



Biggest Little Fur Con 2017



Artwork and fiction
inspired by our theme





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Thank You

To all the artists and authors who contributed to this conbook.

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To our invaluable staff and recruits. You're all champions!

Finally, to all attendees. We love you guys!



Three Pearls

by Twelve
@ TheLionThing / FA: twelve

Blue Oyster Bay was beautiful until the day the Monolith arrived.

Keyo and Kory had been to Blue Oyster Bay before that day, but under much different terms. On this day, they stood atop the giant, spire known as the Lance, Sanctuary floating high above, enjoying the blue skies and azure water that they remembered from long-ago visits, for the smallest of moments forgetting the urgent blue glow the Lance emanated as it bustled with activity below.

Far below the twins, the once-crowded shoreline gleamed white sand in the high noon sun, stretching off into the distance to their right. To their left, expensive watercraft bobbed serenely at their docks, filling the quiet marina. They could almost smell the burgers cooking at Blue City Burger above the growing scent of soot and smoke billowing into the sky from the ever-increasing rubble behind them.

"You guys done with Evac assist?"

The snow leopards turned to face the voice that shouted over the Lance's warning siren. The otter that stood before them leaned casually against the head of his giant hammer, decked from head to toe in his Defensive Aerial Versatility Device and the gear that came with it. He had even drawn the bright blue, weaving tattoos from the left side of his body onto his gear. New recruit or not, he looked strong and confident, even before a background of rubble and fire and twisted metal beneath Blue Oyster Bay's gorgeous, smoke-poisoned sky.

Kory shook his head incredulously. "Scuse me, I haven't known you that long, Colin. Do you always show up looking like you're on the set of an action movie?"

"Yes I do," joked Colin without missing a beat, straightening up and giving his hammer an experimental swing. "No time for that though. We're about to deploy."

"Seriously?" Keyo cried. "But we're Team Beta and you're Gamma. that means Alpha's—"

"It's the strongest Juggernaut we've seen. Three pearls."

Keyo felt his eyes widen. Three pearls? He looked at his brother. Kory, taken aback, had his mouth hanging open as the true weight of their burden found its mark. Keyo gave him a light slap on the back of his helmet.

"Hey. We're good, right?" he said, flashing his doppelganger a grin. "We killed one with two pearls, right? It's just one more. Right?" Kory and Keyo were very talented, described by their peers as one of the better teams on the D.A.V.D. forces. This was urgent. It wasn't the time for Kory to psych himself out.

Kory nodded, uncertainly at first, but then more emphatically.

"Yeah," he said. Slowly, he mirrored his brother's grin. "One more pearl. Let's get 'em."

The scramble alarm began to sound from their D.A.V.D.s, a long, wailing siren. Colin rolled his eyes as he turned to go find his own partner. "I swear, always with the damn panic sirens. Why not, y'know, energetic music or something? Pressure us all to death, why don't ya, that'll help us kill a Juggernaut with three pearls..."

Kory snickered and nudged his brother playfully as Colin continued nonchalantly fussing about the alarm. They had all taken out pearls before, even Colin, who hadn't been on the force for long. There were plenty teams, plenty fighters. The full Evac was going well and while there were casualties, so far they were minimal. The D.A.V.D. pilots could do it. They could save Blue Oyster Bay.

The sheer size of the beast was incredible. Facing their first Juggernaut some years back was like standing

at the base of a skyscraper. Keyo in particular remembered wondering how he was supposed to defeat a skyscraper. Still, he and his brother did it. On their first deployment, they shattered their first pearl. They didn't run decoy, they didn't get supplies. They shattered a pearl. This time, shattering a pearl seemed like a pipe dream.

Rushed instructions came through their helmets. Team Alpha had destroyed a pearl, the beast was weakened, but Team Alpha was defeated. There were casualties. The Juggernaut was the biggest they'd ever faced, the biggest they'd ever seen. None of it was important. Keyo told himself that. The size of the Juggernaut, what it had done, none of that changed the fact that they were going to beat it.

Kory and Keyo were going to run point. They were fast and precise, a perfect duo. Colin would run backup with his partner, a strong panda named Benji. Kory ran his paw along the length of his Chisel and held his paw out to his brother for a fist bump. "Pizza for dinner tonight?"

Keyo had smiled and lightly punched his brother's armored fist with his own. "No pineapple this time." The other snow leopard gave his brother a playful pout before zipping off to catch up with Benji as the decoy group began their movement. Colin drifted his way behind Keyo

"This is it."

"Let's knock 'em out."

No one in the world, not a single person on the planet, could have expected the cursed beast to suddenly lean its head backward, open its mouth, and spew white-hot fire into the air. Not the higher ups of the D.A.V.D. forces. Not the citizens of Blue Oyster Bay, watching in stunned silence from the safety of Sanctuary or the Lance. Not Keyo nor Colin. Certainly not Kory, nor Benji. No one.

"You there, Keyo?"



The webbed paw shaking his shoulder brought the cat back to the present. He looked over at Colin. The currently shirtless otter had a look of knowing concern on his face. Lewen, a white rabbit and another of his best friends, alongside Colin, was holding up a well-lit birthday cake and waiting patiently for Keyo to blow out the candles, though clearly equally concerned.

"Yeah," said Keyo quietly. "Yeah, I'm here. Sorry." Almost robotically, he blew out the candles.

"Hey." Colin's voice sounded gentle and comforting. "You sure you ready to celebrate birthdays again?"

Keyo offered a weak smile. "I guess not. S... sorry." Birthdays just weren't the same anymore. Not without his younger brother.

Coping with the loss at Blue Oyster Bay had been difficult. Survivors—not soldiers, survivors—had been granted the option to leave the D.A.V.D. forces. Living alone in the apartment he and his brother had shared was mental torture. Lewen had saved him. The bunny had taken him into his own place and kept him sane until Colin finally decided a year later that he could no longer handle the D.A.V.D. forces and the three of them became roommates in Oren City. It was a new start.

Keyo almost missed the glance between them before suddenly, Lewen lunged forward. With a startled gasp, he found himself hoisted into a fireman's carry. "What the— what are you doing?"

"Bringing you back to life, cat!" the rabbit replied, his voice cheerful as he carried Keyo out the backdoor into the moonlit yard. With playful ferocity, he unceremoniously dumped his friend onto the freshly-mowed grass. Colin must have mowed it before Keyo had gotten home from work.

"I never met Kory," said Lewen, adjusting his black tank top and white cargo shorts, flexing his paws and hopping up and down a few times to warm up his strong legs, "but you and I know full well he'd kick your ass if he knew you were moping around like this on your birthday. So I guess I'm just gonna have to be Kory."

