

## Shear Force - Chapter 18

By Runa Fjord

### **CW:**

*The Korps and its associated universe were created by @KorpsPropaganda. Thank you so much for letting me play a bit in this wonderful universe. I would tip my RCGs to you but I'm being telepathically informed that's explicitly forbidden.*

*This story is enhanced with a passing familiarity with the Korps setting. You can find a brief primer here: [☰ Brief Korps Primer](#)*

*This book is a direct sequel to my first book, Crystallization. The first chapter can be found here: [☰ Crystallization - Chapter 1](#)*

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*And thank you so, so much to Mabel (@MabelGreysmoke), Grace (@hotbloodeddeer/@lukewarmdeer), Syntax (@Syntaxtakes), Vixie (@VisorVixens), Lexi (@Lexithecow), and Becca (@oren\_1066) for the encouragement and assistance. I could never have managed this without your help.*

*You can find additional Korps stories here, including works by the those mentioned above: [☰ KEU Public Index](#)*

*Author's twitter handle is @RunaFjord*

*The first chapter can be found here: [☰ Shear Force - Chapter 1](#)*

*The previous interlewd can be found here: [☰ Shear Force - Interlewd 1](#)*

*The previous main chapter can be found here: [☰ Shear Force - Chapter 17](#)*

## Chapter 18 - Vulcanism

Dawn finished coiling up the last of the pink ropes, and tossed the bundle into the drawer. She looked around her bedroom one last time. All the clean gear had been inspected and put away; all the dirty gear was in a pile for pickup. The cleaning drone would be by shortly, to take it for proper sanitization. *After the drone licked it all clean first.* The thought made her smirk. She would only have to inspect it for wear or damage when it was returned to her.

Orion was still showering. He had been a very good boy for a long time, and had earned a hot, relaxing shower. The giant eland had confessed that it helped him shake off the last bits of subspace. After that, she always made sure her husband got first crack at the bathroom and had as much time as he needed – no matter how messy her fur was, or how much she was dripping. (She had discovered she liked that part, anyway.)

The dik-dik smoothed out the wrinkles from the pink comforter. She *loved* the feel of the soft, plush bedspread. Then, everything was done and cleaned up except the floor. And there was no point in cleaning *that* until after her *own* shower.

She checked the time. Starshade would be here in a couple minutes. The dik-dik hadn't seen her friend since Geode's trip to Empire two days ago; she would have liked a shower before the cottontail arrived, but the field agent would not mind her being naked and messy. Nor was she willing to rush Orion. Any attempt at showering *with* Orion would only ensure that she would not be ready in time for Starshade...and also that she would need another shower.

Instead, she took the opportunity to just *enjoy* the moment. She was sore in that pleasant sort of way that was less pain, and more a reminder of wonderful times. Their quarters were a riot of pink with black and dark chrome accents. While it might not have worked for others, it suited her *just* fine. The color brought her so much joy. Here, in the Korps, she could embrace it with wild abandon.

Your guest has arrived, Mistress.

*Thank you, Red.*

The doors opened just in time for the tall cottontail in question to bound through, sweep Dawn up into strong arms and twirl her around. Then, just as suddenly, she was back on her hooves, only dizzier. The world spun for a moment before her brain caught up with events.

“What?”

Starshade giggled. “Sorry. Just happy to see you!”

A silly smile spread across the antelope’s lips as she steadied herself. “I’m happy to see you too! You just aren’t usually this chipper.”

The taller woman stuck out her tongue, but grinned. She was wearing what could *generously* be called a miniskirt, and a simple top – cut low enough to scandalize a hero – both in thin black leather. But it was the simple black collar that had Dawn’s eyebrow raised.

“Waaaaait...” she trailed off. A few rumors were starting to fall into place in her mind, as was the special order she had just received from the base commander an hour ago. Then her eyes went wide. “*Celia?*!”

Starshade blushed hard, but looked overwhelmingly smug; that was answer enough. It was Dawn’s turn to shriek and wrap herself around her friend. Hundreds of questions tumbled through her mind, but all she could do for the moment was squeal and squeeze.

When she heard the shower turn off, she reluctantly let go. She dearly wanted to pepper the rabbit with queries, but it would be best to wait for Orion so the story would not have to restart. She hadn’t expected anything this...*juicy* to be the reason for her friend’s scarcity.

