

Perfections Edge:

The Ecorlius Enforcer

By Keon Chow

Chapter 1:

The Lost Imperfect

My name is Dante. I'm an Ecorlius Enforcer, which means I hunt imperfects. Normally you have to be at least 18 to be an Ecorlius Enforcer (and even then, it's quite a grim and traumatizing experience), yet here I am, a 16 year old enforcer. They can trust the burden of being an Ecorlius Enforcer on my shoulders for 2 reasons. One, I'm smart, and two, they know I'm loyal to the cause.

I don't really work in the front lines, I'm more of the tech guy. No, not just the 'tech guy.' If I was just the tech guy, this story probably wouldn't have happened. I'm also a 'people guy.' What do I mean by that? I know what people think, what they might do, what their ambitions are, what they fear, and most importantly, how I might use them.

It all started when an imperfect showed up at Ecorlius Enforcer HQ. Yep, the very thing that Ecorlius Enforcers such as myself kill. Some people in my place probably would've killed the imperfect right away. But like I said, I know how to use people. We were short-staffed that day so I had to take a break from my usual duties and work in security. All of a sudden, alarms started blaring.

"We got a disturbance at the northeast section of the gate," someone said.

"What is it?" someone else asked.

"Looks to me like it's a human, possibly a child," the first person said, now squinting to identify the cause of the breach. The man raised his walkie-talkie, "alright, we're dealing with a possible 1825..."

"Perhaps it's lost," a third person interjected.

"You think it's an imperfect?" the second person asked.

"Probably, only an imperfect would get lost out here, but we don't know for sure. I'll check it out," I said.

I walked down a hallway and to the front door. Upon pushing it open I whispered into my walkie-Talkie. "Reinforcements, please stand by," I then spotted the intruder. It was a boy, probably no older than 14. He was trying to scramble up the fence. Thankfully, we had turned off the electricity that normally runs through the fence in order to not harm this possibly innocent child. He saw me first.

"Who are you?" he asked in a shaky voice while quickly scrambling down the electric fence, as if to look innocent.

I hesitated. I was almost sure that he was an imperfect. Only an imperfect would be scared. Only an imperfect would speak in such a shaky voice. Only an imperfect would have gotten lost in the first place. "I'm a friend. A friend to imperfects," I was slowly edging my hand toward the gun on my right pouch. One second. Two seconds. Three seconds. My fingertips were brushing the edge of the handle now. All I was waiting for was for the boy to confirm that he was an imperfect. "Now, who are you?"

The boy sighed with relief. "Oh, good. You can help me then."

"Alright," I thought, "*he has confirmed to me that he's an imperfect. As an Ecorlius Enforcer, I have every right to shoot him.*" I had never killed anyone before, but I would do it for the cause. Or would I? Could I really shoot this child? Beads of sweat trickled down my forehead, my hand reaching for the gun quivered. My thoughts were engaged in a civil war inside my brain. Do I shoot, or bring him in for questioning? Or do I abandon all my Ecorlius Enforcer training and let him go? Right before I was about to choose, the boy started talking again. "After I got separated from the rest of the *Shifting City*..."

Did the boy just say, the *Shifting City*? Was it possible that the boy was from there? From the city of imperfects? The city where the Ecorlius Enforcer's enemies lived?

Chapter 2:

The City Of Enemies

I felt a strange sense of relief because now the option was clear. I was taking this boy in for questioning. Any smart Ecorlius Enforcer in my place would do the same. I was about to do just that, when I froze. I had options here. I felt around the pocket of my uniform, where the Security Override Device lay. The Security Override Device was something I had secretly

designed a while ago. It held a blue microchip with the power to momentarily shut down all security systems in the building. If I'm being honest, I designed it because I don't fully trust my colleagues. I was tempted to use it. If the Ecorlius Enforcers caught footage of me taking this imperfect in for questioning, who knows what they would do to this kid, or what they would do to me. Sure this little boy happened to be my enemy, but I know that certain Ecorlius Enforcers would be thrilled to do horrible things to this boy. Like turning him into a perfect.

