

Oceanfront

*The First Resistance*

## Chapter 1

“Can you --- it?” My comms were always shit below 30,000 feet. I didn’t understand why, maybe it was something to do with me - some people could grow plants on what land remained... I could kill a plant just by looking at it. The same was true with electronics.

“Yes. Eyes on. Ready for orders, over.” I hated the civilians we were tasked to work with. All joy and hopeful overtones in everything they did. I guess it was easy to be happy about finding and creating new weapons when you weren’t the one who would likely die testing, retrieving, or being on the business end of them. “I say again: Ready for orders... Over.” Still no reply.

Of course. I was going to have to broach the top of the water so I could get my orders. I knew what they wanted to do, and I knew how easily it could be done and over with... I also knew the risk of waking the thing up. Getting to the surface wouldn’t be difficult, I doubted the thing cared about creatures moving away from it. It was returning that would be the long trip, likely taking another four hours of careful sonar and salinity tracking to make sure I wasn’t creating any excessive noise.

I sighed and keyed my comms. “Diver One, Surfacing. Out.” I slowly maneuvered backwards, keeping an eye on my blind spots as best I could, and waited until I was about 300 feet away before turning on my thrust. I knew I was being impatient and I didn’t care. If they could build equipment that worked we wouldn’t have this problem.

I checked my speed and noise - 70 knots with a sound level of 50 Pa. The best submarines we had were still sitting around 10 knots with a sound level of 100 Pa. These deepwater combat suits, or DCSs, were impressive in their ability to travel quickly and quietly while maneuvering efficiently enough to feel like I wasn't in water. Why we needed this new weapon was beyond me... give me enough of these suits for my entire unit and I'm sure we could destroy any enemy willing to face us. As is we only had enough for Sergeants and up.

Visibility was the only remaining question. Our eyes still struggled to adapt to underwater visibility, limiting the best vision to just shy of 300 feet, and even that is with the boost of the optics within the suits. For me, however, 300 feet is plenty of room to see an enemy and design a quick plan of attack.

Except here I wasn't trying to see an enemy... I was looking at our research vessel. At 400 feet it began to look ominous, but at 300 feet... I could tell something had torn it apart. I kept my distance as I surfaced, exposing my head only and keeping the rest of my suit below water, and tried to look for a ship on the horizon. Nothing. We were in open sea... how could a ship have come in, done this much damage, and disappeared?

The ship was half sunk, water rushing into every gap it could before pulling what remained of the hull under. The destruction was incredible. Something blasted a hole in the side of the ship, destroying the integrity of the structure, and splitting it in half. The types of vessels that could do that would either be heard flying overhead, and would have easily been shot down, or seen in the distance... unless.

No. There was no way the Erilians would send a submarine out this far! This was

Korlynian territory and they knew what would happen if they dared cross that boundary! Except what else could it be? The only other thing that could possibly do something like this was asleep 30,000 feet below me... I had my eyes on it the whole time.

## Chapter 2

I travelled back to my base, the Armadillo, with what bodies and undestroyed classified equipment I could find. The trip took three hours and a travel depth of 500 feet to avoid a hurricane that raged overhead. The tow hook took two hours to makeshift out of parts of the sinking ship, and gathering what bodies and equipment I could find took another three. Needless to say, I was hungry.

When I moved into our ship's wet/dry dock, without a ship, I drew the attention of the crewman who worked the system. Unfortunately, the system was not designed for a DCS to climb out of the water... so I had to make do. I waited for the crewmen to raise the water level, instead of lowering it like they normally would when cleaning the underside of any ship that spent too long at sea, and pulled myself out. Of course, no one showed up to help me until after I had pulled out the bodies and equipment.

“Gunny... what’s going on here?”

I turned on my Captain, a new import from Cherillyn - the primary Marine Naval Base for the Korlynnian Empire. He was young, only 24 years old, and had the lack of experience to match. I couldn't tell if he was intimidated by my being a badass... or because I was a woman who was a badass. “I’m not really sure what’s so hard to figure out here, Skip.” I handed him my end of the tow line and moved past him to get out of this stupid suit. “My ship sunk, I grabbed what I could, I’m getting out of this suit. What else?”

