

# *The colors of the dragon*

*Dakota Jones - Volume 1*



*Virginie T.*

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**The Colors Of The Dragon**

«Tektime S.r.l.s.»

**T. V.**

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Les couleurs du dragon
I de <i>Dakota Jones</i>
Virginie T.

Dakota Jones is a Demon Hunter. Under the orders of her cold and distant father, she fights evil day and night with her team, who are also her friends. However, his next investigation will turn his world upside down. His meeting with Eldrekki, a man as beautiful as he is mysterious, will modify both his past and his future. Dakota knew she was different, unique, she will finally discover why and the answers may not please her.

## **THE COLORS OF THE DRAGON**

**The Colors Of The Dragon**  
**Dakota Jones - Tome 1**  
**Virginie T.**

Translated by Ferial Benhamiche  
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## Prologue

Who has never imagined monsters in his closet or under his bed, or hidden behind a door or a dark corner, lurking in the shadows, looking out for our arrival in the darkness to jump on us and mutilate us in an abominable way until that death follows in excruciating pain ? Well forget all about it because you are far from the mark. The reality is far worse than your mind can imagine. Some people would say that i have a talent, i think it is rather a malediction. I see evil, the one who hides, like the one who crawls in broad daylight among his future victims who suspect nothing , that on Earth and beyond. Remember the most terrifying horror movie you've seen, with improbably shaped demons combining claws, fangs, venoms and awesome power, and you'll get an overview of things that i'm facing regularly. Beside these monsters, fighting werewolves and vampires is like a health walk on Sunday. I haven't walked in a park to get some fresh air for years, since my dear dad realized my potential and forever transformed my life into perpetual war.

## Chapter 1

Dakota

I was born in Fort Benning, a military area near Columbus, Georgia, which gathers over 120,000 soldiers and their families. It's a self-sufficient US Army base, like a city inside the city. Suffice to say that many years passed before I passed the portal to get out. And even, i was under good escort, because I am forbidden to leave alone. I even thought that there was nothing outside the enclosure, like in the disaster movies that appear on TV, and that was why I never passed through the portal. Daughter of the base general and a civilian who died while giving birth to me, my young years were not easy in the midst of this strict universe governed by rigid rules. But if I had guessed what was going to happen in the future, I wouldn't have wanted to grow up as much to see things change.

Here I am once again in a gloomy place, the kind of dark and silent place that makes you shiver up the spine and where no one would want to be there alone. Fortunately for me, I am not alone. Well, almost not. I have an earpiece, my best friend for far too long, whispering in my ear. It allows me to communicate with other team members who are stationed outside the building. I think that this building is really dilapidated. All the windows are broken, the doors creak quite sinister, and the floor is littered with trash. I am not a maniac, very far from the fairy house itself, but do not exaggerate! This place looks like a garbage dump. The ideal place to find what I am looking for. And the fact of not meeting any homeless person is an additional clue. No human would want to be in the presence of a demon. Even without seeing its demonic side, people feel discomfort in their presence.

— Still nothing in sight Dakota?

Ah, they remember me. It's true that it's been two minutes since I said anything.

— Nope, not yet.

— Be careful, you're starting to be far from us.

— OKAY.

Effectively, I am already on the fourth floor, on the west side of the building, while the commando, my backup in case of troubles, is waiting for me in the van located at the east side of the building. They might be over trained, if problems arise, they will need five minutes to join me. This may seem little, but if we are not mistaken on the target, it can do a lot of damage on my dream plastic in this lapse of time.

I know, i'm bragging a lot, but being single, and not ready to get married because of my lack of social contact, I accept all compliments, even mine. After all, what sane man would want a woman who hangs out at night with other men in such a place?

I continue to move forward and perceive movement on my right, in the adjacent room. So I whisper so as not to be spotted.

— Possible threat on the fifth, south side.

— Understood. Go slowly and keep your glasses well. We are waiting for visual confirmation to move.

