting to see you here," Madison managed to say. "I'm a little surprised myself Doctor, though I suppose it was inevitable we would meet here," Sarah told her. "I thought you were dead!" "Not quite. I'd rather not get into it, but," Sarah Lyons hesitated as she recalled the events in her mind, "There was some disagreement with the other Paladins and I ended up betrayed, left for dead. Remember that kid that helped out with the water Purifier?" "James' son?" "He helped me out. We made our way here not long after," Sarah explained. "Is he around here somewhere," Madison asked, curious to the answer. "Unfortunately, he returned to the Capitol Wasteland a couple of months ago and I haven't seen him since." Madison heard a bit of sadness in her voice. Sarah missed him. "What happened after I left," Madison asked. "That's a long story," Sarah responded. "Then you won't mind telling me while we work on your power armor."

Night fell and the Brotherhood knights watched on as the Minutemen prepped their defenses. Their camps already set up, well hidden among the debris and from the prying eyes of the Minutemen scouts, they waited for the order to attack. From the main camp, Paladin Roe watched on as the Minutemen made their futile effort to improve the defenses of the Castle, as they called it. He had two reasons to attack the location. The first was to destroy the Minutemen and any real attempt at resistance they could muster. Revenge for pushing the BoS out of the Commonwealth and destroying the Prydwin. The second was to secured the use of the Castle as the new main base for the Commonwealth Brotherhood chapter. After taking it, the Brotherhood could finally end the Minutemen and have no resistance to their goals in the Commonwealth. Little did the rest of the Brotherhood know that Roe was looking for someone. He once made the mistake of leaving Sarah Lyons alive once before. If Elder Maxson were to find out she was still alive, it would cause any number of issues. This time, both her and that traitor Madison Li would die by his hands. He would ensure it.



## PART SEVEN

Nate stepped out of his temporary accommodation at the Castle and looked out across the ocean. The sun was rising and with it hope for the meeting that would begin in mere hours. Twelve representatives from across the Commonwealth, each speaking for the various towns and farms that had agreed to the meeting, were ready and waiting for it to begin. Nate for his part was hesitant to lead the meeting himself. He was a soldier, not a politician and he considered himself a poor choice to lead any negotiations that took place. But many of the representatives and some of the Minutemen kept pushing him to take the role. Seemingly they had more respect for him than Nate held for himself, but their insistence spared him any choice in the matter.

The Castle had received not just a complete rebuilding of its wall but also a massive upgrade to its defenses. From turrets of all stripes and sizes to manned guard stations at the entrances, it would take a considerable force to even get close to the Minuteman Capitol. Nate walked around the fort walls, wishing none of this had to happen. But there were concerns over the sightings of Brotherhood of Steel soldiers in the ruins around the Castle and everyone knew why. Nate wanted to move the meeting place to Diamond City. It was perhaps a safer place, though the Castle had a greater meaning as the home for the Minutemen. Nate stopped as he stared out at the ruined city of Boston. Once again he was reminded of the world he had been forced to leave behind, and with it the memories of his wife and son. Nate found himself turning away from the city, seeing it as a representation of all he had lost and the pain that had since filled the void. He had fought time and again, always losing something. Now he was expecting to fight again, expecting to lose another piece of himself to unending war. He forced himself to look back at Boston. Right here, right now, was a chance to fix this broken world. Even if he would never live to see it, Nate knew that a united Commonwealth could rebuild all that had been destroyed and just perhaps make the world a little bit better than before. It was hard to find hope in this world. But it was there.

"Is everything in place," Paladin Roe asked Danse. "Yes, sir." Paladin Roe looked at the map of the Castle. It would need a more fitting name after he captured it. "Have the Vertibirds be ready for their approach. As soon as we take out the turrets they'll drop the reinforcements and we can eliminate those inside." Danse began to show some discomfort. "What of the civilians inside sir?" "Consider anyone inside hostile. I want the leadership alive, eliminate everyone else and leave no survivors. The Commonwealth should learn the price in turning against us," Paladin Roe stated coldly, "Bring me this General they have and those leaders who are meeting with him, along with four more. It's time we made an example out of them." Danse suppressed the horror and disgust he now felt. Never before had he met such a monster.