Homo Sapiens Delta. That's what perfects are called. It means 'Alpha Human,' and lives up to its name. Everyone knows an imperfect's worst nightmare is to become a Homo Sapiens Delta. So that's what some officers probably intended to do. They are there - our - enemies, after all.

Thankfully, Ecorlius Enforcer code allowed the imperfect to decide it's fate; either be executed (quick and painless), or become a Homo Sapiens Delta. They always chose death. I don't think that's right, no child deserves that. If I can trick this imperfect into thinking I'm his friend, I can interrogate him peacefully. Even though it was breaking protocol, I had to keep this imperfect a secret for now.

"Wait a second," I told the imperfect. Then I stepped out of his earshot and started speaking into my walkie-talkie, "I've lost sight of the boy, it's too dark to pursue. Call off reinforcements."

"Roger that," came a voice in response.

I walked back towards the boy. "Come with me," I finally said, "we have food."

That was enough to get the imperfect moving. He scrambled up the fence and was at my side in a flash. I led the imperfect down the hall. "*No one knows he's in the building,*" I told myself, "*as long as no one spots us.*" Thankfully, I was able to lead the boy into my office, and into a secret room that only I knew about. To an onlooker, the door to this secret room was just an ordinary bookshelf.

"Stay in this room and don't make any noise!" I cautioned.

"Why do I have to stay silent?" the imperfect boy asked quizzically, "aren't I safe here, if this place truly is a safe haven for imperfects?"

I paused. Most people would've just thought that the innocent little boy was just asking an innocent little question. I saw something different. I saw a faint gleam of suspicion shine across his eyes. I had an ominous feeling that this boy was smarter than he let on, and was just trying to seem naive.

"Protocol," I finally replied. "New imperfects could possibly have a mental breakdown in a new environment such as this."

"Okay," the boy replied.

He glanced away, obviously trying to hide his expression from me. He then closed the secret room. I took this as my cue to leave. I marched briskly down the hall, thoughts swirling in my head. What was my next move? Obviously I had to interrogate the boy, but how, exactly? And should I keep up my charade of hiding this imperfect from my co-workers? At least I knew the answer to the last question. I didn't want this boy tortured, so I would continue to hide him. But how long would it be before someone found him?

I was in the cafeteria now, mindlessly scooping chicken and potato wedges onto a tray. I couldn't bring two trays to my office, that would be suspicious. I should let the imperfect eat first, then go back to the cafeteria and pretend to get second helpings before I would eat. Hopefully, my act of bringing him food would get him to trust me, and he would reveal something about the *Shifting City*. The imperfect was ravenous. He gobbled down the food, nearly biting off my finger in his frenzy.

"Why don't you guys share any of this stuff with the *Shifting City*?" he asked between bites of potato. "We always have to eat thin slices of bread, we almost never get any meat." He waved a forkful of chicken for emphasis.

I saw an opportunity here.

"What?" I gave him a puzzled look, "I thought we shared plenty of food with the *Shifting City*. Maybe the *Shifting City* is too far away for us to send anything. Where is it, anyhow?" I asked innocently.

"The Northwest quadrant of sector 78," the imperfect bursted out impulsively. Then he clamped his hand around his mouth, his eyes gave a look of pure horror. "I shouldn't have said that! That could put the entire city in danger!"

"It's okay, I help imperfects, remember?" I said soothingly.

"But I can't trust you!" the imperfect cried, tears rimming his eyes.

"That's okay, a lot of imperfects don't trust us at first," I looked the imperfect in the eye, faking sympathy, "and to be honest, if I were in your shoes I wouldn't trust me, either. You don't have to open up to me any more than you already have."

I didn't prod the imperfect any more that day, I figured I had already gained enough information. I had just accomplished in a day what my colleagues wouldn't have accomplished by torturing twenty children! This convinced me I was doing the right thing, I had made the right decision by hiding the imperfect. I went to bed smiling, even though I had no idea what the 'Northwest quadrant of sector 78' was, but the imperfect didn't know that.