“Can I offer you anything to drink?”

“Hot tea, please.”

Dawn eyed her friend. The answer had always been coffee, before, or something stronger. “Since when do you like tea?”

“I’ve been trying out new things lately.” The rabbit blushed as she fingered the collar.

*That’s a good sign.* She busied herself making tea. Though she didn’t have it often, she always kept a stock of barley tea for when the mood struck her. Curiosity was eating her alive, but she let her quarry settle in.

She grabbed her favorite mug – a simple one with a pair of horseshoes and the date she had officially become a trainer – for herself. For Starshade, she grabbed one with a picture of a knotted rope encircled by the words “Ropes And Friends Are Both Best When Tied.” Starshade blushed hard *again* when she read her mug, much to

Dawn's amusement. She always loved seeing just how much of those lengthy ears she could turn pink.

With a distinctive *whoosh*, Orion stepped into the room. The giant eland was *massive*. He towered over two meters tall, *before* counting the impressive twisted horns that swept up and back. His broad shoulders almost brushed the doorframe as he stepped through. Heavily muscled, he looked like a powerhouse; the bit of belly added softness, but took nothing away from the sense of strength he projected.

His reddish-tan fur was accented by thin white stripes across his back, and a striking line of black from throat to dewlap to heavy shaft. By the way she was staring, Starshade clearly didn't mind that he hadn't bothered to don a towel. The bull antelope's nose ring accented the studs at his nipples and along his length. Pink scars at the base of each pec were proudly displayed, as was the lock of pink amidst the short black hair that marked Dawn's ownership.

As she looked up and down the titanic figure, a warmth spread through Dawn. Even after years, she still felt a thrill from seeing her husband. She hoped that feeling never faded. She couldn't, and didn't want to, hide the delighted grin that spread her muzzle as he walked into the room.

For his part, the buck looked exhausted. Given how hard the smith pushed himself in both work and play, it had become something of a perpetual expression. As Orion stepped into the room, his metal-shod hooves rang as if to announce his presence. The shoes were wholly unnecessary for his typical activities, but he insisted (not without justification) that they made him look '*Badass*.' He gratefully claimed the third mug that his wife had set out for him, one that proclaimed 'If You Find A Good Farrier, Marry Her.'

"Star," he gruffly acknowledged with a nod.

"Hey Orion! Lovely to see you again, as always." Starshade was still beaming and openly admiring the nude Adonis.

His response was a snort and a slight uptick on one corner of his mouth, causing Dawn to smirk at the display of high praise. Her gaze lingered for a long, appreciative moment before finally turning back to her friend.

"So. Dish. How the *hell* did *that* happen?" The question, accompanied by a gesture with her mug at the collar, tumbled from Dawn before the rabbit could try to escape the topic.

Fighting a goofy smile and a light blush, it took the cottontail a moment to answer. "Well...after I decanted...I was curious why Celia showed up. My first thought

was that it had to be some official business. I mean she's the *base commander*. Even if she felt guilty, she has so much to do that she rarely leaves the command level. I *had* to know why. So I confronted her."

"*You* confronted *Celia*?" Dawn was shocked at the brazenness. Her friend wasn't usually this brash with authority. At least authority that she respected.

"I was *terrified*. But all my instincts were screaming that there was more going on. We talked for a bit, but after pressing, she eventually admitted that she liked me. I admitted the feeling was mutual. I mean, you know me; I *like* them big and terrifying. One thing led to another, and I ended up having the most painful sex of my *life*."

The dik-dik eyed her for a moment. "But you don't like pain."

With a stronger blush than before, her friend couldn't quite meet her eyes. "I'm developing a...taste for a lot of new things lately."

Dawn paused, several pieces falling into place. "So does this have anything to do with how you ended up locked in the Dominion Club pillory, a couple weeks ago?"

Starshade was blushing furiously and couldn't meet anyone's eyes. "I...uh...got greedy. I didn't make it home in time."

Dawn wanted to push, but by how quiet and squeaky her friend was getting, asking for more details would just result in the bunny getting flustered. As fun as that was, she still did want a shower, and there was a reason for this visit. Still, she vowed that the next time she had the cottontail tied down and helpless, she would get the rest of the story.