He eyed me and I knew he was considering some form of judicial punishment. I hadn't shown him an ounce of respect since he got here - Marines tend to not respond well to dry-ears who try to assert themselves simply because they outrank us. "I expect a full report when you've changed over."

I came out of the suit in my underwear and noted his quick blush before he looked away... immature brat. It says a lot about a man who can't look a woman in the eye when she's naked or near it. "Listen, *sir*. I'll have the report on your desk after I've taken care of myself. If you don't mind, I'm both hungry and horny so I'll be going to take care of both now." I wasn't horny... I just knew it would shut him up.

Dry-ears, what we call the assholes who never step foot in the water, but expect those of us who do to respect their limited wisdom, all believe that any woman who becomes a Marine also sleeps with everyone they can so life isn't too hard on them. Add to that my rank of Gunnery Sergeant and you've got a dry-ear with the idea of a female Marine who slept her way through the ranks. I smiled at his half chub and walked away.

"G-Gunny! I need that report!" he yelled after me.

I threw up my middle and ring finger, a sign among Marines that we "understand, but we don't give a fuck," and yelled back, "When I'm done, Capitan!" The door closed behind me and I felt satisfied for the first time today.

"Gunny! Nice bod!"

"Can it, boys." Stevenson and Arrons were troublemakers of mine. The two had just made Corporal, which was a big deal because they could begin training on the DCSs, but that

meant that I expected more out of them than when they were Lances. They knew it and so did everyone else. “Why are you not in class?”

Their faces went slightly serious, though they couldn’t possibly take anything more seriously than that. “No class today, Gunny.” Stevenson stated.

“All ladies, all day.” Arrons followed and met my look of disappointment.

I pulled my top over my head, exposing my breasts and making the two young trash talkers highly uncomfortable, and grabbed a towel to dry off. “You boys wouldn’t know what to do with a woman if she came with instructions. Go report to Sergeant Ellis. He’s got something special for you.”

I watched as their faces went from embarrassed to uncomfortable to realizing their mouths had just ruined their day... and I smiled. A day full of enrichment... something bad had to be coming. This was just too enjoyable.

I got dressed and joined some of the crew in the chow hall - the mess schedule was split throughout the day so that we never had everyone in the mess eating at the same time. I didn’t care for the food, I don’t think anyone ever did, but it sustained the body... I guess that was all that really mattered. The rich get to live inland eating flavourful morsels of unnamed variety, while the rest of us are forced to join the science corps or one of the three branches of the military and eat the shit they try to pass as food.

I got up to throw my plate away, happy for the moment when I’d be done shoving this crap into my mouth, and something hit the base...



## Chapter 3

Each of our water stations were self sufficient micro-traveling nodes. The stations were approximately ten square miles in size, made up of 25,000 to 150,000 square foot sections all attached with breakaway tow lines and adaptable tunnel systems that allowed for the station to break apart in the event of a pop up storm or assault. The tunnels could be sealed off from the inside and become short term floatation devices until someone could come and pick them up, while the larger pods sealed off and had slightly longer living durations.

Everyone always joked about wanting to be in the mess hall when something attacked the station... but I preferred the weaponry to the food - even though we could likely use the food as weapons against anyone stupid enough to attack us. So when I saw the armory floating away from the mess hall I realized that two good points of the day were the highest points I was going to have.

I ran to the window, more trying to figure out what was going on, as red lights and sirens began blaring throughout the station. The armory was made up of three different buildings... and I had just sent Stevenson and Arrons to one of them with three of my other Marines - two of which were qualified for the DCSs.

My Marines understood the drill: get to an armory, report to the Master of Arms, obtain your standard issue equipment, then find out where my meeting point is and get there - no excuses. Now to make my way to an armory and get into a DCS.

“ALL HANDS! ALL HANDS! REMAIN FREE OF TUNNEL PATHWAYS UNLESS YOU ARE MARINE COMBAT PERSONNEL! I REPEAT, REMAIN FREE OF TUNNEL PATHWAYS UNLESS YOU ARE MARINE COMBAT PERSONNEL!”