Oh yes, the camera glasses that I have to wear and that allows them to follow the least of my movements, because otherwise I have a perfect view. However, if you want. All is relative. I can see very well, 10 of 10 in each eye, but my eyesight is not really ordinary. But let's stay focused, I didn't come here to get eaten , even though I doubt to be to his liking. Not enough hair. The creature I'm tracking is more like eating animals, domestic in this precise case. By the way, this is what led us to him. There have been an increasing number of dogs and cats abducted in the area, and the appearance of minutely cleaned carcasses near this building has caught our attention. The public imagines that a psychopath has fun plunging them in acid. It's plausible, but the world is full of more dangerous monsters than just a fool. The official authorities opened an investigation, and like any strange phenomenon, the file landed on my father's desk. Unlike the police, we used to deal with

these events out of the ordinary . I tiptoed until the opening of the rickety door which does not close since a long time and look discreetly in the doorway.

— So Dakota, is this the guy we're looking for?

My team can only see a neat and banal man through my glasses despite his disturbing air and his unusual presence here. It's true, he doesn't look like a tramp who hangs around a squat. He is wearing jeans and a shirt with hiking shoes, but the whole looks relatively clean considering the place. His hair is cut short, brushed, and he is closely shaved. But my teammates can perceive only the surface. Me, I am different and what I'm seeing is much less fun. A snake head with long and poisonous fangs, with no arms, but six tentacles as suction cups, mouths full of small pointed teeth and legs covered with scales. Bingo, we found it. A serpieusson, as we supposed. It is not the first time that I meet it and I know that this species can be aggressive if it feels cornered. We will have to be subtle. I move backwards, melting into the shadows as I have learned to do over the years and from my experiences in the field.

— The target is there.

— OK, stay back, we are coming.

I would like to follow his request, but the person in red who appears in front of my eyes doesn't seem of the same opinion at all.

— What are you doing here girl?

He doesn't seem threatening, but I know we shouldn't trust appearances. I know his true nature and under his innocent and courteous air a monster from hell is hidden capable to dismember me and make my skeleton gleaming.

— I am lost. I'm just passing through.

It is hard to make believe when two swords as long as my arms cross on my back. As a weapon, we are more discreet, unfortunately, demons, of all species, are insensitive to bullets. To kill them, we should use titanium blades. And no need to think of having them with a simple knife, you would be dead before you even make a mini cut anywhere. A long and tapered blade keeps the enemy away and maximizes the chances of getting out of the fight unscathed, or almost at least

— You should not be there, this is my home.

His voice becomes wheezing. It is not a good sign. His snake side comes out with his anger and I hate reptiles. I find it sneaky and viscous. So I am trying a strategic retreat.

— Okay, I will leave.

But, I don't have time to take a step that I find myself hanging by the feet, upside down, held by a cold and scary tentacle.

— Tell them to leave or you will suffer.

OK, the situation is very bad. He felt the vibration of the ground as the reinforcements passed and he was not happy. Not happy at all. I do not know where my team is, but if the serpieusson has spotted it, for my part I do not hear any movement, which probably means that it is still, at best on the lower floor. This gives ample time to the serpieusson to manhandle me.

— Okay, calm down. We don't want to hurt you.

— I'm at home here.

It is territorial, it seems. However, he cannot stay in this building, any more than in this city, indefinitely.

— People are asking themselves questions, you are not very discreet when chasing your meals.

— So you came to exterminate me.

My blades might suggest it, but they are there only to defend me in case of an attack. And although I am hanging above the ground, he does not pretend to hurt me.

— No, just moving you.

That is true. My team is doing a dirty job. Often, the demon ends up lacerated, cut or pierced, in short, dead, but in this specific case, the demon is not a real danger to the population apart from

his four-legged companions. The only problem is highlighting strange and unexplained phenomena. Except the secret concerning the existence of Hell and a passage between their world and ours is essential to preserve the world from a situation which exceeds it and which would be source of anxiety and chaos. So we just want to take him to a less exposed location, where it can live in peace without attracting media attention. Whatever some people think, I am not a murderer.

— Where ?

— In the jungle. A secluded place full of animals to eat as you please.