Keyo chuckled a little. "Lewen," he groaned with a bit of a smile, "you know you always out-spar me. Why do you have to beat me up on my birthday, huh?"

Lewen slipped easily into a ready stance. "Better than beating up yourself, right? On your feet."



Keyo just raised an eyebrow and gave him a coy, defiant grin.

"That how you're playing it?" the bunny nodded. "Alright, I can play along." Lewen leapt into the air, performed a neat front flip half twist, and landed with Keyo's body between his feet. He deposited a salvo of playful jabs and not-so-fierce punches to Keyo's face and stomach. Despite the sadness he had felt earlier, Keyo found himself laughing and halfheartedly defending himself against the totally-not-vicious onslaught.

"Guys. Guys!"

"Colin!" the snow leopard called toward the voice. Lewen was getting ready to start tickling,

Keyo just knew it. "Save me! We can double team him!"

"Guys." Something in his voice made both of them freeze and look back toward the sliding glass door. Colin was standing in the doorway, his rugged, handsome face wide-eyed and grim. With a meaningful glance, he turned and walked back inside. Keyo and Lewen looked at each other briefly before Lewen helped the cat to his paws and the two walked back inside. Colin was staring at the TV, where a grim-faced reporter was speaking.

"—imagery to show you just yet, but we've received word that a massive Monolith has appeared in the heart of Oren City and a Juggernaut has been confirmed. If you are within eyesight of the Juggernaut, find your way to low ground, and take shelter in any available basements until you're given the clear to evacuate by D.A.V.D. personnel. We do not have information yet about the category of the Juggernaut, but the Monolith is being described to me as 'massive.' Stay tuned to News 41, we'll get you immediate information as it comes out."

Colin sighed. "I might have to go."

"Why?" asked Lewen. "You left the D.A.V.D.s."

"I didn't leave in time to get full dismissal. I'm on reserves. If the Monolith is any indication—oh what the hell..."

The news organization finally managed to get cameras airborne over the Juggernaut. It was a raven.

"—three, again, a Category three Raven Juggernaut! Some of the most accomplished pilots the D.A.V.D. forces have are deploying now. Again, if you are in the immediate area, seek shelter immediately! The landfall of this Juggernaut may mean a full Evac tonight, so if you're able, start thinking about heading toward the Lance. If you need assistance or directions, contact—"

Keyo could feel Colin's and Lewen's eyes on him. It wasn't like the memories of Blue Oyster Bay hadn't been with him. It wasn't like he hadn't spent most of his and his late brother's birthday obsessing over it and trying to cheer up for his concerned friends, or like falling to pieces would save their lives should the cable in the back of the raven's neck allow it to reach their home.

He took a deep breath and swallowed hard. Whatever emotions were trying to break out of his chest would have to wait. "I'm okay," he announced, his eyes focused. He could see Colin and Lewen relax. "What's the plan?"

Lewen shrugged. "I'm not a pilot," he said.

"You should be." Colin gave him a sharp, but not unfriendly look. "You're a talented fighter. You're athletic. You get things done when you feel like it. You have what it takes and if we do go full Evac..."

"It's not for me," Lewen said flatly. "I don't do well with things like that, and this really isn't the time to argue, now is it?"

The otter smiled knowingly at the bunny's indignance as he turned his head away with a huff. "Alright," he said. "Well we should all head to the Lance. They might call me, they might not. If they do, I have no choice but to go. If not, we'll all be safe and we can Evac together."

Keyo nodded. After leaving the D.A.V.D. forces he'd had no plans to set foot in another Lance, but the memories... he knew more than perhaps anyone the terror of a Category 3 Juggernaut. He and Kory had joined the D.A.V.D.s for a reason. There wasn't time to mess around. He had two friends here, and as strong as Lewen was the rabbit seemed determined to remain a civilian. Safety was most important right now.

So long as he didn't have to fight, he'd be okay.

Colin's convertible roared down the highway with minimal regard for speed limit signs. All they had brought was a backpack each; Sanctuary would have supplies for them, and as a reserve Colin could get them quick

access to whatever they needed. It was just as well they left quickly; traffic in the direction of the Lance was sure to be insane, and they needed to beat it.

Lewen was driving, and normally Colin would have berated him for speeding, even in an emergency like this, but at the moment he was too preoccupied.

"Yeah, this sure isn't a drill," he sighed, dropping his phone exasperatedly into the cup holder. "Phone's dead. You, Keyo?"

Keyo too was a bit preoccupied. He was staring out into Oren City. In the distance, he could see the blue streaks dashing through the air like shooting stars. A tall, black shadow extended into the sky—the Monolith. The Juggernaut had already made its way a good distance away from it.

He wondered vaguely when this would all stop. It was bad enough Juggernauts had to exist; they seemed to be getting stronger. Ones with a single pearl appear and kill so many people. Just when they figure out how to beat those, along come ones with two pearls. Then three. Were there Juggernauts with four pearls? Five? Fifty? Where was the ceiling?

He had to look away when he realized the blue streaks were decreasing in number.



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"—destructive path through Oren City as we speak. D.A.V.D. pilots are having a very difficult time with this Juggernaut, and we have yet to see whether it has some hidden ability, as did the one in the Blue Oyster Bay attack of year 13. The all-clear has been given to any survivors in—"

Tight-lipped, Lewen shut the radio off. Colin had wanted to stay up to date with what he could very well be facing soon, but he didn't object. Things were looking bleak.

By the time they pulled off the highway, none of them were talking. The Lance was in sight, an incredibly enormous spire about five football fields in diameter around its base, used as a dock for the floating safe haven known as Sanctuary. It glowed bright blue and sounded loud sirens to serve as a beacon for evacuees. He remembered standing with Kory atop the one in Blue Oyster Bay before deployment, briefly reminiscing about happier times.

Despite the building traffic, they got into the parking lot without issue thanks to Colin's reserve status. A uniformed D.A.V.D. officer quickly directed Lewen to a parking spot, and with haste they grabbed their things, locked the car, and walked quickly through an entrance into the Lance's clean, spacious, circular staging area.

This was familiar scenery to Colin and Keyo, but Lewen had never seen the inside of a Lance in person before. He had never needed to. This was his first Juggernaut attack, and though the D.A.V.D. forces had shown interest in him he had never wanted to be a part of it. He had only wanted to survive, not fight—an idea that Keyo had followed since the loss of his brother. He watched the bunny carefully as they hustled among a crowd of other evacuees into one of the enormous elevators that would lead them to safety at the top of the spire. Lewen was stone-faced, quiet, staring through the glass at the growing destruction as they ascended.