Excellent! That would clear the path for me to get to an armory, the closest one currently floating away making the second one... six tunnels over. Fuck. That was too far. Okay, new plan! I needed to get back to the wet/dry dock platform - there was no way they had transported it to the armory yet considering it took them two hours to inspect it for necessary repairs and general sterilization before sending it off.

It had only been an hour, which really only meant that it would stink of my own sweat... which... kind of turned me on anyway and that was always good for a fight. I made my way down the first of two tunnels, staggering slightly from another explosion, and noticed that a barracks platform was now floating away. The Erilians attacking us were at least smart about isolating units - though I would have split all three armory platforms before the barracks.

Not that I really knew if they had managed that or not. The other two armories were on the other side of the station and they could have coordinated an attack against the armories and now isolating the barracks... shit. I needed to hurry.

I picked up the pace, trying to get a glimpse out the windows as I sped by them. Unfortunately, they weren't very large in order to keep those who still get seasick from vomiting every few moments. Most humans had evolved beyond seasickness being caused by movement - since we were all born on a vessel of some kind unless you were of the rich upper class - but some still couldn't cope with the idea of living in an isolated base surrounded by cold, bitter

death.

I passed through the final tunnel, seeing the dock platform just 100 feet away, and doubled my efforts. Tiredness was trying to creep into my bones, but I fought it back with the will of a Marine who had been in three different wars and knew what true exhaustion felt like. Before the suits, when water combat consisted of outflanking slow moving targets and watching large vessels blow each other to pieces, a single day in the water could make a Marine sleep for a month. Now? Now it was easy... now it was fun!

Another massive blow landed on the base, this time I could tell it was behind me, not too far off, and that was confirmed by the tunnel disconnecting from the platform I'd just left. Shit. I turned to see what was going on to catch the tunnel door seal itself shut. I spun, as fast as I could, and ran as hard as I could. If this tunnel disconnected from the wet/dry dock platform I'd be stuck inside like a child waiting for mommy to pick me up from school.

That was not going to happen... I was *not* going to be useless! Twenty feet to go and another blow struck the tunnel I was in. I lost my footing for a moment, rolling forward, and regained my step. Ten feet and I could see the tunnel giving away... five feet... I was *not* getting stuck, I was *not* going to float uselessly... and jumped!

## Chapter 4

I slid through the door, feeling a little over dramatic until the door sealed shut behind me, and looked around me to find three crewmen staring at me. I got up, dusted myself off jokingly, and smiled. “What? You guys never seen a girl jump through a doorway before?” I looked around and spotted what I wanted almost immediately! Yes!

I ran over to the crew setting up my rig for sterilization. “How is she?”

“She’s in great shape, Gunny. We decided to skip the rest of the inspection - no structural damage and we couldn’t find any issues with the comms, sorry Gunny. We were about to sterilize it for you.”

I waved him off. “No need. I love my own stank!” I took off my suit, forgetting that I had decided to freeball it, and the two male crewman working on my ship looked away immediately. The women smiled and checked me out - I knew they’d get a nice shot of my ass as I loaded into my DCS - and helped seal up the machine. “Thank you, ladies. Do me a favor and help these gentlemen grow up.”

They laughed, the guys blushing, and I turned on the same port I’d come in only an hour ago. I jumped into the water, checked my propulsion for a second - really just showing off - and made my way out into the ocean.

First thing was first: I needed to issue orders out to my crew for a location to meet. I opened my digital input device on my sleeve and input coordinates that put me roughly 500 feet

from my current point but just far enough away from the station that we could begin an intel sweep and design a plan of attack. Some soldiers rushed right into battle... not Marines. Marines were strategic, smart, deadly as hell. We didn't show our ass until it was too late for someone to do something about it. Our pride of point was the ability to create a plan quicker than it took us to destroy our target - and we were exceptional at destroying targets.