Chapter 3:

The Origins Of The Ecorlius Enforcers

Imperfects are taught to hate Ecorlius Enforcers, taught that they are evil. But that's not the full truth. It started a while ago (well before I was born), when the government found a way to perfect human beings. Perfect speech, perfect actions, perfect thinking, all at the tip of a needle. They called it the Ecorlius Antidote. Believe it or not, at first the government was fine with people choosing to not take the antidote, as long as the perfects and the imperfects lived in separate societies. But that wasn't enough for the imperfects. They believed that the Ecorlius Antidote was truly evil and were willing to do anything to fight it. Even resorting to acts of terrorism.

For a period of time, imperfects marauded around the country, harming people and inciting chaos. That is until the government intervened. They drove the imperfects back, far enough that they couldn't bring any harm to the rest of society. But they didn't stop there. The government knew that the imperfects could still manage to rebel so they founded the Ecorlius Enforcers. Their job - no, our job is to capture imperfects using any means necessary.

But here's the thing. Ecorlius Enforcers don't actually take the Ecorlius Antidote. You see, a Homo Sapiens Delta would never try and fight anyone. They would use knowledge and debate and reason to try and turn someone's perspective while not harming anyone in the process. But imperfects can't be reasoned with. They are dead-set on hating the Ecorlius Antidote. Nothing you can say to them will convince them otherwise. So the government needed their own band of loyal imperfects sworn to kill the bad imperfects.

Ecorlius Enforcers take an oath. That oath is that after all is done - after all imperfects are gone, after there is peace, and after the Ecorlius Enforcer's duty is finished, we will take the Ecorlius Antidote.

Chapter 4:

The Captured Imperfect

I woke from my sleep.

I made my way from my sleeping quarters to my office where I checked in on the imperfect. Then I went to the cafeteria. As I shoveled pancakes and bacon onto my tray, I thought about what information I could try to get out of the imperfect today.

“Should I continue, or wait?” I pondered. “As much as this boy pretends he’s oblivious, I can see it in his eyes that he’s not. If I continue to pry information, will he get suspicious? Maybe I should wait for a couple days, then try to get more information.”

Eventually, I created a schedule in my head. I would try to get information out of the boy, hopefully the exact location of the *Shifting City*. But to avoid his suspicion, I would wait three days before I did any further prodding. I walked up the hallway with a smug smile and a clear plan in my mind. But you can probably imagine how fast it was wiped off my face when I returned to my office, opened the bookshelf-door only to discover that the imperfect was nowhere to be seen.

I panicked.

My breathing became laboured. Almost instinctively, I collapsed into a chair and clutched my forehead. Anxiety and fear coursing through my brain. Usually nothing went wrong with my plans, this is the first time anything unexpected had happened! What was I supposed to do? Should I run away? Should I kill myself right now? It would probably be better than what they would do to me for breaking protocol. Perhaps I could try and blame the imperfect for brainwashing me. Obviously, I was panicking. These were all childish thoughts. Running away? Pfft. I wouldn't be able to pull that off, I have nowhere to go. Suicide? Yeah right, I don't have the courage to do that. Blaming the child for brainwashing me? No. The imperfect is really good at pretending to be dumb and innocent, how was I supposed to frame an oblivious child for brainwashing me?

At that exact moment, a voice on the intercom said, “Dante, please report to the Main Office. Also, don't try anything funny, you'll be shot on sight!” The voice was almost cheerful.

Well, that squashed my little hopes of running away. I slowly got up, and walked down the hallway to the Main Office, my knees trembling, my heart full of dread. The second I stepped a foot inside the Main Office, a booming voice started talking as if activated by my footstep.

“So Dante, seems like we have something to discuss,” I rounded a corner and found Ben, my boss. He was about 6 feet tall, with pale-white skin and a mop of coffee-brown hair set upon his head. He was strangely normal looking for a man of his status, except for his eyes. His eyes were blue, and cold, with an eerie gleam of intelligence displayed upon them. They radiated authority and discipline. I tried to look nonchalant, but it was hard to do that in his aura. I may have gulped.

