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S E A S O N I

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TRANSIENT

Post-Apocalyptic Marines

Purple was all he saw as he awoke with fabric all around him. It was overly humid where he was, his heart racing as he could smell thick musk and sweat. Mathew knew exactly where he was, and by the time he regained his senses, the sock was already moving and tumbling. Everything outside of the walls of his chamber sounded busy. People walking around with purpose, some running from place to place, shouting and talking.

Then, her toes came in, sliding over his tiny body as she tugged her sock on tight. He quaked with anticipation as he felt his back press against the warm, tough skin of her foot. The

little one didn't squirm as he was plunged into darkness. Heat intensified to a dangerous level, but the owner of the sock was in a hurry to say the least.

"Damnit... I'll deal with it later." Alicia grumbled to herself as she grabbed her rifle, rucksack, and ran out from her bunk.

Their military base had been pulled into another plane of reality, another existence all together. It started with a loss of communication, followed by the disappearance of civilian life. Buildings remained where they were, the world looked like it should have, but everyone else simply disappeared. Alicia didn't wear a vest or body armor, an enemy's bullets weren't what would do her in if she were attacked in this strange new hellscape of shadow. Everyone had to be lightweight and fast. Thankfully, there were enough resources in their local area to keep their base afloat.

A nearby oilfield was retaken, kept pumping by some of the new recruits who knew a thing or two about the industry. It

was near enough to a refinery where they could still produce fuel for the base's vehicles and tanks. Food still grew, and the weather was cooperative here still year-round, so nobody was going to starve. A nearby lake and dam was connected to the base's power supply. All locations they had to defend with their lives. In times of shortage and famine, the base still had plenty of long-term rations. Bullets and shells could be produced nearby as well, though they still had to be careful about what they shot and how many bullets they expended.

Alicia, a Jergon from the region, was a versatile Marine on base and a soldier stationed there before the fall. Their base was around 80,000 people strong, spread thin among the new services the base needed to provide to continue operating. Her MOS had changed several times in her career - She was a grease monkey working on the tanks to begin with, and just before the fall she had become a Heavy Equipment Operator. Today was the base's monthly trip to one of the nation's largest

cities, and she was to roast herself inside a tin can for a convoy that consisted of seasoned Marines and new trainees alike. She was the tank commander for this mission, while the gunner, driver, and loader were all close friends of hers.

Their mission: Food, Fuel, and to procure a specimen of a Wraith species they were fighting so Alicia's sister could study it.

"Shut the fuck up, jackass," Alicia laughed over the comms on her headset, "I love ya but that was some stupid shit you just said."

The tank's treads rumbled on, hatch open as Alicia sat back and watched the strange, dark sky roll by. It was like night and day, literally - Shadows churned overhead creating a purple-blue haze while the ground looked bright as though the sun were shining. Out in the desert though, it still felt like the desert. She brought a canteen of water to her lips, legs crossed as she heard her friend's response over the radio.

"With respect, uh - I'm right, and you're just jealous."

Alicia nearly choked on her water, before slipping her left boot down from where it was to kick the back of her friend's head. There was a mutual bit of laughter over the comms, but Alicia felt something else in her boot. That thing from before, whatever was in there had stayed pressed against her skin. It was significantly thinner though. Mathew had been squirming, trying to move himself over to face the bottom of her foot the entire trip to no avail. Face pressed to the side, he had felt his spine and ribs shatter and break. The only saving grace for him was that her position in the tank was one that didn't require a lot of standing at present. Sweat covered his entire body though, and the darkness inside a Marine's combat boot was crippling. She felt him twitching and moving, but assumed it was just a muscle spasm of some sort. His movements were few and far between now, a result of being roasted alive inside

a boot. The convoy started to veer off to the side of the road and stop.

"Alright children," Alicia shouted over her comms, "Piss break. Drink water, don't die, head on a swivel, cool your asses and preferably clean them so I don't have to smell your shit all day. Smoke. Whatever, fuck off, you don't need me to hold your hand."

Hatches popped open in the front, allowing the driver to exit while Alicia helped her other two crewmates out from her own. She was the last to get out, slipping to a seated position on the top of the vehicle. Alicia's sister had come up with some detection devices for the lead and rear vehicles of convoys, an early warning system to keep everyone alerted if something were to come in. Alicia had heard it several times, the voice was stolen from one of the CIWS platforms that malfunctioned. It was a terrifying, garbled, *'Incoming, Incoming!'*

But so far, today was a fairly average day. No combat encounters, nothing out of the ordinary. They'd stop by one of the fuel depots for a top-off on all their equipment on the way back. The tank was a thirsty beast, but its main canon was one of the few things that could topple the bigger anomalies, so at least one was a requirement on every run.

As Alicia hopped off the turret onto the shroud covering the tank's tread, she felt whatever it was inside her shoe pop. The sensation was sharp, a crunch like stepping on a leaf. In agony, breathing through damp sweat and musk, Mathew felt her hop - then the impact. He squelched, his skull smashing almost instantly against her skin as what was left of his body splattered. Organs pressed out, and those that couldn't liquefied inside his body. The sensation was invisible to her though, hidden by the intense moisture of her own sweat as she finally decided to take a second and see what the pebble was.

The Marine undid the laces of her boot, cracked them off to reveal her purple socks - and a deep red stain in the center.

"Shit," She said to herself, assuming she was the one bleeding as she carefully peeled off the grimy fabric.

Flattened, Mathew's body adorned Alicia's sole. After spending a few minutes trying to figure out what the creature was, she casually pulled a cloth from her pocket and wiped him off the sole of her foot. It was partially stained with oil and other grit, the cloth was one she used to wipe her hands when she messed around with the engine. After every bit of him was taken into the fabric, she balled it up and shoved it back into her pocket.

"Eirian might want to see this..." She said casually, putting her footwear back on before hopping back up to the turret. People were starting to get back into their vehicles, so she grabbed her helmet and started smacking it on the metal to get

her crew's attention, "Back in! Stamp your fuckin death nails and lets get this trip done."

What was the thing in her shoe? Another oddity of their new reality, most likely. If it was dangerous, Eirian would figure it out.

Alicia snickered though. It looked like a person.

What shit luck to be roasted to death in her boot.

S E A S O N I

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Mathew / Alicia / Eirian (c) AnirusFere

Jergon Race (c) to its respective owner

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