I moved out to our point and waited for a few minutes. They had five minutes to be here or they were in trouble - they knew that and they were trained for that. This was it, people, this was our first combat scenario in the DCSs! I was beyond excited!

Two minutes in and I saw four suits moving toward me. "Check in, over." I issued the command over the comms for the suits to identify themselves.

"Corporal Stevenson in Dread 5, over." What? He wasn't trained for that... and in Sergeant Stenson's call sign? That meant something bad was happening...

"Sergeant Ellis in Dread 3, over."

"Sergeant Feerin in Dread 4, over."

"Staff Sergeant Corhealis in Dread 2, over."

"Where is Sergeant Stenson, Dread 2? Over."

"Dead, Dread 1. Everyone else has organized on platform 32 for deployment on non-personal boat craft. Awaiting your orders, over."

Okay. So we had one down, five suits, and sixteen Marines ready to engage on two hovercrafts that can maneuver on water and are equipped with four different heavy weaponry

mounts. All we needed now was a target.

“Dread Squad. Our job is to find our enemy. Once you have eyes on, you report in and send your LOC immediately. I want two scouts at 300 feet and two scouts at 600 feet. Both underwater and above water scouting. Questions?” A unanimous “No, Gunny!” boomed over my comms and my team split up to find our enemy.

I moved toward the compound to scout the area immediately within and below, checking sonar for some sign of life beyond natural... there was nothing. Considering the lack of fire on the station it couldn't be a ship much further than a thousand yards - the munitions impact from that distance alone would create a highly explosive impact... this was more like someone lobbing something non-explosive at us.

“... -unny? Do you read me, ----y?” Why did I always have the shitty comms?

I stopped moving and keyed in. “Gunny Corrella, here. Identify yourself.”

“This is Captain Emerman. There are reports of something off of Platform 15. Please investigate.”

“Roger. Dread 1, out.” I adjusted my course by a few degrees and increased propulsion... and that's when I saw it. There was something out there swinging away at the station, tearing everything to pieces. It wasn't a ship... it was that thing they wanted me to find... it must have followed me back!

## Chapter 5

“Dread Squad! To my LOC, now!” I let the comms sit quiet for a few seconds.

“Command, Dread 1. I have eyes on the target... you’re not going to believe this... over.”

“What do you see, Gunny?”

“Respectfully... a Kraken... over.” The creature was massive. Its tentacles were larger than one of our gangway tunnels between platforms and powerful enough to crush anything they came in contact with. It was like a massive squid or octopus... except it was far too big to be either. It had grabbed onto a couple of platforms and was tossing them about the water, smashing them to pieces and killing anyone inside. The destruction was surreal... I had no idea if we *could* do anything, but we were going to give it all we had!

“Gunny... you are weapons free, I say again, weapons free. Engage at your will!”

“Roger, Command. Dread 1, out.”

“Gunny...” I heard the fear in Sergeant Ellis’ voice... Marines don’t shake, they don’t startle, and they don’t scare... so that should tell you something. We were tiny fish in this ocean, we knew that from the day we were born, reminded of that every single day after, and Marines excelled at teaching the ocean that it was our bitch... but this? This was no fish... this was something far older and far more dangerous than any storm we’ve lived through or any war we’ve fought.

These researchers, these... scientists, they wanted to tame a Kraken, to make it into a

weapon against our enemy, and now I understood why. This thing was, without any concern or worry, tearing apart our home with little to no effort.

“Dread Squad. Engage the tentacles at their midpoint. Try to shorten its reach.”

“Roger that.”

“Dread 5... stay back and watch.”

“But, Gunny-”

I spun on Dread 5 - Corporal Stevenson. “You stay back and watch, Marine. You are not ready for combat! Questions?”

I could see his face through my port screen and he saw mine. “No, Gunny. Staying back.” I knew he didn’t want to, hell, I didn’t want him to, but he would just wind up dead. For the younger Marines the instinct to fight is more important than the instinct to fight and win. There is a slight difference in the two - one requires bravery mixed with stupidity and the other requires training mixed with strategy. He lacked the latter. He knew that.

