

Clash of Kin

Rene and Bauer's narrow escape from death only put them in worse situations as they grew older. As 13-year-old paternal twins, they watched a building fire kill their parents. After surviving the disaster, the near-death experience awakened new superpowers of the element that almost killed them. Rene shoots and manipulates water with her arms, while Bauer uses fire. Their powers – a product of an experimental vaccine administered at birth – changed their lives forever. Years later in late 90s Boston, the duo split. Rene extinguishes fires and rescues those in danger, while Bauer fights for the military. When both start to experience more life-threatening events, they reconsider their roles. Bauer leaves the military in search of freedom, while Rene seeks more appreciation and compensation for her sacrifices. *Clash of Kin* follows both Rene and Bauer in a parallel story structure, which intersects later in the narrative. The low fantasy, superhero story follows two siblings on a journey to fight each other and the people trying to control them.

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Scene – Location: This scene takes place in the middle of the story, but in a later section.

Bauer wrapped his fingers around the metal bumper, squeezed his eyes tight and took a deep breath. The bumper ripped off a tall pickup truck and stabbed into the backseat of a sedan. The truck wedged into the passenger side of the brown car and pinned it against the guardrail. The L-shaped bumper, still attached to the truck, pressed down on the door frame through the window.

Bauer secured his grip around the bent metal. It then shone a bright orange, softening beneath his fingers. Once bright enough, Bauer released his heat and bent it back into shape. He ripped off and pulled out the reformed bumper, setting free the little girl pinned underneath. She then climbed out of the backseat window, towards the pickup truck. Bauer carried her away from the wreckage at the intersection just nearby a short bridge. If the girl sat anywhere but the middle seat, she'd be dead.

The passing cars blared fast, separated honks. The distant cheer and hollers rose the hairs on Bauer's arm. For the first time in years, he felt embarrassed – too shy to acknowledge an audience.

Bauer stood her up on her shiny pink rainboots. When he looked up, he spotted a familiar blue and white headband. It kept her brown hair back, with a yellowish hint staining the white. She remained quiet, eyes half closed and staring back at the two accordion-like vehicles.

“Don't worry about your dad,” Bauer said. “He'll be fine. Can you stay here while I get him out?”

He waited for a response, but she said nothing.

“Okay,” he answered for her.

Bauer walked back and analyzed his next move. The truck T-boned the car against the guard rail and blocked all access to the passenger side. The driver of the truck, an older, white haired man, spun his head around in a circle. He stayed seated, whipping side-to-side the lone hairs atop his head.

“Hey, guy,” the man slurred through the empty window frame, “get me outta here. I can’t open the door.”

“You can wait,” Bauer said, as he circled the wreckage.

“Alright, alright,” the man shouted. “I’ll wait. Better you helping me than your sister. I ain’t never ask help from a lady. We’re not starting today.”

“You’re not really in a spot to be picky,” Bauer said.

He circled around to the sedan where the girl’s bloodied father looked on. A cut on the centre of his forehead spilled blood down his nose. While Bauer looked for the best way to dislodge the vehicles, the truck driver spoke again.

“Where is your sister anyway? I was talking to my buddy Joe at the office and he said that she quit. They said it on the news. Is it true?”

“I don’t think so,” Bauer said.

“Are you sure?” the man said with a higher pitch. “You know, I wouldn’t quit. Isn’t it your job to help us regular people, anyway?”

Bauer circled around to the driver side of the pickup, crunching glass underfoot. The man smelled of a weird mix of cigarette smoke and mint. On the floor, empty beer bottles piled up with the shattered car windows. Bauer rested his hands on the edges of the door frame and lowered his face close to the truck driver.

“What’s your name?” Bauer asked.

“Vince.”

“Vince, I’m not on a salary, if that’s what you’re asking,” he whispered. “Listen Vince, I’m going to blast your truck back to get her father out. He and his daughter need to get to a hospital. You sit here and keep your mouth shut. Okay?”

“Your sister would’ve,” Vince stopped to suppress a burp, “got me out already, you know. I heard she earns a couple hundred bucks for every person she helps. Ain’t that right?”

Bauer stared back at Vince, rubbed his hands together and moved to the rear of the pickup. A fiery mix of flames and smoke spiraled around his arms towards his hands. Then like a rocket out of a cannon, he blasted a pillar of smoke forward, rocking the truck back and forth. Bauer looked back at the little girl. She stood in the same spot he left her, this time she stared at Bauer's hands.

"Hey, hey, hey," Vince shouted.

The tires screeched along with the shifting truck. One more push would set free the sedan and the little girl's father. Once again, he rubbed his hands together and planted his right foot back.

"Bauer, hold on," a distant voice shouted.

He straightened up, looked around and saw her. Rene leaped side to side, from rooftop to rooftop, a frosty air trailing her feet. The ice followed with the wind blowing her short hair back. The black, sleeveless coat she wore fluttered down with every fall, like a flag catching a small breeze.

Bauer's shoulders relaxed, his arms now at his side. As she approached, a mix of cheers and boos erupted from the passing cars. The traffic slowed as heads craned out of car windows. Bauer started pacing, listing reasons for why Rene rushed over. A photo opportunity, a newspaper headline or a public display – all seemed possible.

"Here comes big sis," Vince said with a laugh.

"We're the same age."

Bauer looked back at the little girl. Her eyes opened wide and her jaw hung open. He knew of Rene's reaching popularity, but this felt different.

Rene landed with a stutter step just a few feet in front of him.

"What are you doing? Why didn't you come see me when you came back?" she said through her teeth.

"I had some errands to get out of the way."

“Errands in the middle of the road?” she waved. She inhaled through her nose and moved closer to Bauer. “I’m trying to change the way we’re treated,” she said, “and you’re out here doing exactly what I’m trying to avoid.”

Bauer didn’t understand what Rene meant. He rubbed his hands together again, smoke and fire forming, and blasted the truck back. The back end flung out, dislodging from the crushed sedan.

“I don’t know why you’re upset or what your problem is, but I’m just helping this little girl and her father,” he said, hand pointing to where the little girl stood. “Is that okay, or do I need permission from you, too?”

Rene pressed her lips together, glancing back at the wreckage and the wide-eyed girl. “You should let the police clean this up. If you butt into everything, they’ll feel like you don’t trust them – like they can’t even handle a car accident.”

“Look at me, I must be special,” Vince said.

“I’m going,” Rene said. “Finish this and come see me at my house.” She crouched down, ready to leap away and froze. Rene then walked over to the little girl, who with every step closer, backed up until the guardrail blocked her. Rene reached for the girl’s headband and balled it into her pocket. Then with the other hand, Rene took off her pristine white and blue headband and placed it on the little girl.

The girl looked up at her own forehead, twisting her head to get a better view. Rene didn’t smile back. She turned back to Bauer. “At my house, alright?”