

Chapter 31

The wave of psionic filth that rolled out of the Omega Block was a physical thing. It was a soundless scream that vibrated in the bones, a stench of madness and decay that clogged the throat.

Bradford and Enzo instinctively flared their own psionic shields, creating a pocket of clean air around Anja, a desperate attempt to protect her from the psychic contamination.

Director Lawrence Donovan and his men flinched back, their faces pale. Anja did not.

She stood her ground as the hurricane of despair washed over her. It tore at her coat and whipped strands of hair across her face, but she felt no fear. She felt only a cold, clear purpose. This was not a threat. It was a feast.

She took a step forward, crossing the threshold from the sterile corridor into the heart of the abyss.

The heavy blast door slid shut behind them with a groan of finality, plunging the corridor into a dim, oppressive twilight lit by emergency chemical strips. The air was thick with the smell of antiseptic, stale sweat, and old blood.

The walls were a testament to the suffering contained within. They were made of a special alloy, designed to withstand psionic detonations, but they were covered in deep, terrifying gouges. Claw marks. Some of them were inches deep, scraped into the hardened metal by fingers that were no longer human.

Anja ran her bare fingers over one of the deeper gouges. She could almost feel the phantom agony of the man who had torn his own nails to the quick, trying to claw his way out of his own mind. A pang of empathy, sharp and unexpected, pierced her resolve. These weren't monsters. They were soldiers. Heroes who had been broken by the very thing that made them strong.

"The physical restraints in this facility are... limited, Matron," Lawrence said, his voice tight. He gestured towards a heavy titanium restraint chair bolted to the floor in a small, temporary functional area they had entered. "Our budget does not allow for the constant replacement of psionic grade containment fields."

He was trying to manage her expectations, to explain the brutal reality of his post.

"The man behind that next door," he continued, his voice dropping "could tear this entire building apart if he had a moment of clarity. The only thing keeping him contained is the fact that his own mind is a prison."

Lawrence fumbled with a locker, pulling out a bulky, black protective suit, crisscrossed with wires. "This has a high-voltage electro-shock function. It's not much, but it might give you an extra second if one of them gets loose. As a last resort."

Before the words were even fully out of his mouth, Bradford moved. He didn't say a word. He simply stepped in front of Anja, his massive body a living wall, physically blocking Lawrence's offering. His glare was colder than the void between stars. The insult was clear: you do not offer a shock collar to a goddess.

Lawrence froze, his eyes widening as he finally registered the small, discreet insignia on Bradford's tactical belt. The silver wolf's head of the 7th Fleet's elite Void Wolf squadron. He was looking at a decorated, active-duty Captain from one of the most prestigious units in the Commonwealth. A shining hero of the current generation.

An involuntary comparison flashed through Lawrence's mind: this bright, powerful soldier, and the broken, forgotten husks of his own generation wasting away in the cells beyond. The tragedy of it all made his stomach clench.

Shaking his head, Lawrence turned to a control panel on the wall. He entered a long string of codes, his fingers moving with grim familiarity. "Initiating subject transfer protocol. Target designation: Darius Stone."

With a deep, grinding rumble, a section of the far wall slid away. A mobile platform, carrying a figure strapped to another titanium chair, slowly emerged into the dim light.

The man—the creature—was immense. His body was a landscape of bulging, distorted muscle, his skin covered in a shell of jagged, overlapping black scales. His eyes were pits of burning scarlet, and a low, rattling growl emanated from his chest, a sound of constant, unending agony.

"Darius Stone," Lawrence whispered, his voice thick with a sorrow so old it was part of him. "Former Vice-Commander of the 7th Fleet. S-Class psionic. One of the greatest heroes of the last war." He paused, and the next words were heavy as gravestones. "Corruption level: ninety-nine percent. He is scheduled for humane termination at the end of the week."

Bradford sucked in a sharp breath. He recognized the name. He had studied Stone's tactics at the academy. He had been a legend. To see him like this... it was like watching a monument crumble to dust. Bradford unconsciously touched the side of his own neck, where his own corruption had almost consumed him. If not for Anja, he would be in a chair just like that one.

Anja's psionic senses reached out, probing the energy around Darius. It was a black, toxic swamp, a thick, viscous sludge of pain and rage that pulsed with a desire for self-destruction. The Commonwealth used these men, squeezed every drop of power and courage from them, and then discarded them like broken tools. The thought filled her with a cold fury.

"We have no medical protocol for anything above ninety-five percent," Lawrence said, handing her a data slate. The screen was filled with grim statistics, a litany of failures and dead ends. "Despite the risks, we get new arrivals from the front every day. The war with the Hive is getting worse."

Anja ignored the slate. Her attention was focused on Darius. She watched the pained, rhythmic heaving of his chest, the way the black scales on his neck strained with every ragged breath. She was already mapping his energy flows, calculating the injection points for her own psionic power. The complexity of the corruption was far greater than Enzo's had been. This would be a challenge.

Lawrence saw her intense focus and misinterpreted it. "If you could just... soothe him, Matron," he said, his voice pleading. "Just for a few minutes. To ease his final days. That would be a greater mercy than he has known in years."

But Anja had no intention of staying in the safe zone.

She walked forward, her steps silent and sure, until she was standing directly in front of the chained beast.

Darius sensed her proximity. A new, more violent tremor shook his massive frame. He let out a deafening roar, straining against the titanium bonds, the metal creaking in protest.

Bradford and Enzo tensed, their muscles coiling ready to spring into action at the first sign of a breach.

Anja simply raised a hand, a small, silencing gesture. She turned her head slightly, giving them a look of absolute confidence. Stay put.

She pulled off her black tactical gloves, revealing her slender, pale hands. She reached out, her fingers extending towards the monstrous, fanged face of the former hero.

Lawrence's heart stopped. He almost slammed the emergency purge button on the wall, a button that would flood the room with a fast-acting neurotoxin. He was sure he was about to watch her be torn to shreds.

Her fingertips, delicate and white, made contact with the hot, rough surface of Darius's black scales.

A ripple of pale gold light, soft as dawn, spread from the point of contact.

And the monster, who had been roaring in a hell of his own making, fell silent. His massive body went rigid. The scarlet fire in his eyes flickered,

< Chapter 31



+120 Points at most

stunned, as if seeing the sun for the first time after a lifetime in the dark.



Limited-time gift: Over 40% extra 🔥

Check