“So,” he continued. “You have been harbouring an imperfect, no?”

“Yes sir,” I replied, seeing no need to lie, “how did you find out.”

“Well, your colleagues got suspicious last night when you said the boy had run away. They did some investigating and boom,” he mimicked an explosion with his hands. “And why exactly did you hide this from your co-workers? Your friends? Me?” Ben said calmly.

“I thought Ecorlius Enforcers were allowed to use any means necessary in order to detain imperfects,” I stated, but I already knew what he was going to say.

“Yes they are. But they are limited by restrictions, which you have violated.”

“My apologies, sir,” I replied.

“So what did you plan on doing with this imperfect? Don’t lie Dante, it will only make things worse.”

An idea sparked in my head. “I was interrogating the imperfect, slowly prying out information about the *Shifting City*. I was going to release the information soon,” I answered smoothly. Yes it was a lie, but only half of one, I really was interrogating the imperfect, but I hadn’t planned on releasing any information.

Ben nodded. “So all seems well, but tell me Dante,” he leaned forward, so much so that I could smell his breath. “Why did you keep the information secret?”

“Well, as you know boss, certain Ecorlius Enforcers wouldn’t hesitate to kill an imperfect on sight, and that would be a waste. Instead, we can use him to learn about the *Shifting City*.” This was actually completely true.

“Ok then, looks like we’re all cleared up,” he said. It took all my willpower not to let out a tremendous sigh of relief. I spun around and started walking towards the door when he added, “Oh, and I’d just like to say, I will be taking the imperfect into my custody.”

I whirled back to face my boss. “Excuse me?” I asked incredulously, making no effort to hide my shock and anger. After all the progress I had made with the imperfect, I wasn’t going to give him up.

He chuckled. “I can understand keeping lies from your co-workers, but not from me. I’m hurt, Dante, I really am,” he clearly wasn’t hurt, in fact he looked a little amused by the whole situation.

“Sir, you don’t understand. The imperfect is beginning to trust me, putting him into a new environment is just going to put you back to square one,” he raised an eyebrow, clearly not believing me, but I saw something. Maybe, just maybe, he would be willing to let me keep the imperfect. “Why don’t we ask the imperfect?” I said, my voice with an edge of despair.

Ben hesitated. “Fine. If the imperfect trusts you as much as you let on, he’ll surely pick you.”

He got up from his chair and walked to the other side of his massive office to a fancy looking door. After typing in some sort of passcode the door opened, revealing the imperfect huddling at the back of the room. I approached and crouched down to him so that we were face to face.

“Hey buddy, I think it’s almost time for you to be free to roam this place, out of my nasty office. But you need a little more training to help you cope with this new environment,” I said soothingly. “Would you like to do the training with me, or this man over here,” I nodded towards Ben.

While all this was happening, I was doing my best to shoot the imperfect a look that hopefully conveyed the message: “*You’re in trouble, you need to pick me!*” I think the imperfect got the message.

“Uh, I think I’d like to do the training with you.”

“Ok, fine,” Ben turned towards me, “you can train him.”

I knew what he really meant by that was ‘you can continue interrogating him.’ I led the imperfect out of the office, and for a moment everything was good. I had the imperfect back in my custody, I hadn’t really gotten in trouble, and I would soon know the location of the *Shifting City*. But then the imperfect turned to me and said, “I know you’re an Ecorlius Enforcer.”

Chapter 5:

The Traitor Of The *Shifting City*

I froze.

I probably should’ve pulled out my gun and shot the imperfect, or marched back to my boss’s office with the imperfect in tow, or asked the imperfect how the heck he found out. I didn’t do anything. I kept still, waiting for the imperfect to make the next move.

He chuckled. “Surprised, Dante?”

I started to panic, how did he know my name? Was this all an elaborate plot devised by my boss to bring me down, and the imperfect...

“Don’t worry,” he said, seeing the worry splayed in my eyes, “your name tag is on. My name is Edward, by the way.”