Nate approached the meeting room. Ronnie was waiting outside, motioning to him to wait a moment. "Is there an issue Ronnie," Nate asked the cautious commander. "At the moment, no. But I'm a little unsure about those tin cans walking around in the ruins," Ronnie told him bluntly. "Just keep everyone on alert. If it helps, you can fire off some rounds of the artillery," Nate suggested. "I'll keep that in mind," Ronnie dismissed in her usual annoyed tone, "Just be ready to get the civilians to safety." "Sure," Nate agreed before entering the meeting room.

The room was silent, the various ambassadors already seated and waiting on Nate. It was an awkward moment. "I suppose there's no need for introductions," Nate commented as he made

his way to the head of the table, "I know this meeting is a little unexpected for some of you. Perhaps some of you have come to hear what everyone has to say, or are skeptical about what we can achieve. Before we begin, does anyone have something to say?" The first person to speak up was someone Nate didn't expect. "General if I may," Blake Abernathy asked, "I doubt any of us would have bothered coming if we didn't feel this was important enough to at least consider." A murmur of agreement spread throughout the other ambassadors. "The Minutemen have done more for us in the last year than any of us could've hoped for. The least any of us can do is see what you have to say." "Thanks Blake. I don't have much to say," Nate confessed, "I've always been a soldier. But the Commonwealth needs more than soldiers to survive. The Minutemen won't be around forever and we can't guarantee the future of the Commonwealth. But all of you here today can." "We tried forming a Government once," one of the other ambassadors called out, "The Institute wiped it out." "The Institute is gone, it's survivors scattered," Nate answered harshly, "There's nothing that can stand in our way now. This is our chance to finally unite under a single flag. We can work..."

Ronnie immediately rushed into the meeting room. "General, Brotherhood tin cans are incoming!" "Get the ambassadors into the tunnels below and seal the entrance," Nate ordered. "But..." "There's no time Ronnie. Stay with them. Take the two at the door and set up barricades!"

Nate immediately rushed to the courtyard just as the artillery began to bombard the incoming attackers. He could hear the sounds of turrets firing off in the distance and instantly knew where the attackers were. "Blue!" Nate turned around to see Piper rushing over to him. "Piper, the ambassadors are in the tunnels with Ronnie," he rushed to inform her, "Take Nick and back her up!" He didn't stay to debate the order he gave her, instead rushing to get a better look from atop the wall.

The attack wasn't going as well as Paladin Roe had thought. The ground shook as artillery shells continued to batter the knights he had sent to clear the turrets. Still, he refused to call off the attack, believing the attack could break through to the point where the artillery was useless. When that happened, it would take mere minutes for the defenses to fall.

Nate looked at the slowly advancing line of Brotherhood knights, distinguishable by the power armor they wore. Sniping them would be a waste of time, their helmets would protect against anything smaller than a .50 cal which was dangerously in short supply. What the attackers didn't realize was that their attack wasn't unexpected. Barely visible, Nate eyed the minefield that lay in front of the trenches dug by the Minutemen. The minefield wouldn't stop the attackers, but it would slow them down and hopefully take some of them out of the action.

The knights were caught unaware when the first mine went off. Eight of the heavily armored brutes had entered the minefield that faced the city itself and it was the ninth would-be invader that would set off the first mine. This gave the Minutemen hiding within the trenches the signal they needed. Bringing up mounted mini-guns, they immediately began firing upon the Brotherhood of Steel, catching them out in the open and without cover. The two nearest knights quickly fell to the hailstorm of bullets while a third was quickly killed after accidentally stepping on a mine. The remaining five knights returned fire but were unable to hit their targets before quickly falling to combined fire. The last knight fell only for another group of knights to walk into the minefield facing the ocean. The combined fire from the turrets, mini-guns and minefields helped keep the Brotherhood at bay.

Paladin Roe was furious! Two teams of heavily armored knights had fallen to a trap laid by farmers and squatters! This was unacceptable and decided he was going to lead the next attack personally. "Danse! Tell the Vertibirds to approach now," he demanded, "Tell them to take out the artillery!" Danse wasn't given time to reject as Paladin Roe grabbed his laser rifle and ran out to the frontline. "Paladin Danse sir," the radio operator awkwardly, "It's Elder Maxson." Danse felt his heart sink as he took the radio receiver. Everything felt wrong.