The other people in the elevator seemed unconcerned. One badger was cursing quietly to himself at the inconvenience of not being able to use his phone, concerned about some business deal he had been negotiating. A kid was taking photos of himself with the destruction of Oren City in the background, no doubt to post on Twitter later. A wave of anger swept briefly through Keyo. Didn't they understand that people were dying?

"They're gone." Lewen's quiet voice suddenly cut through the strange atmosphere and made Keyo and Colin perk their ears.

"What?" Keyo blinked. He looked out at the scene below. The downtown area was coming into view. They could see the Juggernaut towering above what should have been buildings, but instead were nothing but rubble. The blue streaks were gone.

Colin pounded his fist against the glass, teeth gritted, causing a few people in the elevator to jump "No! Damn it!"

Keyo bit his lower lip as everything fell into total silence. The wailing siren outside the elevator wailed eerily in the background, a perfect background for the moment. Things were bad. Very bad. Colin was going to have to go. And if Blue Oyster Bay was any indication, if Colin went...

Keyo bit his lower lip harder, swallowing hard. "Colin, please," he started to say. "You... if you go..."

The big otter sighed softly. "You know I don't have a choice," he said softly. "We signed up for this."

"I'm going."

Keyo and Colin both stared at Lewen. They could feel the eyes of the others in the elevator on them. The rabbit had his ears back and a resolute look on his face. "They said they wanted me, right? Well look at all this. If you're going, Colin..." He stared up at the otter. He didn't look scared or worried. He looked angry, determined.

The snow leopard sighed softly. He knew where this was going. The elevator reached the top of the spire. He imagined Kory there with them, both of them in D.A.V.D. gear, looking out over Blue Oyster Bay before facing a threat that at the time nobody understood.

Lewen probably wasn't going to fight right away. He was new, and didn't have a partner. Still, he wasn't about to let Colin and Lewen get involved in all this without him. The three didn't say anything when the doors opened and the crowd rushed out into the smoke-scented moonlight, the lights and safety of Sanctuary within sight.

Keyo could feel his friends' pride in him as he reached out and pressed the down button on the elevator.







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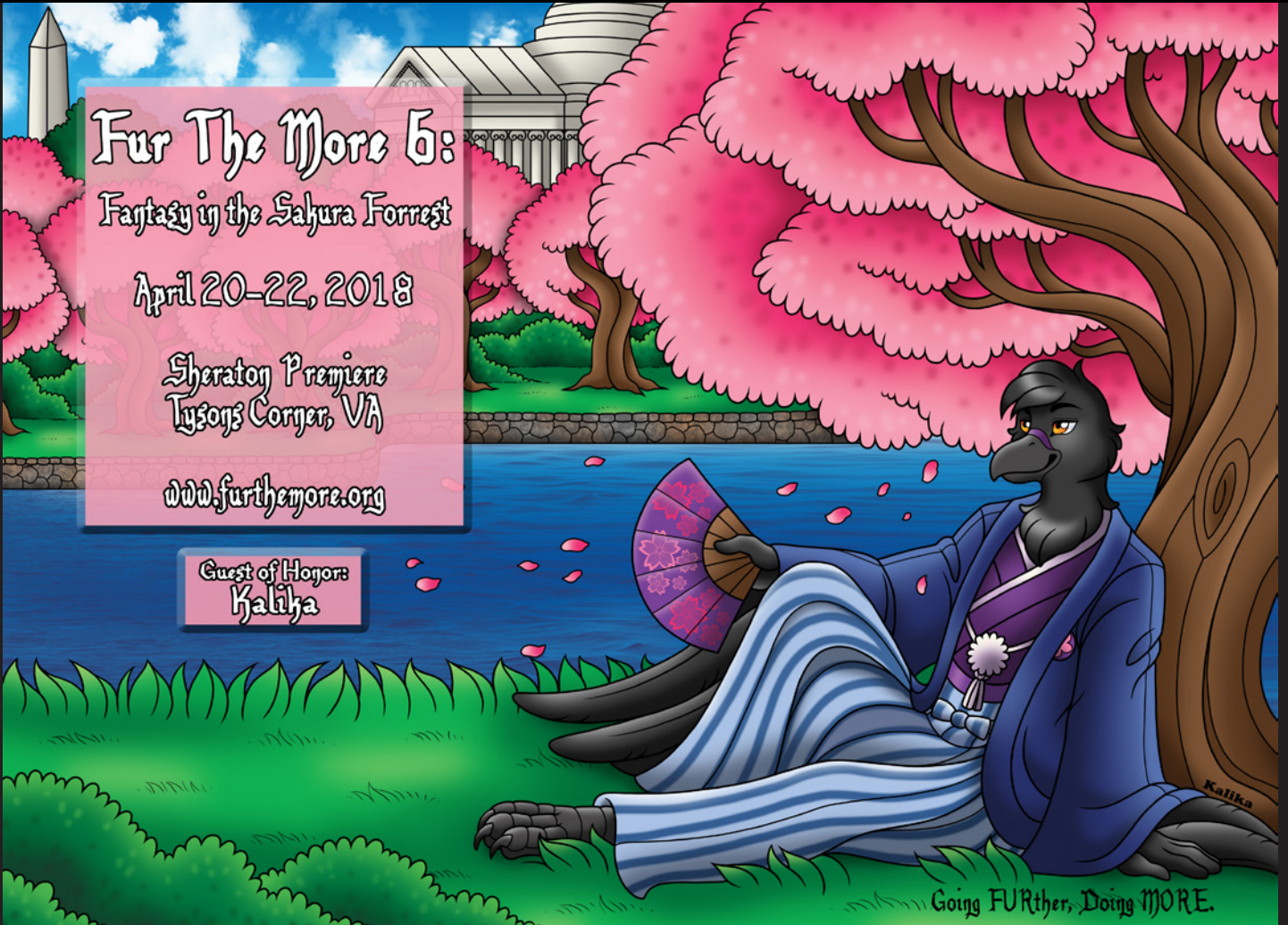


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Anthro Northwest



November 9-12, 2017

Seattle, Washington

Hammer & Chisel

by Angelus A. Glace

Weasyl: holodrom

The rising wail of air-raid sirens split the relative quiet of the city night. On the skyline, a tremendous tower lit up like a blue beacon, flooding the darkened streets with light and brightening the sky. A Monolith of pure, unnatural black loomed against the light, as though challenging it. More lights began to click on, shining out through the windows of so many apartments as their occupants scrambled to evacuate their homes and make their way to the blue-lit tower that lanced the sky.

A boom near the Monolith echoed down the city streets, setting off car alarms. A figure emerged from within the black tower, making the surface ripple as it revealed its form: that of a fifty-meter tall striped hyena. Its empty, white eyes reflected the towering, blue Lance in the distance, and it took another step forward, shattering the asphalt underneath its feet.