I breathed a sigh of relief.

“You were making it pretty obvious you weren’t someone who ‘helps’ imperfects,” Edward continued.

“And you weren’t doing a very good job hiding your suspicion!” I shot back, but my voice came out shaky. For the second time that day, something had happened that I hadn’t anticipated. I felt so utterly helpless.

“I think I did a fantastic job, you’re just perceptive, and I can appreciate that,” the imperfect retorted.

At this point my frozen brain finally thawed and I realized this kid was a real threat. “So what are your intentions here,” I reached for my gun.

The imperfect clearly saw my action, but he didn’t show any sign of worry. “Oh, did I forget to mention that I’m on your side?”

“Oh please, everyone knows imperfects and Ecorlius Enforcers are enemies. You’re not on my side.”

“Not all imperfects disagree with the Ecorlius Antidote,” Edward spat impatiently. “Think about it, do you think everyone in a society made up of thousands of people all share the same opinions? Do you think everyone there is a terrorist? It’s not that simple, Dante. It’s a very heinous crime in the *Shifting City* to become a Homo Sapiens Delta. If you’re born an imperfect, you don’t get a choice in the matter, you are destined to forever be an imperfect no matter what you believe. I’ve wanted to take the Ecorlius Antidote for a long time.”

I took a moment to digest this. “So then how’d you end up getting here, was it on purpose?”

“No,” he replied, “I got separated from the imperfects the last time Ecorlius Enforcers were trying to bomb the city, and by chance I found this building.”

“Wait, you want the Ecorlius Antidote right?” I asked, an idea materializing in my head.

“Yes.”

“So are you willing to tell me the location of the *Shifting City* if I can get it for you?” I asked, my voice full of hope.

I saw glimpses of guilt in Edward’s face. Finally, he replied in a shaky voice, “Yes, but as long as you wipe my memory.”

“Done.”

Chapter 6:

The Imperfect’s Friend

The raid was an absolute success. The plan was for Edward to return to the *Shifting City*. He had been gone for a couple of days so he was to tell everyone that he had gotten lost, but had managed to find his way back. He would then turn on a tracking beacon that would allow Ecorlius Enforcers to swoop in and take the city.

You might be wondering why the Ecorlius Enforcers hadn't managed to capture the *Shifting City* until now. Well the *Shifting City* isn't exactly a city. It's a camp that's always on the move. The residents of the *Shifting City* have fold-up tents and camouflaging parkas, so it's hard to see any sign of it. The imperfects also have an army. They have skilled pilots that discombobulate our jets, and ground-level turrets that bring them down. So even in the rare case when our scouts have a lead on its location, it's still very hard to do anything before the *Shifting City* does what it does best: shift.

With some tech I gave Edward, he was able to disarm some of the *Shifting City's* ground turrets. That, combined with the fact we knew the exact location of the city, allowed the Ecorlius Enforcers to swoop in and capture hundreds of imperfects.

In total, we had about five-hundred out of the couple thousand residents of the *Shifting City*, and suffered minimal losses on our side. All the captured imperfects were held in one giant cell back at our headquarters. Everything should've been absolutely fine. No, more than fine. I had done something amazing. But I felt a strange sense of guilt that I couldn't place. I thought about what Edward had said, "*not all imperfects are terrorists. It's not that simple, Dante.*" Was everyone in that cell really my enemy?

Meanwhile Edward nervously scanned through all the imperfects from outside of the cell. He then rushed towards me with panic in his eyes.

"I can't find my friend!"

"What's the name?" I asked, not very concerned.

"Jennifer!" He answered hastily.

I typed her name on my computer, then shook my head. "Yeah, I don't think we have her here."

Edward fell to his knees.

"Look, Edward, that doesn't mean she's dead."

"That's not what I'm worried about! I was with her during the raid, she didn't get hurt, but she must've ran away, and that's not good. What if she's lost! She could die in the woods!"

"Edward, I think that's a bit of an exaggeration," Just then, an Ecorlius Enforcer marched into my office.