The fighting started to become more intensive as the Brotherhood knights surged forward through the minefield. Multiple small explosions peppered the ground, injuring or killing several knights. But the combined fire between the mini-guns and turrets only slowed down the advance, it did not stop them. The first few knights that managed to break through the firing line dropped into the trenches and started firing upon the now retreating Minutemen while their allies rushed to catch up.

"General, should we halt the bombardment," one of the Minutemen shouted in confusion. "No! Continue the bombardment," Nate shouted the order, "Give the outside defenders two minutes to fall back, the barricade the entrances!"

Paladin Roe charged the trench line, dropping in momentarily to brutally kill two Minutemen who dared challenge him with his bare hands. Without stopping he climbed out of the trench and attempted to charge at the open entrance to the Castle, only to be pushed backwards into the trench by a grenade. Momentarily stunned, he again attempted to charge at the entrance, not realizing it was now being barricaded from within. Regardless, he kept moving forward even as a dozen Minutemen began firing upon him from atop the Castle walls. He struggled through the hailstorm of laser bursts and bullet pings, only to fall mere inches from the door. No amount of power armor could stop the constant fire of a dozen Minutemen, though Paladin Roe was still arrogant enough to believe he could win even as he succumbed to the fire.

Danse sent the order to retreat over the comms. The battle had been lost and at once was a disaster for the already stretched thin Brotherhood forces. To make matters worse, Elder Maxson himself had ordered Paladin Roe to avoid conflict with the Minutemen. His mission was only to secure a foothold in the Commonwealth by reinforcing the survivors left behind. "Has anyone seen Paladin Roe," Danse asked the survivors of the assault. "He fell near the walls," one of the knights confirmed, "Three of us tried to recover him but were pushed back. I'm sorry, it was just too much." "No need to apologize. If you can, see to it the injured get back to the aid stations. And get yourself checked out as well," Danse ordered. A lost battle and the death of one of the most legendary living members of the Brotherhood of Steel was not something easily forgotten.

Nate looked out at the battlefield, fires still raging and the cries of the injured still calling out. The Brotherhood were supposedly smarter than this, but the assault had been doomed to fail from the start. "You make quite the mess Blue," Piper stated softly. "Is everyone okay," Nate asked. "A little shook up, but they're fine," she confirmed, "In fact, they're even more eager to work together. Seems you made a good impression today." "I didn't do anything Piper. The Minutemen did," Nate dismissed her attempt to congratulate him. Too many people died needlessly today. "Don't sell yourself short. We wouldn't even have the Minutemen if not for you," Piper told him. He knew what she was saying. He just needed time.

## PART EIGHT

Paladin Danse arrived back at the Cambridge Police Station, surprised that Elder Maxson had already arrived. "Sir," Danse saluted, "I wasn't expecting you so soon!" "At ease Danse," Maxson said with mild anger, "Where is Paladin Roe?" "Dead sir. He fell during the battle at the Castle." Maxson became visibly angry upon hearing the news. Clearly this wasn't something the Elder had planned. "Fool! I specifically ordered him to avoid conflict with the Minutemen. His actions could jeopardize everything I have planned for the Commonwealth." Maxson looked out from the roof of the station. Injured Knights were being brought in, many barely able to walk. Despite his initial desire to fight, the young, charismatic leader had since realized war with the Minutemen was a foolish idea. The Commonwealth belonged to them now, the chance for the Brotherhood to take control had long since passed them by. "Send a message. I want to arrange a meeting with the Minutemen leader. It's time we end this fighting while we can."