A twinkle of light blinked at the top of the Lance, and two streaks of blue light barreled down from the heights, headed right for the hyena Juggernaut. It was a pair of DAVD fighters in full combat gear. The bright light streaming from their anti-gravity engines caught the attention of the Juggernaut, which swiveled its head to follow them as they zipped past it, trying to draw its attention away from the Lance.

"This is Hammer reporting to Lance, we've successfully grabbed its attention." The black cat outfitted in the Hammer DAVD stopped in midair, hovering near the Monolith, just outside of the hyena Juggernaut's reach. A long-handled hammer with a head bigger than his own skull was clutched in both hands. He glanced to his side as his partner arrived.

"This is Chisel, looks to be a Category 2 Juggernaut. Pearl locations are chest and upper back. Ready to engage." The wolf flexed her clawed glove and readied the chisel attached to her other arm. She met her partner's gaze, and they nodded.

The Juggernaut bared its teeth at them and snarled as it turned to face them, looking back into the depths of the Monolith behind them as it did so. The shining red pearl on its back slid out of sight, but the one on its chest shimmered with malice, as did its empty eyes. It took a lumbering step forward and raised its arms, and Hammer and Chisel bailed in opposite directions.

"Alright, we're gonna keep this thing within two blocks of the Monolith. No point to us being here if we just run it across the city and let it destroy everything anyways." Hammer said into their intercomm. He flew in an arc, trailing glowing blue exhaust behind him that drew the gaze of the Juggernaut. He spun to face it, gripping the shaft of his hammer tight.

"That's not a lot of room to maneuver," Chisel replied as she got behind the Juggernaut and watched the lumbering thing turn its back to her.

"We're here to protect civilians, not ourselves. We keep it contained."

"Roger."

The giant hyena moved toward Hammer and swiped at him with a huge, clawed hand. Hammer propelled sideways, out of reach of the swipe, but the rush of wind from it blew him downwards a few feet.

"Urgh, kinda fast." He grit his teeth and regained altitude. "Chisel, are you in position?"

"Just about." As the Juggernaut took a swing at Hammer, Chisel had zoomed forwards toward the red sphere embedded between the Juggernaut's shoulderblades. She slowed as she neared it and braced her stop with

her legs. She raised the arm with the metal claw and slammed it against the pearl, latching onto it tight. She swung her other arm in and placed the point of the chisel against the pearl. "Ready! Get over here!"

"Coming, hold on!"

The Juggernaut's ears perked up and it snarled as it felt the landing. It reached back with one arm, stretching to rake at its back. The other took another swipe at Hammer, forcing him to alter his course to avoid the collision. The delay was just enough. Chisel shouted and fired her engines as she disengaged her claw. She tried to slip between two of the Juggernaut's fingers but clipped one in her haste to escape. She grunted and careened in her flight, tumbling onto a nearby rooftop. She rolled and landed on her back, sliding a couple feet before her momentum stopped.

"Hey! You alive over there?" Hammer shouted into the comm link.

"Yeah, just took a tumble!" Chisel got to her feet and lifted off the ground, engines humming. "We still going for the back?" She zoomed away from the rooftop before the Juggernaut tried to crush her and the building together.

"Whatever you can get set up on!"

"Chest then, distract it!"

"Roger! You just stay alive!" Hammer revved his engines to and took off into the sky, flying several stories above the Juggernaut's head.

"Where are you-" Chisel's voice came in over the comms, and she stopped mid-sentence. "No no no, that move is no good against a Category Two! They're too short!"

"Don't worry, I got it!" Hammer reached altitude and paused to gather his wits. He could see the city spread out before him, streets packed with people and cars all fleeing towards the Lance. Directly below him were the base of the Monolith, the hyena Juggernaut, and the little blue streak that was Chisel. He took a deep breath, then exhaled, and pushed his engines to full power.

The black cat dove, plummeting, blood rushing to his head as wind whipped his face. He squinted against the air and didn't dare breathe. The head of the Juggernaut was closing in fast. He twisted the handle of his hammer, and the head of it suddenly gained weight as the anti-gravity was turned off. He raised it over his head and hollered. "How about a piledriver?" He brought the hammer down with all the force he could muster.

Were it not for the full-body suit of DAVD armor, the force of the impact would have shattered his arms. The head of the hammer hit with a window-rattling boom that snapped the Juggernaut's head down and made the beast stumble in place. Its soulless eyes rolled in its skull. Hammer turned in the air and blasted his jets against the ground to try and slow his plummet, but even with so much momentum expended through the hit, he couldn't stop before he crashed to the floor near the huge hyena's feet.

"Hammer? I told you... Are you okay?" Chisel watched him hit the ground, but eyed the Juggernaut in the corner of her vision as it reeled from the blow.

"Ghhgg... It was too short... for that move..." He got to his feet, using his hammer as a support. He twisted the handle, taking the gravity off of it. Still dazed, he floated back into the air. "We gotta



get it though! Now!"

Chisel nodded and zipped to the Juggernaut's chest and latched on again, putting her chisel in place. Hammer followed her up and ramped up his speed, his vision locking onto the head of her chisel. He pulled back his hammer, engaged the gravity, and swung.

Hammer and chisel met with a metallic ring. The chisel punched into the red pearl, sending a spiderweb of cracks out from its center. Chips of it fell off and floated to the ground. The Juggernaut howled, and in a rage it brought its fists down on the nearest building, crushing the top half of it into stone rubble and twisted steel. It lurched forward in doing so, tossing Chisel and Hammer away. They landed on the ground amid the debris.

"Was that-?" Hammer began.

"Evacuated?"

"I hope."

"Come on, one more." Chisel said as the pearl in the Juggernaut's chest lost its luster. The two of them got a running start and took off again, circling around the Juggernaut's head as it recovered from having its pearl smashed. It chomped at them as they passed, missing them both, but it spun around and swung both arms at the pilots. The hands missed their marks, but the rush of wind made the two pilots collide. They grunted and winced as their shoulders bashed together, and their engines shut off sending them tumbling to the sidewalk. They skidded to a halt, armor covered in scratches.

A shadow loomed over them, and they looked up to see a huge foot descending on them. They rolled, narrowly avoiding getting squashed, but the asphalt that was forced up around the edges of the foot threw them back into the air, and down onto the rough street again.

Chisel landed hard, and her helmet hit her claw, cracking the glass. She groaned, ears twitching, and hobbled to her feet, trying to move away from the Juggernaut as she attempted to reboot her DAVD systems. Her claw was flexing, shorting out, and the glass of her helmet was cracked and scratched from landing against it.

