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'Jian'; I yanked that memory from somewhere along with a blitzkrieg quick montage of its proper use.

'Phfft - phfft - phfft - Yeowl!' came from under the bridge, followed by a high-pitched whistling noise. That would be Miyako disabling a hydraulic jack with a silenced pistol, then having the other bad guy knock it from her grasp. New villain plan: - team up. It was a good plan. They had Miyako on one side and me on the other.

By using internal lines of maneuver, they could double-team one us, then turn to fend off the other. All they had to do was keep us from destroying the other hydraulic jacks. Miyako didn't have a gun and I had two tomahawks. Help for them was on the way. Counterplan - Miyako disappeared. New villain plan: - rush me.

It was two 1. 2m/4ft double edged blades versus two tomahawks. Unlike earlier skirmishes against less skilled foes, these two had perfected their teamwork. They were fighting me, keeping an eye out for Miyako (vis-a-vis the snipers) and they utilized their individually superior fighting skills to preclude anything but a desperation defense on my part.

Their added bonus was that I would soon be a target for said sniper(s). Alien memories came crashing in. I didn't fold up. This wasn't at all similar to my fight with Caprica. There was no neurological turf war. My survival warranted a temporary cease-fire between the foreign and homegrown thought patterns. I didn't chop them up into sushi. Hell, I didn't even hit them.*www.noVeluor(m).cOm*

I was getting in some swings though and that mattered. What mattered more was a sudden urgency in their attacks. Then, over the humming of steel on steel, I heard footsteps coming on fast and the tell-tale sound of high caliber rounds chewing up the real estate. By the Holy Seven Martial Goddesses of the Host, no matter how many times I would later rewind that memory, I didn't know how she did it.*wW.nuVë1W©(r)©.Öm*

My savior knew precisely where the leftmost combatant was. He expertly spun to face her, ready to parry and counterstrike. Her blade was... a... the bastard offspring of a Claymore and Dao - the other Chinese white meat - I meant the other traditional steel sword design of China. At first glance I thought that heavy SOB would be impossible to wield effectively in a sword fight.

The blade alone was long (1. 5m/5ft), with too much weight in the top third. I was willing to bet the Seven Pillars special operations soldier was thinking the same way, until her two-handed downward hack powered through his overhead parry as if his steel Jian blade was nothing more than a marshmallow stick. The blow sliced off his ear, severed his collarbone and drove the front and back hard plates down below his crotch as she plowed through his ribcage.

She finished off that display by fluidly following through with the strike so that her blade pulled effortlessly free of his corpse. The last guy didn't lose his professional resolve. He tried to put himself between both of us and the bridge. He successfully deflected the stranger's next blow by switching to a two-handed grip as well. That opened him up to me and I promptly chopped down into his left shoulder joint which ripped open his arm with a gush of blood.

He didn't have the strength left to fend off her next strike. She took his right arm clean off. I put my left handed axe to use and slashed open his throat.

"Bridge," I indicated as I ran to its relative safety. "We need to knock out these devices." The jacks. I was a little worried she wouldn't understand the technology.

"There is a large convoy coming this way," she grumbled after she joined me. "There are also four small helicopters hovering out there, waiting for the signal to attack." So much for needing the History of Modern Warfare update. "These," she looked around to the job at hand, "I don't know."

"I've got it," Miyako appeared.

"Smash these two tablets together and you'll get a rather destructive acidic reaction," she handed out blue and yellow marbles to me and... well, our newfound non-enemy wasn't interested. The ninja and I got to work. She was faster. In my defense, she'd trained for this and I had a sinking feeling whatever acid this combo made was equally hazardous to my flesh.

"You are bleeding," the warrior woman snuck up on me.

"Got shot. Hazards of the profession," I joked dryly. The hydraulics sounded off a final, fatal objection. The bridge beams began to creak as the upward pressure ceased.

"What exactly are you?" she persisted. She almost shook my shoulder to get my attention.

"Currently I am a highly indignant 'attempted murder' victim," I murmured. That was stupid of me. I already knew she had a temper problem. [OKH] "I cannot adequately explain my status to you 'mukil rëš damiqti' (guardian angel), in the time allotted before battle is rejoined."*(w)Ww.NoVeLwÖrm.(c)(c)©*

[OKH] "There is no way you are 'Hatti LÜ' (a man of the Hatti), so how do you speak this tongue?"