Instead, with great self restraint, she looked over to Orion. Her husband was leaning against the doorframe, one giant hand wrapped around the mug. He was drinking deeply of the still scalding liquid. While it made her wince, she knew that the smith had been hardened against such heat damage by Empire. Even then, he would still have felt it burn his throat - but he liked the pain.

Dropping his mug, he looked pointedly at their guest. "Field?" he asked in a gruff voice.

Starshade blinked at the sudden question. "I was just cleared by Nurse O for field duty again. It took a bit to integrate the new lungs and for me to be confident in using them. I can't *wait* to get out there again."

Dawn nodded. "I'm certain you will be out there causing no end of mayhem soon. I was a bit surprised you opted for cybernetics. You hadn't shown much interest in them before."

“I...” Starshade started before trailing off. When she spoke again, her voice was haunted and troubled. “I just...Dallas was the scariest moment of my life. I spent the entire night alone in a way I hadn’t since joining the Korps. ROSE was *gone* and I had to survive with the help of a *Hero* that *I* saved.”

The distress in the agent’s voice wrenched at Dawn’s heart. While she was horrified at how close her friend had come to death, she had been with the Korps long enough that it wasn’t the first time she had to confront the possible loss of a loved one. She shifted her seat, sitting next to the larger rabbit, and wiggled close, resting her head on a lapine shoulder, sharing what comfort she could.

“I spent the entire evening just barely escaping with my life. Then, when I thought it was all over, I collapsed from the blasted *dust*. I know I’ll never be a big villain. But...I just couldn’t help but feel out of my depth. I just kept wishing to be *better*. To be *more*. I kept desperately wishing for *any* edge.”

Dawn stroked her companion’s arm. Starshade’s voice had gone distant, filled with the echoes of pain and desperation. All the dik-dik could do was to show support and let her friend know that there was no shame in fear.

“Then, when it was all over...even as my body was struggling to survive, I was told there was a way to *be* better. Suddenly, I had the ability to get the edge I needed. I had to take it. It *felt* right.”

“I like Adam. He seems very bright. Plus, Celia trusts him, so I trust him. I’m certain you’re in good paws. But, if you feel you need an edge, you’ve come to the right place. Dear, do you want to show Starshade her new toy?”

The blacksmith snorted, then grabbed the small black wooden box from the counter, gently putting it on the coffee table in front of the field agent. Her amethyst eyes glittered in eager anticipation chasing away the clouds that had been haunting them as she stared at the magenta helix emblazoned across the case.

With trembling hands, Starshade slowly reached forward. She knew what an honor this gift was; Orion and Dawn made some of the best blades available in RIV. While her last knife had been from the pair, it had been one of their standard blades. This one, however, was a Special Project. Those were rare, and *highly* prized.

The bronze catch snapped open at her touch. Reverently, she slowly lifted the lid to reveal the contents. Nestled in the black felt was a blade, although that seemed an inadequate word to describe the weapon. It was made with a magenta-hued metal that glittered faintly in the light. The wicked point and gleaming edge would make it effective for stabbing or slashing, and there was a notch on the spine designed to catch

and shear through cables or ropes. The handle was wrapped with supple black leather with a small, inlaid magenta helix.

Starshade slowly lifted the gift out of the case, wide-eyed, turning it over and watching the light play on the unusual metal. Then she grabbed it firmly and tested the balance and grip. Her expression showed that it fit her *perfectly*.

“What’s it *made* out of? I’ve never seen it’s like before!”

“Metal,” Orion sniffed unhelpfully.

Rolling her eyes, Dawn answered more completely. “New super-science alloy that just came out of Engineering. It’ll never rust or corrode. It can slice through damn near anything, so be very careful. Tough enough that if you somehow break it, the lab might be very interested in finding out how you managed that. It should never need sharpening, though if it does we’ve included a special whetstone for that purpose. A normal one won’t do anything.”

Orion grunted in acknowledgement and pride.

With glittering eyes, Starshade looked up. “I don’t know how I could ever thank you for this.”

“Simple. Come back alive.”

She cried happy tears as she hugged them.

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**\*CRACK\***

The loud crunch of a door being kicked in jolted Jennifer awake. Adrenaline flooded the nutria as she fought her way from the clutches of sleep. A cacophony of shouts and snarls filled the room, echoing weirdly off concrete, but her befuddled mind couldn’t make sense of any of it.