Hammer had been thrown in the opposite direction, and his hammer had been flung from his hands. It was laying a few feet away, and the blue lights on it were flickering. He crawled toward it and grabbed it, using it to push himself to his feet again. He could feel it vibrating in his hands as the antigravity engine struggled to remain stable, causing the hammer's weight to fluctuate every few seconds.

The two spied one another over the tops of the hyena's toes and ran around the back of its foot and down a street as their gear rebooted. A soft blue glow started to emit from the engine ports of the DAVD gear.



"One more huh?" Hammer glanced over his shoulder. The Juggernaut was pursuing them, and gaining.

"I never said it would be easy!" Chisel glanced back as well and grit her teeth as the ground shook under her. "We gotta get up!"

"I know, I'm trying!"

A footfall landed close enough to almost knock them down again. Luckily, the jolt was just enough to rattle their systems back to life, and cold blue flames exploded from the packs on their backs, lifting them into the sky.

"Too close..." Chisel sighed, already sounding exhausted.

"You're telling me." Hammer flew up beside her. They were at the edge of their two-block range from the Monolith, and the Juggernaut was closing in. "Blitz?"

"Risky," Chisel cautioned.

"Not more than anything else today."

Chisel smirked. "Blitz."

The pair zipped forward, damaged gear and all, and soared right past the Juggernaut's ears, making them ring with the whine of their engines. They kept going, about a half block past before stopping and spinning in place. The Juggernaut hadn't turned around yet, and they made a full-speed break for it.

Chisel went first, and in a flash she was hovering against the pearl, chisel in place, doing her best to keep steady without the aide of her malfunctioning claw. Hammer hefted his hammer, paying attention to the way the weight shifted to try and learn the timing of the fritzing antigravity drivers. Once Chisel was in place, he launched himself forward, and pulled his arms back.

The Juggernaut reached for the pearl on its back, trying to crush Chisel, but this time it was too slow. With one well-timed, well placed strike, Hammer slammed his weapon against the metal chisel, punching it into the pearl. The Juggernaut stopped and howled as the red orb cracked apart. Hammer and Chisel landed on the ground, panting as the huge hyena dissolved into a cloud of ash and vanished into the sky. The cable attached to the back of its neck was sucked back into the Monolith, which began to dissolve into the night. The two of them sat back on the curb with a sigh, their muscles sore from the rough fight.

"This is Chisel to Lance. Juggernaut down, Monolith retreating." She made her report and then flopped onto her back with a groan, splaying out on the sidewalk. "Ow."

"Same," Hammer said as he joined her in laying down. "Shouldn't we head back to base?" the black cat asked.

"If I take off again right now, I feel like my legs might fall off," the wolf replied with a groan.

"Honestly? My arms feel the same way." He realized he was still holding his hammer in one hand, and he let it go. "Short break?"

"Short break."

They laid sprawled out on the broken sidewalk, catching their breath and staring up into the sky until it brightened with the dawn.





R/S 103
17

Pierce the Heart

by Rivet Ringtail

@Rivet_Ringtail

Once did fresh year's snow sift through ash and blood,
Black Tower struck, scant understood;
A whisper They were—giant phantoms may
Burst, to drive dread dreams and dead days.

Our humbled world, then so ill-dissembled
From crimson reflections, trembled
Nations from Juggernauts built the city
To flee — Divine Sanctuary.

Through Pearl-powered prowess, our haven floats
high above: a safe home for coats,
A symbol of unity whose voice be
Our furry echo — Liberty!

We waited and waited, tempestuous
Juggernaut, us impetuous
To believe our drear end to be near;
Twin Destinies lurked — Hope and Fear.

Five years our fears grew calm in sure slumber;
Evil dreads lowered in number;
The romantic world of titans made fuel
For pop culture's red-jeweled rule.

Six years silence, Sanctuary's sentence,
Our punishment, a vain repentance,
Relentless incursion, our existence
Shattered, no hopes of resistance.

One by one, three by four and more, we fell,
No weapon yet a Juggernaut quell.
Seething beasts with soulless eyes trampled down,
Crimson Dew — the Monolith's crown.

In blood-matted fur and war-torn world, we cried —
Til one day, our Arthur arrived;
Stone Lance shattered, and Juggernaut did yield.
Our own Excalibur we wield!
Soldiers! Our fearsome times shall be no more!
It's our turn now to break their core!
Their shattered Pearls, our sapphire source of light —
Pierce the heart! Take back the fight!

Pierce the heart! Make hope return! D.A.V.D. trail
Of blue bring Freedom and prevail!
Chisels and Hammers and blue Lances hail
Upon our foes! This is our tale!

Wield Levi's eyes, so undismayed to slay,
Strike till their rage has died away.
Paw to paw, claw to claw, fly true in blue,
Pierce the heart! Stab, hammer and hew —
Us the many, the monsters the few!



For the Greater Good

by Nightdragon0

Twitter / FA / Weasy!: nightdragon0

Pain...darkness...ringing...the smell of fumes...voices...

"Ignition, do y...bzzzttt...copy? Answer me please!"

Blindly fumbling about, the German Shepard got a hold of his fallen helmet. The normally blue flickering LEDs were stained red with his blood. He was finally becoming aware of where he was now: the floor of a dark office building. Surrounding him were the pieces of the desk he'd smashed into, along with the fragments of the glass window he'd been thrown into. Shaking the stars out of his vision, Ignition tapped the communication device in his helmet.

"It's just a flesh wound." He rasped, pulling off the blue bandana he normally wore around his neck and using it to bandage his bleeding right shoulder. The shoulder pad of the armor had broken off, but his chisel unit was otherwise intact.

"Christ, your vitals flatlined in the system earlier! We thought we'd lost you!"

"You know that thing can be glitchy." The D.A.V.D. pilot muttered, fitting his helmet back into place. There was a huge crack across the visor, but it was otherwise operational. "What's our status command? Mirage and I shattered the damn Pearl!"

"The Juggernaut is still active. So, that means it has another one..."

"Damn! This is getting a little out of hand for our local unit! Is Mirage OK? I remember her being tossed away as well! And have we gotten word from Sanctuary yet?"

"Slow down! The first question: her vitals are stable, but she's not moving. Sending a location marker to your HUD now."

Ignition walked to the window and glanced out. The destruction seemed worse than before. Even more fires and destroyed buildings as far as eye could see. Along with the darkened outline of the Juggernaut in the distance.

"And the second question: Sanctuary is occupied in Georgia with another attack. They're sending a detachment to reinforce us, but they're still enroute."

"Well, Huston we have a problem too dammit!" Ignition retorted.

