

# REBEL OF FIRE by L.M. Preston

## EXCERPT

### Chapter 1

Rei smelled blood. The metallic taste was in her mouth, enveloping her senses. Sirens blared, but the throbbing in her head hurt so bad she didn't have the will to wake up fully. She had to open her eyes. *The accident.* Her last thought before being suffocated by the chilled waters beneath the bridge where they'd crashed was that her sister, EmVee was thrown from the van. Her brother hit his head. Dexter was drowning. Her mom and her twin brother, Reece... what happened to them? It was her fault. She had to save them, get them away from here. She struggled and jerked, feeling like she was fighting to get out of the suffocating waters of the lake.

"Ah!" She fought the pain that coursed through her entire body and pushed herself up. Rei's trembling hands braced her on the hard cot in what appeared to be the inside of an ambulance. Rei willed her body to move.

She tried to open her eyes. One was bandaged closed, but the other was slightly crusted but opened. Rei's vision cleared. She raised a hand to the gauze covering her head. Everything on her hurt, but suddenly, an energy she couldn't explain rushed through her in waves, dulling the pain, giving her focus.

"They are on us!" a gruff curse came from a medic near the light from a window. The ambulance sharply whipped from side to side.

Rei slid off the hard bed, and her knees buckled when she hit the floor. "God! Ah."

She willed herself to stand and pushed her back up against the wall, wincing at the burn in her side and on her head.

The crouching medic held on to a looped strap in the corner of the ambulance van. The medic pointed a gun through the broken glass window of the back-double doors. Several pops sounded, and the doors flew open. Someone was shooting at them? At an ambulance? Why? Rei crawled backward, grimacing at the pain.

“I can’t die today.” Rei searched for a weapon, anything she could use. The bed slammed to the opposite side of the ambulance then surged at her. Rei dropped to the floor, barely in time to keep her head attached to her neck.

The medic yelled a name, maybe the driver’s – Rei didn’t know. The medic fired at what sounded like a motorcycle gang outside. She could hear the revved-up engines in succession.

A huge explosion from a building or something shook the vehicle. It caught the wind from the blast and reeled forward. Rei’s petite form was jerked against the small cabinet of supplies then fell backward, striking her throbbing head against the metal back wall of the ambulance. The motorcycle riders didn’t relent though.

The medic shot several rounds from the gun he thrust forward. The back door flung open then closed then open again. The shots didn’t stop them. The dark smoke from the motorcycles kicked up. They swerved from one side to another behind the speeding ambulance as if setting up for another attack. A blue, glowing whip snapped through the opened door and wrapped around the medic. He fought against the weapon around his neck and braced himself by a foot against the wall within the cab of the ambulance. His fingers wrestled with it as it tightened.

Rei could have sworn his hands turned to claws as he tried to rip the glowing blue whip’s tail from his neck. The medic roared. His teeth even appeared to grow into sharp points that protruded from his mouth. Rei gulped back the putrid taste of vomit as she held tightly to a small hook in the middle of the wall. She must be hallucinating.

“Grrrrr.” The medic released an inhuman sound before the whip yanked him out of the cab of the ambulance.

She had to be dreaming. Rei felt nauseous. This couldn’t be real – could it? What kind of medicine did they put her on? Rei shook her head. She felt clammy, sweaty. She had to get out of the ambulance.

She blinked through her blurry vision while searching for a weapon. She crouched lower, wondering how she would get out of this alive.

Rei glanced at where the medic had fallen before he was snatched from the vehicle. His gun would work. There it was in the corner. She scrambled on her hands and knees to the tossed handgun. She remembered her father’s summer hunting trips and wished she’d paid attention when he told her how to shoot a stupid gun. Rei fumbled with the weapon, vaguely remembering how to fire it. She couldn’t make out what was behind the smoke from the ambulance.

Then two of the bikers appeared within the sway of the smoke they kicked up. One of them, in a black leather suit and helmet that covered his head, gave a hand signal to another. Rei squinted her eye and swore the bike resembled her twin brother Reece's motorcycle. It had to have been stolen or a replica. Rei didn't care. She wasn't going with anyone without a fight. She pulled the trigger, bracing for the kickback of the weapon and – nothing. All of the bullets were gone.

The ambulance rocked to the left and up into the air. “No!” Rei was thrown against the door frame. The bed slammed the wall then rolled toward her. She kicked it away. It launched out of the door. The impact of the ambulance hitting something hard bounced it down and then up. She went flying, mid-air, and fell on the side of the breathing machine. She fell forward. Every bone and muscle on her body throbbed. Smoke and dust from the collision curled around the high blood-red moon. Rei focused on trying to fight the throbbing of her head. A motorcycle guy climbed up into the cab of the ambulance.

Rei's vision grew hazy. She fought to stay coherent, but the ache drumming into the back of her head traveled to her eyes. Rei tried to stand, but gravity sucked her down.

Someone caught her.

“I think she's okay.”

Rei stumbled into the abyss of darkness once more.