She was in a small, unfamiliar room. A rhino had Tony shoved against the wall, pistol held to his temple; but it was the old border collie, holding the shotgun to her *own* face, that held her attention. The yawning portal of darkness of the weapon’s muzzle seemed endless. Fear cascaded through her.

*I don’t want to die!*

The desperate, impotent thought filled her. She didn't know what was happening or where she was. She didn't know what to *do*. Her thoughts chased themselves uselessly, fragmenting and stealing her ability to act and to *think*.

"Who are you?" snarled the man with the shotgun. It was impossible to gauge his height as he towered over her, but she got the impression of toughness and wealth from his clothing. She didn't know why her mind felt it important to note the details – eyes flitting over his leather jacket, silk button-down shirt, and tight leather pants – but it added to the confused maelstrom of fractured thought.

"What?" she managed, not because she needed clarification, but because her mouth seemed disconnected from any conscious thought.

The shotgun barrel pressed forward, grinding into her cheek and forcing her head back down into the thin, dirty pillow. She wanted to cry out, or possibly just cry, but her fear stole any ability to do either.

"I said, who are you? I won't ask again." His deep voice was full of fury and disdain.

It was all too much. She was *going to die*. That thought brought with it a sense of resignation; all the confusion drained out of her, and she still didn't know what was going on, but it didn't matter. None of it mattered. Not the pain radiating from a dozen wounds. Not the unfamiliar surroundings. Not the shotgun pressed against her. She was *going to die*, so it just...didn't matter.

A strange, resigned calm flooded her. Nothing mattered, so she simply answered the question with a flat, sullen voice. "Jennifer Delver."

The dog's lips curled, like he bit into something foul. "Well, Jennifer, I'm going to ask you this once and you will tell me the truth. What the fuck happened to Terrock?"

She knew this would be the question. She didn't have the energy to lie. Her answer didn't matter and she couldn't find the energy to lie. Still, her voice took on a hard edge. "I tried to buy something. He tried to kill me. I killed him first."

"And how, exactly, did you do that?"

"I have no idea." The nutria snarled her answer. She couldn't help it. "I just did. He was about to kill me and I refused to die. So yes, I destroyed your precious little *Terminator*, because it was me or him. Now, pull the trigger or don't; I'm done dealing with your tantrum over losing your murder-oomba."

Jennifer braced herself for the shot. She wondered if it would hurt. Would she even hear it? Or would the world simply go black? Tension filled her as the dog considered her words for a long moment. Then he quirked a brow. "Are you a super?"

Jennifer, taken off-guard by not being dead, could only shrug as best she could. "Fuck if I know. I didn't think so."

There was a long moment. She could see the man considering her fate. She could see him weighing her life. Finally, he stepped back, lowering the shotgun. "I'm Braze. I own this place. We ain't met yet, so here are the rules."

Jennifer blinked. She wasn't sure what else to do. Events were happening too quickly.

"Rule One. If you betray me, you die. Rule Two, if you are a cop or a Hero, or if you work for them, you die. Rule Three. You interfere with or try to stop the fights, you die. Rule Four, if you tell anyone about the fights that I ain't approved of, you die. Rule Five, you do what I say, when I say it."

"Wait, you want me to work for you?"

"I don't give a *shit* if you work for me. But as long as you are in *my* station, you follow *my* rules. Or you die."

"There's a lot of dying involved in your rules."

"I run an underground bloodsport arena for supers, *Jennifer*. Why, exactly, are you surprised?"

"Kind of hurts the possibility of repeat customers...?"

Braze smirked. The expression was cruel and mirthless. "Ain't been a problem so far."

"I agree to your rules. But if anyone tries to kill me, I *will* kill them first, your rules be damned."

"That's why you ain't dead yet, lady. Terrock broke the rules first."

Sitting up on the dirty, stained mattress, she was finally able to get a sense of the collie. He wasn't particularly tall or short. He was decently built, his body filling out the silk shirt. But his eyes were cold and dead. And his lips showed he frowned habitually. She knew he was very dangerous and used to getting his way.

"So you're not going to kill me?"

“You a cop? Trying to get me to confess? I ain’t ever killed nobody.”

“You just put them in a position to die easy?”

A cruel grin was her only answer.

**The Story Continues In  *Shear Force - Chapter 19 Mass Wasting***