"Our other units have been either disabled or forced to fall back and aid in civilian evacuation. The Juggernaut hit the factory district. Volatile gases and fuels are in danger of going off. You need to retrieve your partner and get out of there."

Ignition shuffled, kicking a metal piece on the floor. It was his Claw unit, which he retrieved and reattached to his armor.

"I'll get Mirage, but I'm not falling back." The G-Shep grimaced. "The entire factory district going up in flames would make things even worse."

"Ignition! You can't take that thing on by yourself..."

Click Ignition shut the communication off. "Sorry command, but there are some things I just have to do."

Blue streams of light emerged as the G-Shep activated the flight unit of his D.A.V.D. gear. Leaping out the

window, Ignition took off into the night. His partner's tracker was somewhat close to the Juggernaut's location. Zipping above and between the buildings (and the remains of them) also allowed him a moment of thought.

A quick glance at the blue streaks of light left in his wake brought him back to the memory of a voice.

"I can fly faster on my own wings! But, hell this makes me feel alive!"

Ryakas...heck of a crazy dragon. But he's gone now, thanks to me...

"Mirage!"

The white furred wolf was tangled in a large nylon netting and dangling off a balcony. Her Hammer weapon lay on the street below.

"Mirage! Hey! Get a hold of yourself!" Ignition braced himself against the wall, using his Claw unit to grip on.

"Ughhh...sorry..." The wolf stirred. "Who the heck hangs this thing off their balcony?"

"I know you've been tied up here..." Ignition whipped out a combat knife and began cutting through the webbing. "But did you see another Pearl?"



"Back of the neck..." Mirage muttered. "After it bashed you away, I was trying to locate it."

"Hang on! I'll get you free. And then, we're going right back at it..."

Thoom! Thoom! Both froze as the building vibrated.

Appearing from a cloud of smoke was the Juggernaut's head, glaring with its pupilless eyes over the top of an adjacent building. On its chest were the shattered remains of a Pearl, the result of their earlier attack on the titan. The creature appeared almost Sergal-like in body structure, only colored black and red, with spikes lining its back and massive tail. The Juggernaut seemed to notice the pair, letting off a terrifying roar.

Having gotten his partner's arm free, Ignition placed the dagger into her claws.

"Get yourself out!" Ignition ordered. "I'll distract it till you're ready."

"No! Wait!" Mirage protested, but Ignition had already kicked off the wall.

Sweeping downwards to retrieve his partner's fallen Hammer weapon, Ignition bounded up and towards the Juggernaut's face. Snarling, the creature brought both claws together, attempting to squash the D.A.V.D. pilot between them. Ignition deactivated his flight unit for a second, causing the Juggernaut to miss as he dropped. He just as swiftly reactivated it and shot up, swinging the Hammer weapon with a yell of fury.

That caught the Juggernaut on the underside of its jaw, seemingly disorientating it. The force of the blow also caught Ignition off guard, causing him to drop the weapon to the streets below. He didn't have much time to think about however. The G-Shep swung around, flipping to the top of the creature's head. He sprinted across its surface and fired up his flight unit, soaring off as the creature's claws came down upon him. Looping back, he scanned for the creature's weak point at the back of its neck.

"Ignition! I'm here!" Mirage's voice beeped over the commlink. "And could you treat my Hammer right if you're gonna borrow it, dammit!"



"You know I like it hard!" Ignition chuckled.

The blue streaks of his partner's flight unit were visible as the creature swatted about. Using that distraction, Ignition redirected his chisel unit's targeting systems.

The luminescent red glow was just barely visible against the creature's red markings. Setting his flight unit to full speed, Ignition charged towards it. The tips of his claw unit scraped into the Pearl's surface as he gripped on and drove the Chisel unit at the Pearl with all his might.

"Mirage! I'm in position...Garrgghhh!"

That was as far as he got before a massive hand clamped down around him. The G-Shep was roughly yanked off, leaving the Chisel stuck in the Pearl.

"Ignition! Argh!" Mirage was forced to take evasive action as the Juggernaut spewed a breath of flames in her direction. She barely got away, before

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scraping against the side of a building and crashing to the ground. While the flames quickly stopped, the Juggernaut swiftly brought the struggling Ignition to its tooth-lined maw.

"Gargh! Argh! I'm so not into this OK?!"

The jaws began to clamp down on him. He could smell stanch of the putrid sulfurous breath.

"I'll give you indigestion! I swear to God!" Ignition screamed as a final act of defiance.

"Justice Rains from Above!"

Wait...that voice?! That was all Ignition could comprehend before his world was rocked by explosions. He was flung towards the ground and snatched out of the air by Mirage. Dizzy with tension, all Ignition could see were missiles and explosions all around as Mirage zipped through the air. A final explosion knocked both out of the air, sending the pair tumbling and rolling onto the street. The city block behind them had been utterly devastated.

Another huge shape blocked out their sight of the Juggernaut before it latched on to the creature, gripping both its arms and forcing it backwards. The stunned D.A.V.D. pilots could only stop and stare at what had come to save them: a Goliath. The white and red mech seemed to have been designed based off a quadruped dragon mixed with a fighter jet. The mech was currently standing up on its hind legs, using its forelimbs to wrestle with the Juggernaut.

Roaring, the Juggernaut spewed its flame breath at the Goliath. The mech responded by reconfiguring a wing into a shield, redirecting the flames away from the cockpit. The Juggernaut seemed to pause in surprise, to which the mech took advantage of and headbutted the creature. It followed that up with another barrage of missiles, which took both the Juggernaut down, along with many of the surrounding buildings.

"What the hell?!" Ignition & Mirage had to scramble away and fly up above the destruction.

"Sorry about nearly team killing, but it was either that or let you end up as Juggernaut chow." A familiar voice came over his commlink. It wasn't a channel from command though.

"Ryakas?" Ignition gasped. "Ryakas...you...you're alive? Piloting that piece of junk?"

"This piece of junk just saved your life, old partner." The dragon growled.

The Juggernaut had begun to pull itself to its feet and the mech responded by charging into the creature, wrapping its body and tail around the Juggernaut to drag it down. As the creature collapsed, the mech grabbed it by the legs and swung it in an arc, smashing the creature into another set of buildings.

"Think we should just let them fight?" Mirage whispered.

"They're gonna level the city at double the rate if we do that." Ignition replied. He watched as the Juggernaut attempted to rise, but the mech simply charged through a building and rammed it in the chest. That sent the Juggernaut spiraling into yet another building.

"Come on Ignition! Work with me for old times sake!" Ryakas insisted over the commlink. His mech now had the Juggernaut in a headlock, with the mech's long tail wrapped around the creature's legs to immobilize it.

"Ignition, the system reading shows your Chisel still stuck in the Pearl." Mirage tapped his shoulder. "If you can just steady it, I can take it out!"