I spun toward the beast and moved in for the strike. “Encore Unit, what’s your status?”

“We’re ready to go, Gunny.”

“How many standing by?”

There was a moment of silence. “Just us, Gunny... everyone else is either cut off or dead.”

“Dead? So... we have *sixteen* of you up there?”

“There are non-Marines, Gunny-”

“No. Listen. I need you to find this creature's eyes, or mouth, or something, and if you can't find that then you shoot its fucking tentacles until they fall off, you understand?”

“Yes, Gunny!” There was only one Sergeant on my hovercraft team and he was there to provide guidance to my Corporals when combat got too heavy. They were highly trained at what they did, and they were more than efficient. If anyone was going to tear this creature a new asshole it was going to be us!

I found a midpoint for one of the tentacles latched onto and currently smashing what looked like Platform 15 - one of two medical bay platforms - and fired torpedoes. I had to aim directly because the creature didn't let off any heat - there was no way to use any guided missile system to destroy this thing.

The torpedoes made contact but didn't do much damage as far as I could see... shit. My team were striking several spots on other tentacles all with the same undesirable effect. We had to come up with something... we had to beat this beast back and kill it... or it would kill us.

“Dread Squad. Does anyone see eyes or a mouth?”

“Negative, Gunny. Only more of this thick skin spread throughout its bulb.” The bulb that Dread 3 was referring to was what would typically be the head of a squid.

“Keep testing it for weaknesses... I'm going to go in. Dread 2, clear that-”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!” One of the tentacles, seemingly just floating there, reached out quicker than could be imagined and wrapped itself

around Staff Sergeant Corhealis. She screamed in pain as it crushed her suit and then tore it open... if she wasn't dead by power of that tentacle she'd soon drown. Shit.

"I'm going in!" I called out to my team. I needed to find its mouth or an eye or a damned nose! I needed somewhere I could stick something explosive that would cause a lot of pain! I kept myself alert, keeping the speed of the tentacles in mind, and moved at around 30 knots. I wouldn't be able to do any hard banks at this speed but I could maneuver well enough to avoid the thicker parts of the tentacles.

I made it over one of the tentacles, thinking about how a squid's mouth is at its center, and saw the most terrifying thing I'd ever seen... The mouth was thousands of teeth encircling a dark pit that sent a feeling of hopelessness through your spine. I almost pissed myself before I realized that it was drawing me in... psychically.

I shook my mind free of its grip, and it sent me images of destruction, chaos, death... it was showing me what it was doing to our station. I spun and looked... and almost the entire station had been destroyed. A hundred thousand lives... gone... why? I saw a future of Krakens striking down vessel after vessel in the open sea - slaves to masters... to men. It was here to prevent that... it had seen my mind and could determine its own potential fate... it was here to destroy all of my species...

The present day came rushing back and I could feel tears rolling down my face. "ALL UNITS! ALL UNITS! WE HAVE TO DESTROY THIS THING! It will not stop... ever..." I opened a line directly to Dread 5 - to Corporal Stevenson. "Stevenson... you need to go. You need to tell everyone... tell them the Krakens are coming... tell them there is no running... tell

them... we held them off as long as we could.”

“But, Gunny.” I spun my ship at the creature and primed my nukes.

“GO, MARINE! AND DON’T YOU DARE THINK ABOUT FIGHTING IT OUT!”

“Yes, Gunny.”

“Stevenson.”

“Yes, Gu---.” His comms were in and out now... he was already moving away... he was a good Marine. Well trained, loyal, and would follow me to hell and back. I issued a command through my input device letting the other Dread Squad know to arm their nukes and follow my lead... they’d understand.

“Tell them to avenge us.” With my luck with electronics he likely didn’t hear me, but it was past the point of worrying about that now. I thrust forward into the mouth of the beast, setting my comms to transmit to my team, “Semper fucking fi, Marines.” Ignoring the images the monster was sending me, and as I reached its teeth, as I felt them beginning to crush the suit and tear its integrity to shreds, I pulled the trigger and watched as the blinding light filled my vision.