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"WAR," SAYS MAYOR PRENTISS, his eyes glinting. "At last."

"Shut up," I say. "There ain't no *at last* about it. The only one who wants this is *you*."

"Nevertheless," he says, turning to me with a smile. "Here it comes."

And of course I'm already wondering if untying him so he could fight this battle was the worst mistake of my life–

But no–

No, it's gonna keep her safe. It's what I had to do to *keep her safe*.

And I will make him keep her safe if I have to kill him to do it.

And so with the sun setting, me and the Mayor stand on the rubble of the cathedral and look out across the town square, as the army of Spackle make their way down the zigzag hill in front of us, blowing their battlehorn with

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a sound that could tear you right in two–

As Mistress Coyle's army of the Answer marches into town behind us, bombing everything in its path *Boom! Boom! BOOM!*–

As the first soldiers of the Mayor's own army start arriving in quick formayshun from the south, Mr Hammar at their front, crossing the square towards us to get new orders–

As the people of New Prentisstown run for their lives in any and every direkshun–

As the scout ship from the incoming settlers lands on a hill somewhere near Mistress Coyle, the worst possible place for 'em–

As Davy Prentiss lies dead in the rubble below us, shot by his own father, shot by the man I just set free–

And as Viola–

My Viola–

Races out on horseback into the middle of it all, her ankles broken, not even able to stand up on her own–

Yes, I think.

Here it comes.

The end of everything.

The end of it all.

"Oh, yes, Todd," says the Mayor, rubbing his hands together. "Oh, yes, indeed."

And he says the word again, says it like it's his every last wish come true.

"*War*."

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