"All right, let's do this." Ignition nodded. "And that goes for you too Ryakas!"

"Now the hunters have been rallied!" Ryakas replied. "Let's do it!"

Ignition sped towards the back of the creature's neck, bounding off the shoulder of Ryakas' mech. In passing,

he shot a glance at his former D.A.V.D. partner, visible through the cockpit on the mech's dragon head. With a roar, he leapt onto the Pearl, clamping his Claw unit down and wrapping his other arm around the Chisel unit to steady it.

"Mirage!"

"Hammer Down!"

Ignition glanced up as Mirage rocketed towards the target. For a moment, he imagined Ryakas' silhouette over her, roaring his cheesy 'Justice Rains from Above!' catchphrase, like when the dragon was his Hammer partner.

The sound of the Pearl shattering was music to his ears. With a final howl, the Juggernaut collapsed and begun dissolving. But Ignition had already landed on the Goliath's shoulder, with Mirage on the opposite end. Returning the mech to its default position on all fours, Ryakas stood up and opened the cockpit window.

"Why didn't you tell me? Contact me? I thought you were dead!" Ignition yelled. "We all did!"

"I kinda was. I got better though. They had the technology to rebuild me, you know?" The black dragon stepped forward more so that Ignition could see better. His arms, legs, tail, wings...all were clearly mechanical prosthetics.

"Who?!"

"Our benefactors. You think these mechs come from Walmart or something? Maybe Japan though, haha!" Ryakas flopped back into his seat and closed the cockpit window. "Despite what Sanctuary might tell you, we're still working towards the greater good. Just remember that, partner..."

The mech's forelimbs suddenly grabbed Ignition and Mirage. The fingers were surprisingly agile and separated the D.A.V.D. pilots from their flight packs.

"Hey! What the?!" Ignition yelled as the mech took to the air.

"Sorry, but I can't have you two tracking me." Ryakas continued to speak over the commlink.

"Wait! You're not going to drop us, are you?" Ignition cried, feeling surprisingly naked so high up without his flight unit. Mirage too had a worried look on her face.

"Who do you take me for? Smaug?" Ryakas laughed. "I just felt that you doggos stink enough to need little bath."

Ignition realized that they were now over the waterfront.

"Oh son of a b****.... Aaaarrggghhhhhh!"

Ryakas flew his mech low and dunked the D.A.V.D. pilots into the cold water. By the time the pair had spluttered to the surface, the mech was but a speck disappearing into the sky.

"So, that was your old partner?" Mirage commented as they treaded water. "Quite the charmer, I see."

"For the greater good, huh." Ignition muttered. "Come on Mirage, let's get to shore. I'm more worried about the report we're going to have to write..."



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Fighting the Fog

by Indigo Rho

FA: indigorho

Tobias panted as his eyes darted across the endless expanse of fog below, listening for the sounds of heavy pawsteps amidst the blaring evacuation sirens. Nothing. The last hour had felt like an eternity for the frustrated zebra. A Juggernaut resembling a salamander was lurking somewhere nearby, nearly seventy meters tall yet far shyer than anything the D.A.V.D. pilot had ever personally faced. His only remaining comrade was skimming the streets in a five block radius in the hopes of luring their target out, but the Juggernaut hadn't been taking the bait at all.

Suddenly a brief flash of red pierced the fog, and Tobias dove. The lights on his suit caught the reflection of the Juggernaut's pearl again, giving the zebra just enough direction to firmly plant his clawed glove into its base. The slick surface of the salamander Juggernaut's skin hindered Tobias' attempts to maintain his grip, but he was just barely able to hold on thanks to his jets, whose blue flare served as a convenient beacon. For some reason the Juggernaut didn't try to swat Tobias away, and instead broke into a sprint that rattled nearby buildings.

"Ethan I'm on a pearl, top of the forehead, it's making a run for it!" Tobias yelled over his comms, positioning his chisel.

"Incoming!"

Tobias saw the fuzzy glow of his partner closing in through the fog, the lion's teeth visibly clenched as he made the desperate, nearly blind swing with his hammer; his hit wasn't clean, but it was enough. Ethan's hammer slammed into the chisel attached to Tobias' arm, driving it in just deep enough to shatter the pearl. The Juggernaut staggered from the strike, but didn't stop completely, recovering quickly and increasing its sprint. Ethan and Tobias both shouted in triumph, until they were interrupted by the Juggernaut abruptly leaping into the air. With the pearl crumbling, Tobias no longer had anything to hold onto, rolling over the Juggernaut's head and hitting the cable connecting to the creature's neck hard, before tumbling towards the ground.

Ethan rocketed after the fallen zebra, adjusting the gravity of his hammer to speed his descent and reach Tobias. His paw grabbed a hold of his comrade just in time, his D.A.V.D. unit struggling just slightly to handle the added load. A thunderous splash echoed nearby as the Juggernaut finished diving back into the massive lake that bordered the city, and Ethan rocketed upwards once more to evade the incoming wave of water, clearing the fog and landing on the closest rooftop.

Tobias groaned as he came to his senses, his body aching. He let out a pained laugh. "I'm...I'm gonna guess that wasn't the last pearl, was it?"

The lion had braced himself on his hammer, shaking his head. "There's one on the back of its neck still, spotted it when you fell."

"Damn." They'd made progress, but at an agonizing pace. The Juggernaut had appeared in the middle of the lake over an hour ago, bringing with it a cloud of fog that had engulfed the entire city and provided it the perfect cover. Four other D.A.V.D. pilots had been downed during that time, leaving Tobias and Ethan as the only immediate hope for the city. Tobias could only imagine how much worse the situation would be if the Juggernaut weren't acting so abnormally. The giant salamander hadn't rampaged towards the city center like previous attacks, or made any visible attempt to flatten entire blocks. Instead it seemed to be sneaking inland to retrieve debris, which it promptly brought back to the lake.

"Ten minutes, right? Ten minutes in the lake and then it makes landfall again." Tobias asked, doubting his memory after the shakeup.

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"Seems that way," Ethan sighed. "A few minutes to catch our breaths at least."

Tobias looked off into the distance, where the skyscrapers of downtown rose above the fog, and where the immense Lance shone as it scaled even higher. He wondered how much of the populace was huddled there already, waiting for the towering Monolith that brought the Juggernaut to finally dissipate, waiting to return to their homes, waiting to see if they still had a home.

"One more pearl, just one more pearl and we end this." Tobias rose to his hooves.

"That depends on whether it only has one left. No one's gotten a solid look at this thing, for all we know it had four to begin with, maybe even five," Ethan said. "The sheer extent of this fog just seems too great for a mere Category Three."