He whistles more and more and his multiple mouths chatter teeth, but against all odds, reposes me on the ground, on my feet. My head is spinning a bit, the blood flow going up to my brain. I quickly regain my balance and stay on my guard. Nothing is won yet. He has not yet accepted my proposal.

— What's your name ?

Hmm, I don't like the question, it can be dangerous for my future. However, if I do not answer, I will still find myself hanged and I did not like the experience. It wasn't the first time, but I'm not used to it.

— Dakota.

— Dakota how?

He is smart. A first name alone is useless. While a full name is the door open to everything, and to him in particular.

— Dakota Jones.

— Dakota Jones, I can find you if you lied to me.

I have no doubt about it. I'm starting to have a bunch of enemies among those below. My job rarely brings me friends among its people. I am paid to track them down and they are rarely cooperative, which most often results in bloodshed. Note, to incur reprisals. Note, to suffer reprisals, the protagonists would already have to be alive. However, those who are against me always end up cut in pieces in the morgue. My teammates arrive at this moment, all weapons outside. Fortunately my new acquaintance does not take offense.

— It's good guys, he's ready to follow us.

— Are you sure, Lynx Eye?

Yeah, no first name in front of targets in normal times, and like nothing escapes me, I was nicknamed the Lynx Eye. I like it. And it's better than "the weird", the nickname from my childhood. How could I have guessed that I did not see like everyone else when I have been like that since my birth?

— Dakota Jones gave me a promise. You have to take me to a place where I wouldn't disturb anyone. And shit. I'm going to be scolded. George doesn't waste a second to hit me.

— Damn Dakota. We do not give his name to the demons. You know the rules and this is the first one we have learned, the most important.

Me, I am convinced that the most important is the one that says to stay alive at all costs, but, this is not the time to point out to him.

— You always do it only as you please. Your father will fall on me again while reading the report!

— So ignore this detail. And now let's go from here.

I turn to the creature that has returned to human form. Only his shirt shows his change in appearance, the sleeves having cracked under the force of his tentacles. Normal, two sleeves, six tentacles, no need to be a mathematician to understand the problem. At least his anatomy is still hidden, which should greatly relieve my colleagues. It's not always the case and a naked man, even if he's not really a man, makes my friends uncomfortable every time.

— Serpieusson, after you.

— How do you know what I am?

— I see a lot of things.

And I would prefer to see much less. But I certainly do not intend to discuss it with him.

— Do you know other creatures like me?

— You are not the first of your kind that I come across, but you are probably the most cooperative.

— I see.

He climbs into the van without arguing and turns to me before I close the door.

— When you need me, call me. You know how to do ?

I am surprised by his mark of confidence. He is giving me the means to call him as I did by giving him my identity.

— Yes, I know how to summon a demon.

He rubs his leg and gives me one of his scales.

— Take care of yourself Dakota Jones. You are different. Many are afraid of what they do not understand. I am confused. A warning? Different from who?

— What are you talking about ?

— Hell is not the only one to contain evil and unscrupulous beings.

With that, he turns away and the van takes the road. More dangerous than the demons of Hell? Impossible. I've seen enough to know what kind of monsters he can be, and I've never seen anything worse in humans. Even the worst psychopath can't be good enough to the cruelty of a bloodthirsty demon.

## Chapter 2

Dakota

This good old Fort Benning base does not change despite the passing time. Always so many people, and I still feel alone among them. Thousands of people, and one intruder. The weird girl who has the right to stay here only because her father is directing the base. Finally, this is what everyone thinks in silence without telling me clearly, because everyone ignores the role that I play in the army. The girl who has no place among the soldiers who risk their lives to defend the country. If only people knew my life, their vision of me would surely change. In everyone's eyes, I am the nice girl to her daddy who has been boosted. My father has cultivated this myth with the greatest care in public since my childhood. However, in private, that's another story. The difference with my childhood is that today I have my own home in which I can take refuge at will. No more sad and silent apartment of my father who was conspicuous by his absence and where I have been so alone all my life. I spent most of my time between nurses and school until I was a teenager. Until my father realizes my potential and finally pays attention to me. Or rather, interest. The kind of interest that I will do without, and that ended by breaking my hopes of one day having a father. I passed from being a bulky child to a soldier under his orders without ever having given my opinion. Whether I agree or not, I have had no say, zero free will, like the military does, and rebellion is out of the question unless you want to pay dearly for it. Whether I agree or not, I have had no say, zero free will, like the military does, and rebellion is out of the question unless you want to pay dearly for it. No special treatment for General Jones's daughter, whatever the others may think, some might perceive it as a weakness and the general is not weak. One of my teammates took two years before realizing who is my biological father. Like what, the general's strategy is effective. So much so that even I sometimes wonder who my father is.

