

We are the
K.A.M.Z.

Jonathan Ghalmi

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Mission

“You fucking idiot, you’d better not die on me.” Joss held a bloody wrist between his thumb and index, no pulse. “Seriously Dawn, the hell’s wrong with you? You fucked up big time.” Joss didn’t yell; he knew that would be dangerous for the both of them.

He took the helmet off his dying friend. Dawn’s long blond hair was soaked in blood from a scalp, and covered a battered and black left eye. “You ain’t the playboy you used to be mate” he brushed the hair aside revealing a shattered nose, he feared his friend was unable to breathe, no amount of air could possibly get through. He put his fingers on Dawn’s throat, he was shaking but he felt the faint and regular vibration of the skin under his fingers, there was a pulse. “Good, I knew you didn’t die that easily.” He reached for the computer on his forearm, trying to reestablish the comlink with Command while glancing at his friend “Geez mate, you look worse than a stalker.” When the computer informed him the link was open, he spoke into the microphone in his headset “Command, do you copy?” The radio replied with background noise, like a transmission from the explosion. “Command, for fuck’s sake! Do you fucking copy?” Joss almost yelled.

Finally, something intelligible came out of the noise “This is Command, we read you lt. Rogers. We registered both explosions, what is your status?” A youngish wom-

only voice asked.

“Hear that, status is FUBAR! Dawn is seriously wounded at the Bravo bomb site and I need an evac ASA-Fucking-P.” He detailed the situation while the girl kept humming *hmmm, uhoh* and *I see*. Joss didn’t pay attention to her moans, he kept talking while hitting a few keys on his computer. The palm of his left gauntlet flashed with electric arcs and he slammed it against Dawn’s chest, sending an electric shock through his body. He kept his hand pressed against his friend and his computer lit with various medical information; it looked better than he thought, he could move him. On the radio, the girl was keeping him informed on the evacuation.

“We are dispatching a dropship now. Evac is 15 minutes away, I repeat, evac is-”

“Evac is too fucking slow! Zs will be on us in less than 2 here. Don’t you have something closer or faster or both?” As he spoke he heard moans; these were manlier, as if frozen in ice. He looked down, Dawn was waking up.

“MMmmmm-mmhmhmhm... MMMMHHHHH-HHHH !!!”

Joss put his hand on Dawn’s mouth to muffle his whine “Shut the hell up. You can’t talk, and I don’t want you to talk.” Joss hit more keys and a syringe came out of his left gauntlet, dripping with a fluorescent green liquid. Dawn looked back in surprise, his left eye a dark hole of blood and traumatized flesh as Joss stabbed him in his heart. Dawn fell asleep in seconds.

“Command here, there are no troops close to your

position. Situation is unstable and-”

“Throw me something stable then!”

“...situation is unstable and we will not risk losing more men.”

“Lose more men?” Joss stood forbidden and the realization came as a whip “Who?”

“We stopped reading Private Cowen’s vital signs. I am sor-”

“You’ll stop reading ours if you don’t do something right now.” Joss replied in a calm grieving tone.

“We’re reading Private White’s tracker a mile south of your position. You’ll catch up with him-”

“You guys know that I have to carry a two hundred-something pounds injured guy with me?”

“We’re contacting Ron for evacuation. There is a snow field halfway to his position; I am sending the coordinates to your computer. The dropship will get you there.”

That was enough for Joss. Things just seemed to be going from bad to worse and anger finally poured out of his words, “Awe-fucking-some! This is absolute bullshit! You-”

Suddenly the girlish voice he had been communicating with changed. “You get a fucking grip Rogers or I’ll kick your ass so hard you’ll shit through your mouth!” said a loud, angry man who tried to sound authoritarian without any authority in his voice “You accepted the assignment, remember? Now you do by our rules, Command rules. Get to the evac now! I’ve had enough of your bullshit!”

Sereno... “Yes Commander Sereno, will do.” He recorded the evacuation location on his map and switched off the

radio, killing the static but not the throb in his head. *Wait that I come back Sereno. You'll hear from me, Commander or not...* He grabbed Dawn and threw him over his shoulder. His right hand kept the bulk body of his friend firmly anchored against his head while the left grabbed his weapon of choice, a regular pulse gun all Command soldiers were given on their first day, only to be taken back on their last; when the bodies were found. Joss never separated from his, a later model, and so far he had been its only owner. And there was no way he'd let someone else claim it.

The insides of the ore refinery stood exposed, surrounding them with a foul smell that emanated from rotten walls and pipes and chimneys that had once belonged to humankind before the zombies took possession of the complex. The contents of hundred-year-old chemical containers had flown into the air in the explosion and Joss tried to avoid the tiny flames that rained like fireflies before dying on the ground.

There was a shelter just behind them. Joss headed towards it but nearly fell on the ground trying to carry his friend. He grunted a command and his suit responded, switching on the physical enhancer. The network of nanites in his body granted him the strength and endurance he needed to lift his friend. *Much better now, ok let's go.* He reached the shelter, dropped Dawn to the ground and launched his GPS. A hologram appeared before him, displaying a real-time map of the area. Two tiny green lights appeared in the middle of the map, one dimmer than the

other, surrounded by the cold blue mountain and orange fires. The extraction point glowed a bright white on the map. There was a path that ran through the northern wall of the refinery; it was the quickest way but dozen blinking red spots informed him that going that way would be a dangerous idea. He sat as far back inside the shelter as he could, hiding from everything and everyone's view and launched a deep scan of the area, hoping it would pick up a safer way.

He rested a bit, allowed himself to close his eyes for an instant. He could have gone through the last 10 minutes of the mission but his mind refused to put more stress on his shoulders. Either he would soon have the time to think about it or he wouldn't care at all. He opened his eyes to hundreds of years of history falling apart before him. He recalled history classes. Through the twenty-third century, the Nagqu industry had provided resources to the whole region thanks to dozen of refineries scattered throughout the mountains. They all belonged to the dead now, when it wasn't to dust. *What a shame... and it all started with a pill.*