Back at the Castle, the defenders celebrated their hard-earned win. Against all odds, the Minutemen had once again pushed back the Brotherhood of Steel. Once again, the Minutemen had proven their strength, this time in view of the various settlement leaders and ambassadors who had arrived with the intent to form a new Government. "I see you're not in the mood for celebrating," Blake asked Nate. "I've never been one for celebrating," came the lie. The two men shared a moment of silence as they looked out at the night covered ocean. "Piper tells me you're a vault dweller?" "Used to be. It's... not something I like talking about. Actually, you're one of the first people I met after leaving the vault." "Well, I guess that explains that lost look you had when we first met." "Yeah, I suppose it does. This world was so strange to me back then." "Thank you," Blake told the general. "What for?" "Helping us. If you hadn't helped the farm, I don't think any of us would be here today." Nate thought on this for a moment. "I was simply doing the right thing," he replied. "I've met many people who thought they were doing the right thing. But you were the one who helped us out. That means something. You have my support no matter what." "Thank you Blake." "No problem friend. Just give the word whenever you need something." Blake left Nate alone once again. It helped to know that he was actively helping people, that it meant something. Perhaps, after all that had happened, Nate could indeed change this world for the better. Make the sacrifice worthwhile. Even if the pain never went away.

Maxson arrived at the Castle, making sure to make it plain that he wasn't a threat to the defenders. Nate waited at the front gate, Minutemen ready to fight should anything happen. The two leaders approached each other cautious of their respective intentions. "When I heard you wanted to talk, I didn't think you'd make the trip here," Nate stated with mild puzzlement. "Indeed. I wasn't expecting the General himself to be waiting to greet me when I arrived," Maxson said back. "You wanted to talk about the war between our factions?" "I've come to end it. I want to negotiate peace."

The two men made their way to the makeshift office Nate had arranged for their private discussion. "I heard you were overseeing the talks between the various settlements." "I have someone I trust standing in for me today, while I'm busy with our discussion." Nate motioned for Maxson to take a seat before offering some water, which was gratefully accepted. "I want to start off by apologizing. The attack you had to defend recently wasn't one I ordered, nor would it have been allowed had I known about it." "I find that a little hard to believe. From what I've been told, your men have too much respect for you to act outside your authority." "Normally, yes. But one of my Paladins had decided to disobey a direct order to avoid conflict. Unfortunately I was

unable to confront him as I heard he was killed during the battle.” Nate eyed the BoS leader with suspicion. He seemed a little young to be in charge of such a large, powerful faction yet there was the unmistakable fire only seen in the eyes of somebody with years of experience behind them. Above all else, Maxson gave the impression of someone who was honest in his words and sincere in his actions and convictions. “You said you wanted piece between our factions.” “Don’t mistake my intentions. I still hold the Minutemen accountable for all the people who died on the Prydwin. But fighting won’t help anyone.” “That’s something we can both agree on. I assume you have some sort of proposal? An idea of where we go from here?” “I propose an alliance. A... trade of sort. We have the means to manufacture weapons, vehicles and medical supplies. Things a nation will need. In return, I hope you will consider trading advanced technology over to us.” “Advanced technology? Wouldn’t that also include vehicles and weapons?” “Normally, yes. But I’m prepared to trade these with you, given neither side is in a position to say no to this.” Nate again eyed the young leader in front of him. Maxson hid his true intentions well and Nate couldn’t tell if he was being deceptive or not. “I’ll have to consider it, but I want a guarantee.” “I have a small number of Vertibirds on standby. Say the word and they’ll drop supplies wherever you need them.” A tempting offer. “Give me an hour. Feel free to explore the castle while you’re here,” Nate finally said to him.

Maxson decided to have a look around the interior of the Castle. The former open space had since been heavily developed. A clinic, a shop and several tall buildings that housed the homes for the civilians had been built, with a radio tower in the center of the Castle. The limited space and the over-abundance of buildings made Maxson feel somewhat claustrophobic, reminding him of growing up in the citadel. Like the Citadel, the Castle had been a military base pre-war, only to be abandoned and later occupied after the war. Much like the Citadel, the Castle walls had also seen extensive damage with an attempt to repair them. The repairs weren’t to the same quality as they would’ve been had the Brotherhood overseen them, but they were still fairly impressive considering the limited manufacturing capabilities of the Minutemen. The Castle was more than just the headquarters of some faction made up of farmers. It was a city, full of people trying to live their lives. Many of them were here because their family members operated out of the Castle. Others simply came to live here because it was safe. Had the Brotherhood been in charge, this city wouldn’t exist. It would simply be another military base, a foothold for gathering technology too dangerous to be left for some scavenger or worse non-Humans to find. Maxson was about to enter the shop when he saw a figure in the corner of his eye, someone who looked familiar to him. He turned and to his surprise saw a woman who at one point in his life meant more to him than anyone, save for his parents.