The little cocoon that I created for myself is therefore my haven of peace essential for my mental health, if I still have one. Some people find it too colorful, even motley, but those who know me, namely my teammates only, understand the reasons and approve of my different choices. My living room is painted in sky blue, like the days of cloudless sunshine that I love so much, with paintings of multicolored tulips, jonquils or even, lotuses in vibrant colors of blue and pink. In front of my giant screen TV which I only use to watch romantic movies, I see enough horror during the day, my white sofa with neon cushions stands out in this country decor, but it is very comfortable. So much so that my friends tend to be a little too comfortable there. Regarding the white and blue open kitchen with a central island in marble and quartz sparkle, it is literally an invitation to meals with friends, which is perfect because I love to cook. Unfortunately, I don't have time to settle down to enjoy a coffee that my phone is already ringing. Ugh!, my father. I sigh just when hearing her voice. If it would have been someone else, I would have turned a deaf ear. But with my father, useless. Better to answer, because he will harass me until I pick up the phone, and if I turn off my mobile, he will send one of his underlings to ring my doorbell. Out of the question, I hate that a stranger enters my lair and noses about my business. It's therefore without enthusiasm that I pick up the phone.

— Hello.

— Dakota, mission return briefing in 15 minutes.

I don't have time to argue that he's already hung up. No "how are you?" Or "I missed you". The general spoke, execution. It's exactly how I felt right now. I have no father but a general whose orders I must follow without arguing, without thinking, and above all without emotions. I have to go to HQ of TD right now or I will get slapped on the fingers.

Demon Hunters, by his full name, is the unit my father created when he heard about my particularity. Hell has been known for centuries. It is also mentioned in the Bible. As mentioned, there is a passage between our world and this abominable underground world. But contrary to popular belief that men are punished and sent to the Underworld after their death, it is the demons who come

to earth, and not to punish men who deserve it, but to live and do evil there, according to their nature. Originally, the army was fighting the demons, you know, haphazardly. They killed them when felling on them by chance, after several human losses obviously, since not everyone is walking with a titanium blade permanently . Today, thanks to me, our attacks are targeted and only the unit of which I am a member is empowered to fight the demons, and kill them if necessary. On this last point, I was intransigent in front of my father. Just like humans, there are good and bad demons. It is out of the question that I kill a creature that doesn't hurt anyone. Today's serpieusson is the perfect example. I wasn't going to end his life because he eats animals. In this case, let's also arrest people who eat pigs. The poor little pink beasts with their corkscrew tail so cute. I am aware that my father gave in to my claim for the unique purpose that I join the unit, but it doesn't matter. The main thing is that I won my case and demon or not, the innocent are spared. Call to order or move, depending on what is causing the problem, but leave alive and at peace. This does not stop the general from blaming me for my choices and my actions at each debriefing. I'm just a disappointment to him and he makes me feel it on every occasion. Our mission was a success, but he will find fault with it, as usual.

So reluctantly that I join the HQ highly secure of TD , consisting of offices, a huge meeting room, and an underground laboratory to which I do not have access. It is not a problem for me. I don't like the morbid and the lab gathers dead demons for autopsy. I don't need to see this. Truly not. I have enough horror vision during investigations, without having to add images of demons cut with a scalpel and dissected. The staff of the morgue is still essential to our work. It allows us to expand our knowledge of hell species and how to kill them faster without hurting ourselves. It schematizes and lists all the strengths and weaknesses of the different species that we have fought in the past. However, each has its place, and I prefer to face the danger and fight rather than being around death all day long.