She punctuated her bullish attitude by putting her shoulder into one of the disabled jacks and knocking it over. Miyako bounced a pebble off of my shoulder to get my attention. I followed her gaze to the mesa. A tripwire flare had gone up. A quick guesstimation put it halfway up the mesa's rock pile; three-quarters of the way to the first buildings.

From a command decision standpoint, this had all the hallmarks of the quandary facing Admiral Nagumo at the Battle of Midway. Things were not working out as planned for the IJN (Imperial Japanese Navy), yet the prospect of completing the mission - the destruction of the US carrier fleet was possible.

For the Seven Pillars leader, the situation was similar; his assault teams had penetrated the Amazon defenses and were on the verge of separating the Amazons from their heavy weapons. Or so he thought. Thanks to Charlotte, the Amazons had been able to assemble a partial response.

It wasn't perfect, but it put forth a far stronger defense than their attackers had originally envisioned. Caprica and her patron goddess Paranoia had planned for this near-disaster. The flare wasn't set off by the Seven Pillars infiltrators. Caprica had it set off to both signal the rest of the defenders to their rally points and put the leader of the main, road-bound attack force on the horns of a dilemma.

If he pressed the attack, a vicious firefight was in the offing. If he pulled back, he could pull his snipers off the top of the mesa, but his assault team's infiltrators were fucked. They were outnumbered and there was no place to run and hide before the Sun came up. In the end, all the glory and infamy fell on Miyako's and my shoulders. Charlotte had convinced Caprica that I WOULD take the bridge.*w(w)w.noVe1W©)Rm.com*

The Seven Pillars' leader was convinced that his soulless mystic and ten elite troopers could dispose of me, Miyako and Charlotte. Had it not been for the unexpected party crasher, he would most likely have been right. His final deciding factor may very well have been 'hell, I'm already this close to victory'.

For Caprica, her 'Tar Baby' approach was based on her blast zones being alive and kicking. Being buried under a centimeter, or two of loose gravel and equipped with 'pop up' sprinkler heads, the ghosts hadn't picked up on them during their recon. That left me, my new buddy and Miyako kicking out struts under the bridge in the middle of the BBQ pit with the added incentive that no other Amazons could see, or communicate with us.

If we were still there when the enemy arrived, we'd be cooked along with everyone else. That left us in a frantic hurry to knock out the last jacks as we heard the sound of that sizable convoy coming our way. Simply hiding farther down the gulch wasn't going to work. The whole place was about to be roasting our chestnuts at around 300C/575F, spiced up with its napalm-like reputation.

The last jack went down under our combined effort. I was making up my mind about which abysmal exit strategy to embrace when the ghost distracted me. She'd never gone away. Since I was the only one who could see her, it hadn't been a problem. Now she knelt beside the unloving example of why you only have your ear pierced by a professional - ear piercer - and was clawing at his remains futilely.

At first, I thought it was some sort of revenge, a 'beating on her tormentor' kind of thing. It wasn't. She was trying to grab some material object in her otherworldly hands. Love more than hate. I ran out, grabbed up his body and dodged back under the bridge. I guessed the snipers were busy elsewhere at that moment.

The ghost came along, indicating there was something close to his chest she wanted. I yanked up three chains from under his torso ballistic vest. There were three tiny glass reliquaries attacked to the ends. The ghost looked at me with pleading eyes.

"Those are talismans of Gong tau," Miyako whispered; Chinese black magic.

"Those are finger bones," the friendless one added. Smashing them seemed like the sane thing to do. Pamela wouldn't have liked that excuse. I held up each trinket before the ghost. The first one - nothing. The second one - pleading. The third one - nothing. I had to be sure. I smashed the second one. The ghost's shape rippled then began to fade.

She willed herself to continue for a few more seconds of torment. She said something in a language I didn't understand (it turned out to be Vietnamese) then repeated it in Mandarin. 'Thank you'. There was a twinkle in her eyes. She had one last, mad act of defiance to hurl at the people who had defiled her body and lacerated her soul.

We would never know for sure what she did. I had a sneaking suspicion she flew back to the Gong Tau practitioner with the convoy and humbly told him everything was 'A-Okay' at the bridge. He relayed that message to the Unit Commander. The Commander took it as gospel because their enslave spirits didn't have a choice, but to tell them the truth... right?

All we knew for sure was fifteen seconds after she left, the whole line of light armored vehicles and trucks accelerated. I wrasseled up a Type-05, a spare clip and three grenades.