The meeting between the ambassadors was about to end when Nate entered the room. “Ah, General. Glad you could make it,” Ronnie stated happily. “Forgive my intrusion everyone, but I’ve come with news on my discussion with the leader of the Brotherhood of Steel,” he announced, ignoring the usual formality expected of him. “Go ahead General,” Blake called out. “He’s offered to end the hostilities, if we agree to a trade deal with his faction.” “Did you agree to the deal,” Ronnie asked. “Not yet. I just wanted to let everyone here know about what he offered, and to let you all decide for me. This isn’t about the Minutemen. This is about the Commonwealth. I can’t make this decision.” In that brief moment, Nate knew what their answer would be before he even let them know the details. Some would argue against the deal, but many of them trusted him to make the right choice. “Fill us in, General, then we can vote on it,” Blake confirmed the hope Nate held within.

Sarah had initially been concerned with talking with Arthur Maxson, who had for a long time thought her dead. But their brief meeting ended up being better than either had expected, with Maxson clearly still looking up to her. "I wasn't expecting to ever see you again," he told her, "I was told you were killed fighting Super Mutants." "I was fighting Super Mutants, but they weren't the issue," she started to explain, "Roe betrayed me, betrayed the Brotherhood. He wanted me out of the picture." "But why?" Sarah paused as she tried to accurately remember what had happened. "He cared little for how me and my father ran things. Roe was against us working with the wastelanders. So was I, but for him it was more than that. He looked down on them, hated them even." "So why didn't you take him off the frontline, reprimand him?" "Because he was a damn good soldier. And because he held influence over the Outcasts. I hoped that one day I could reunite both sides." Arthur looked at her with the same awe he saw her with as a child. "You know, I did that. I reunited them. Brought them back into the fold." "And for that I thank you. The Brotherhood is stronger united. Much like the Minutemen." "But why didn't you come back? We still needed you!" "I couldn't. What Roe did to me. I woke up in Underworld surrounded by Ghouls a week after he tried to kill me. I wasn't fit to be the Elder back then." Maxson understood. The idea of one of their own trying to kill her, only for her to be saved by the very things they both hated. "Why don't you come back now," he asked, "We could use you." "No. I left that behind me. As easy as it would be to return, I can do more good here than I ever could with the Brotherhood."

"I'm agreeing to your offer," Nate told Maxson, "However, I have a counter proposal for you." "That's somewhat unexpected." "As you know, we've been working towards a Commonwealth Government. I just spoke to the ambassadors. They're hoping you can provide some protection along our trade routes. In return, we can send scavengers to help look for any of this advanced technology you want." "I'm happy to agree to that," Maxson stated gladly. This formal agreement ended the BoS-Minutemen War, and allowed both sides to move forward without the need for further death and violence. At least it was a start.

## PART NINE

"Hey Blue, got a minute," Piper asked as she poked her head into Nate's office. "Of course Piper, I always have time for you." She slightly recoiled when he said that, just enough for Nate to notice. "Just wanted to check in, see how you were holding up." "I'm alright Piper. In fact, I've never felt better since waking up." An awkward silence fell between the pair. "Piper." "Yes Blue?" "Say what's on your mind." "Well, um, I was hoping to find out what you're up to now the new CPG is off the ground?" She looked at him hopefully, her heart hoping he'd say the right words. "Actually, I was thinking about moving to Diamond City," he told her, smiling at how obvious she was being. "Really?" "Don't act so surprised. The last couple of days has had me thinking about what's important. I wasn't thinking clearly when we went our separate ways." "I can't believe this," Piper squealed in excitement, "I'm so happy to hear you say that!" She rushed out of her seat and kissed him, an attempt on her part to show him how much she cared. It mattered little that this was entirely out of character for her, though it was a little surprising to Nate who hadn't expected such a display of affection from the usually reserved journalist. But the surprise quickly wore off. For the man out of time, he took it as a sign that his future was brighter than he thought it ever could be. After everything that had happened, Nate could finally dream of the future again.