When I arrive, the whole team is already there, chatting quietly while waiting for the general to honor us with his presence. I love each person in this room. All these men have become my family since I joined the program and I would be ready to give my life for them as they are ready to do for me. George, our team leader, is the oldest of us. From the height of his 45 years and with his temples which I suppose graying, even if I don't distinguish this color on him, is a surrogate father for me since the formation of the team.

I was just 18 years old and my father charged him of my apprenticeship . This is there when I met Luke, the youngest member of the team after me. Two years older than me, he had just graduated from military school and was placed in the care of George to follow training with me. over the fights, camouflage techniques, handling of weapons and excessive George's shoutings, we weren't very disciplined students, we got closer to become like brothers. Luke is the twin I dreamed of having in my worst moments of loneliness. A brother who would be like me and who would always understand me despite my oddities. In the end, Luke is not like me, I am unique, but he understands me better than anyone and always knows what is on my mind. Like now.

— Calm down Dakota. We do the briefing and I'll take you home straight away so you can spread out on your sofa in front of a turnip. I do my best smile. He just described to me the perfect day, I am dreaming about it. My sofa ', a coffee and a romantic movie that transports me to an ideal and harmonious world.

— Wouldn't you prefer to spend the evening with me, my dear? I'll help you relax, I promise.

Jared, the inveterate flirt. A 30 years old smooth talker with the body of a god, shaped by years of bodybuilding. unfortunate that this handsome boy, from the height of his 75 inches, takes girls like handkerchiefs: usable and disposable. On the other hand, we have to admit that the secret nature of our missions and their dangerousness does not allow us to forge deep ties with anyone outside the team. So he made the choice to enjoy life. I respect him, but it will be without me and he knows it. Only he loves to tease me and above all, tickle the protective side of our stooges. I don't have time to say that Russel does it for me.

— You don't touch her, perverse. Russel, the nice boy, defender of lost causes. And I am his latest charity. I love him, he is always on my side and was the first to support me when I opposed the systematic massacres of demons, but I am far from the fragile little flower for which he makes me pass. I am able to defend myself alone against Jared's pathetic attempts. Especially since these are mainly empty words. I'm not her type at all. To please him, you have to be a hottie with a big chest that opens his thighs when he snaps his fingers. Me, I am brunette, petite, some shapes, but without excess, and especially, I am able to make him very bad if he looks for troubles or disrespect me. Jasper adds a layer.

— She'll never land in your bed, man, she's way too smart to be fooled by your pretty face.

— Thanks for the compliment.

Jasper, the latest arrival to the team. A faithful and precious friend. He's the person I call when I have a sorrow and I really need to kick back and laugh. No it is wrong. He's the one Luke calls to the rescue when he feels like I'm in low spirits. In this job, it is risky to demoralize

Any careless mistake can cost us our lives. Jasper allows me to let go of his humor and antics, and go to mission concentrated and alerted .

— It's enough, kids. The general will arrive. Stay quiet or he will grow up screaming again. I can't stop to mumble.

—As if staying calmly on my chair will keep him from yelling at me.

—It's just a bad time to pass Dakota. Afterwards, you can return to your home until the next investigation. I don't add anything. Daddy George is probably right. The best thing to do is surely to be silent and to acquiesce in all the bullshit that the general will spout. But I admit that I find it more and more difficult to fulfill my role as a good little soldier when my heart cries out to me that I am above all his daughter and that after twenty-five years, it is high time that Mr Jones realizes it. I clench my fists and my jaw, making my teeth cringed, and sit on a free chair. Luke positions himself on my left and Jasper on my right, both grabbing my hand and making circles in my palm with their thumbs. It is a simple gesture, insignificant a priori, but that miss me immediately when the steps of the general are heard in the corridor, forcing my friends to relax their grip to avoid the wrath of the one who prohibited any rapprochement within the 'unit. In his eyes, even a sign of friendly affection is unacceptable. We are colleagues and our relationships must remain professional. It's a high-ranking reflection that never leaves his buttocks out of his office! What sensible person would confide his life to a stranger? Because a co-worker, without any emotional bond, in the end, comes down to being a stranger.