"Dante, a scout has picked up footage of a roaming person, we think it's an imperfect, but we can't know for sure," the officer brandished a tablet. He handed it to me, then left.

The screen displayed a girl, no older than Edward, in ragged wet clothing. Mud was caked across her face, and a cowlick dotted the side of her hair. Edward had a look of pure shock on his face. He pointed to the tablet.

“That’s her,” he said, his voice barely a whisper, “It’s Jennifer,
“It looks like she’s heading towards Ecorlius Enforcer HQ.”

Chapter 6:

The Plan

Edward was worried Ecorlius Enforcers would kill Jennifer so we devised a plan to capture her under the noses of my colleagues. It was quite simple. Edward suspected that she was going to try to break into Ecorlius Enforcer HQ to free the others so we would turn off the electric fence and let her in. Then, Edward would cry out from a distance, as if in pain. When Jennifer approaches to investigate we would capture her. Once we had her, Edward would try and convince her to become a Homo Sapiens Delta.

With the plan set, all we had to do was wait. I was going through my daily work routine when Richard, the same officer who had delivered the tablet to me earlier, returned to give me a hard drive.

“Boss wanted to give this to you, it holds access codes to the *Travelling Town* and the *Moving Municipality*.”

My mouth hung open in shock. The *Shifting City* was one of the biggest cities filled with imperfects. My branch of the Ecorlius Enforcers primarily focused on the *Shifting City*, that’s why I was so keen on interrogating Edward. The *Travelling Town*, and the *Moving Municipality* were thought to be even bigger cities.

Richard smiled when he saw my face, “Boss favours you after you brought down the *Shifting City*,” he then turned and walked out of the room.

Naturally, the first thing I tried to do was plug the hard drive into a computer. But then I saw something. On the corner of the hard drive was a tiny blue microchip, almost identical to the one on my Security Override Device. Except the Security Override Device was meant to shoot out electricity to disarm technology, this hard drive seemed to weaponise the electricity. I stumbled back in horror as I realized what was going on. The Ecorlius Enforcers were trying to assassinate me. But why not just shoot me? Probably because I was too popular at the moment. All the other enforcers loved me, they couldn’t just kill the guy who just brought down the *Shifting*

City. They had to make it look like an accident. The second I plugged in that hard drive, I was going to get electrocuted. Just then, someone opened the door, it was Edward.

"She's nearly here."

"Change of plans," I said, my voice tight with fear.

"What's going on?" Edward asked suspiciously.

"I'm not entirely sure. It's the Ecorlius Enforcers, they're after me. I think they busted our operation."

"Ok," Edward said, panic leaking through his calm exterior, "What's the new plan?"

I looked Edward in the eye. "We meet Jennifer in the woods, and then we run away with her." I began rummaging through my drawers until I found my backpack. I then started shoving my most important belongings into it.

"Dante," Edward whispered, "how is it fair that you have to run from your co-workers for doing the right thing?" I stared at him blankly, not sure where he was going with this. "Are you sure you really agree with them? I've noticed this in our time together, you sometimes doubt the Ecorlius Enforcers."

I paused. "Right now, I don't have time to answer that question," I whispered softly. With that, I pressed the Security Override Device. I needed to make sure Edward and I could escape.

As we walked to the front door, I thought about how I could never quite bring myself to kill an imperfect, how I felt guilty for attacking them, and little hesitations I had throughout my career as an Ecorlius Enforcer. "Edward, I think you're right." I whispered softly.

"Then promise me something," Edward said, apparently anticipating my response, "Promise me that soon, we'll come back and free the *Shifting City*. We both need to fix our mistakes."

"But I thought you agreed with the Ecorlius Antidote." I said.

"Yes I do," Edward pointed in the general direction of the cell, "But I believe everyone should have their own opinions, and shouldn't have to die for it."

I thought about that for a moment. "I promise," I finally answered.

With that, we dashed out of the door. We were both unsure of what the future held, but at least we were sure that we were doing the right thing.

The end