Captain Weimer was relieved to finally have the opportunity to return home. True to their word, the Minutemen allowed Madison Li, a known Institute Scientist, to accompany them back to the NCR, much to the annoyance of the Brotherhood of Steel. Of course, she had continued to complain even as they approached Sanctuary back towards the safety of the west. "I can't believe I'm having to do this," she would say in disbelief. "If it helps, we could always hand you over to the tin cans," Weimer smirked, " But then we'd be left without someone familiar with the reactor technology we came looking for. And of course you'd have to contend with the fact that your friends aren't really happy with you helping someone they didn't like." She would quickly shut up before returning to complaining about her situation not long after. "Captain," Tessa caught his attention before they entered the final settlement they would see for a long time. "Yes Tessa," he asked. "Looks like we picked up a stray." Weimer turned to see Jack quickly catching up with the hardened group. "Good... thing... I... caught... up with you," he managed to say as he caught his breath, "I was hoping to join you." "Only if you bring your own supplies," the captain told him. This time none of the other Rangers objected to a decision he made. During the battle back at the Castle, Jack had left the other ambassadors and had joined the Rangers, going so far as to save Tessa from a grenade that had landed a little too close for comfort. This left an impression on the small group who had since come to respect him for the deed. "Thank you." No more words were needed. Jack was grateful for the chance to go west and see the nation he had heard so much about with his own eyes, the Rangers were more than happy to pay him back for saving one of their own. Though admittedly the extra gun didn't hurt either.

Sarah prepared to leave the safety of the Castle to begin making the rounds when she was stopped by one of the Minutemen Defenders. "Ma'am? There's a call on the radio for you," he told her. Without hesitation she quickly followed him to the radio shack. "Hey wastelander, that you?" A pause. "Sorry to keep you waiting," crackled the response. "Where are you?," she asked. "Stopped by Somerville Place. It's changed since the last time I came through here." Sarah smiled, happy to be hearing the voice of an old friend. "I'm up at the Castle. Meet me here okay?" "Sure thing." The conversation was brief, on account of him not being one for words. It didn't matter, she was just glad to see him again.

Paladin Danse escorted Elder Maxson personally back to his Vertibird. "Danse, a moment before I leave," he asked before leaving. "Yes sir." "I'm in need of people I can trust to take charge around here. I'm giving you command of the Commonwealth Brotherhood." Danse was stunned. The mere admission that the Elder trusted him enough to lead a large force of Brotherhood was not one easily made or accepted. "I made a mistake in trusting Paladin Roe. A mistake that took the lives of many of our Brothers and Sisters. I trust you'll be better." "Yes sir!" Danse saluted, happily taking the order and command to heart. "I hoped you'd agree. Truth is, there is no one else I'd rather take command here in my absence." "I'll make sure not to disappoint you sir," Danse told him proudly. "I know you won't." The two men gave their final goodbye before the Elder left, hoping his decision would help secure the future of the Brotherhood.

## EPILOGUE

The decades following the BoS-Minutemen War and the formation of the Commonwealth Government helped turn this piece of irradiated wasteland into a nation. Nate, ever the soldier, turned down several requests to lead the Government and instead chose to continue leading the Minutemen as they protected the Commonwealth from any and all threats they encountered.

Never one to shy away from duty, he continued to patrol the Commonwealth, helping when needed, until the day came when even he could no longer fight. If the raiders and Super Mutants were hoping his death could somehow relieve them of the threat of the Minutemen, they would soon be disappointed as the Commonwealth Government merged with the Minutemen, an action many of their enemies feared. With a renewed focus, the two forces worked together to finally make the Commonwealth a safe place, a nation where people could live. Nate for his part had come to terms with his fate, with the world he never wanted but had now helped shape. His death regardless had an impact on the countless lives he had saved. His wife, his children. Friends and family, even the towns and farms that wouldn't have survived without his aid mourned him. But even as he took his last breath, he finally understood why he had survived. He still had a place in the world. A world that needed the soldier. And the words that once haunted him were now seen in a different light. War never changes.