"Fours and Fives level cities, this thing is—I don't know what this thing is!" Tobias fumed, trying to regain his composure. "I swear it's just taunting us."

Ethan let the zebra vent. He understood the frustration, the fear they would fail the city and have to wait for Sanctuary to arrive and relieve them. The lion took a deep breath and checked over his gear before lighting up his jets again. "C'mon, let's do a flyby of the lake, see if we can ambush the Juggernaut while he's above the surface."

They'd tried the tactic before with no success, but Tobias wasn't willing to give up. He took a moment to calm himself while powering up his suit, praying they'd make progress this time around. The pair soared in the direction they assumed the Juggernaut had vanished, listening for splashing or roars, anything. As they'd rested the fog had thinned out somewhat. Street lights from the floating bridge that crossed the massive lake were finally visible again, albeit faint, an uninterrupted line proving it remained intact. The horrible sound of metal scraping on metal suddenly broke through the evacuation sirens.

"That's gotta be the Juggernaut! Let's stick with the bridge till we reach it and hope the racket keeps up!" Ethan directed, before streaking towards their mark.

The screeching was joined by splashing water as they raced closer to the center of the lake. Tobias' eyes darted left and right, convinced every lull in the noise would precede the salamander rising up in front of them. While he didn't spot anything in the lake itself, a vague, dark shape atop the floating bridge gradually gained his—and Ethan's—attention. The fuzzy globes of light from the street lamps nearest the mystery object flickered, and Tobias swore they were lower than the others, too.

Sure enough, the outline of a ship soon became visible, its weight enough to dip the bridge but not break it. Holes, dents, and barnacles marred what remained of the ship's hull, a twisted deck gun serving as one of the few hints of its former purpose.

"Damn, one of the sunken destroyers from the city's first Juggernaut attack," Tobias almost whispered. Half the city had been destroyed back then by a one pearl horse that'd spent hours hurling its own body into buildings, tanks, and helicopters. No one knew how to defeat Juggernauts then, but the small naval fleet had done everything possible to distract the monster while chaotic evacuations commenced.

The D.A.V.D. pilots slowed as they approached the ship, gliding over the still-soaked wreckage. A second ship rested just beyond it, split in two. Without warning a giant claw broke through the fog and grabbed the back half of the other wreck, the bridge swaying and creaking as street lamps were snapped apart. Tobias and Ethan swiftly dove for cover. The sound of grinding metal returned, almost deafening at this range.

"What the hell is this thing doing?" Tobias asked, keeping a nervous eye out for escape routes as the floating bridge bobbed up and down.

"I wouldn't waste time worrying about it, even the experts are baffled by their actions." Ethan switched over

his comms. "Lance, this is Hammer One. Chisel Three and I shattered another pearl, unknown number remain, one more confirmed. Over."

Both Tobias and Ethan's helmets received the response. "Confirmed, Hammer One. Sanctuary ETA is less than an hour, you're advised to maintain observation and stand-by for their relief squads. Over."

Ethan mouthed a silent curse. "Tobias, I'm not giving this thing free reign of the city for another hour. We've got surprise on our side for once, we can shatter the pearl."

Tobias braced himself on debris as an unseen wave rocked the bridge, before aggressively nodding. "We've got this. We've got this."

"Hammer One, do you read. Over."

"Alright. Let's assume the Juggernaut's bringing the wrecks to wherever the source of that horrible noise is. Even it won't be able to just grab the intact destroyer with one claw, it'll need to use both." Ethan tried speaking with as much confidence as he could muster. "When it does, we'll have a clear view of the pearl on the back of its neck, and it'll have to waste time letting go of that ship before it can swat us away."

Tobias grinned. "Yeah. Easiest...easiest pearl of the day."

"Hammer One, do..." Both pilots reduced the incoming comms volume to a murmur.



The reappearance of the Juggernaut's claw was expected, but Tobias and Ethan still shook as the last chunk of the other destroyer was roughly crunched before vanishing into the fog. Most of the Juggernaut itself was still shrouded, but the shimmer from its pearl flashed occasionally, giving the pilots hope. More grinding metal, more splashing, more waves rocking the bridge. Tobias and Ethan practically held their breaths as they waited for their moment to strike.

Just as Ethan had predicted, two claws breached the fog, along with the rest of the Juggernaut. For the first time since the attack began, the pilots got a somewhat solid look at their attacker. The salamander's body was mostly black with numerous dark blue spots. Its eyes were pale white, and what could be best described as a satisfied smile was on its face. Small craters on its forehead and chest marked where two red pearls had once been, and the pilots breathed a sigh of relief as they failed to spot anymore elsewhere on its body above the waterline.

The Juggernaut carefully grabbed a hold of the shipwreck with both claws,

apparently far more concerned with its condition than the previous one's. Tobias and Ethan remained unnoticed, and as soon as the Juggernaut had its back turned they went into action. Tobias darted towards his target before the fog could conceal it, zipping behind the trailing Monolith cable and latching onto the last pearl with surprising ease. His presence was noticed right away by the beast, who twisted in surprise and released his prize, the ship crashing back into the lake with a loud splash. The chisel on Tobias' arm was already deployed by then.

Ethan roared towards the pearl, shrugging off the wall of spray sent up from the splash, and swung his hammer true. The heavy cling and crack that followed were the most soothing thing either pilot had heard all day. An angry hiss erupted from the Juggernaut and it stumbled, Tobias breaking away just as the monstrosity began crumbling into ash.

The D.A.V.D. pilots soared over the lake in formation, almost unable to believe the ordeal was over. They could see the fog dispersing just as rapidly as the Juggernaut had, and the ominous Monolith itself retreated into the sky, confirming their victory. As the fog cleared they spotted a dark shadow in the lake. Fearing a second threat, Tobias and Ethan instinctively readied their gear for a fight, but quickly relaxed when their "foe" came into full view. Floating precariously on the waters was an immense mishmash of debris. Boats, billboards, trees, all crudely bound or impaled together to form an artificial island...or a raft. The creation appeared flimsy at best.

"This is what the Juggernaut was doing this entire time?" Tobias looked down in disbelief.

Ethan was just as confused, but even thinking about what purpose the giant raft would have served made him feel oddly uneasy. "Like I said, not worth worrying about. Alright, let's head back to land. We need to see how much damage that thing caused building it."

Tobias pulled his gaze away from the raft and towards the city, which he could now see was dotted by the dark plumes from the sporadic fires that had been unreachable while the fog existed. "Yeah. Focusing on the things that make sense is good." He let out an unsure chuckle.

The victorious pilots flew away from the mysterious raft, a long day still ahead of them.



Harry Otter

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