## Chapter 3

Dakota

I don't have much in common with the general. In any case, physically, we cannot say that the resemblance is striking. Robert Jones' physique is as austere as his character. His face seems to be cut with a billhook with strict, angular features with no beard. His hair is cut in a short brush without the slightest hair sticking out like a high-ranking military man should be. As for his outfit, he obviously wears the official costume that suits a general, a costume without any wrinkles. It looks like he was dipped in starch to be excessively rigid, like his posture. I would say that I got from my mother, but I have no picture of her and my father refuses to tell me. After two unsuccessful attempts which ended in humiliation, I gave up. I still have the hope that I have been adopted and that one day my real parents will come to pick me up. I imagine it's the little girl inside me who still hopes to have parents who love her.

However, for the moment, it is the adult who is in this room, squaring the shoulders, waiting for the admonition which will not be long. The general watches us with his stern look, which, matched his dark bottomless eyes, gives me shivers down my spine. Surprisingly, I am more on my guard in his presence than in the midst of demons capable of cutting me into pieces. Go find out why!

— Dakota, you were late, as usual. I thought I had educated you better. Punctuality is a virtue and your name should not give you any free hand.

It starts well. What was it, 30 seconds late? And I was in the meeting room before his arrival it seems to me, so what's the problem? I know, I exist. That's the concern. Against all odds, he needs me and he hates it as much as he can't bear me. Besides, he never looks me in the eye. They say the eyes are the windows of the soul. What is he afraid of finding in mine to avoid contact systematically?

— Sorry, general.

I grit one's teeth on this appellation. I know this is the norm in the military, people are named by rank and if it was only in public it wouldn't bother me more than that. Only, he demands that I call him general from as far back as I can remember. He always refused that I call him daddy, as if he didn't consider me as his daughter, which leaves a bitter taste in my mouth when he claims my education. The first time I called a man daddy was to tease George a countless sermon. It is pathetic.

— Well, don't let it happen again. Now let's start the debriefing. Commander ?

George scrapes his throat to clear his throat and relate our mission, omitting a few details that would have gotten me in trouble again.

— Anything else to report?

He squinted, suspicious. He suspects that there were omissions in the story, it seems. But against all odds, no one opens mouths. Visibly this does not please to the general who is strumming on the table, his nervous tic when events do not fit as he desired.

— I studied the video of the surveillance glasses before summoning you. I watched the pictures very carefully.

Fortunately, the glasses are only eyes and not ears and my ear-flap is only used to communicate, without recording anything, or I would have taken it for my regimental.

— As much to tell you immediately that I expected to have the corpse of a serpieusson in the morgue at this time. So explain to me why this is not the case.

It's Russel who takes over.

— Not a threat? However, I saw this monster hanging Dakota by the feet. Even without the sound, I can assure you that it wasn't his cordial way of greeting her. So tell me now why you didn't cut this creature to pieces, Dakota. What are your weapons for? Decoration? That's it, the facts are clear, for the general, I am wrong. Whatever I say now, he will consider that I made a mistake. The compassionate look of Luke indicates that he has reached the same conclusion then me. It's very

gratifying. I approach a neutral face, the one I worked on all my childhood to hide my emotions from him, to explain the reasons for my clemency, but inside, I boiling.

— The serpieusson did not appreciate my intrusion into its territory, which is a normal, instinctive reaction, but I quickly made him hear reason and he cooperated without arguing afterwards.

The general frowns as I feel the situation get worse with each of his remarks.

— How did you make him understand reason?

I refuse to answer this question. I can't stand the lie, it's visceral, I hate it, but I have no illusions, if I inform him that I gave my name to a demon, he will treat me unconscious and order to kill said demon, supposedly to protect everyone. It is true that to give one's identity to a demon of hell is to give him the power to do us a lot of harm. He can then track us just by whispering our name and thinking of us, allowing him to enter insurmountable places, like the base of Fort Benning, to name a few, and suddenly, to kill us in our sleep, at the same time. This, therefore, is a mark of trust between a human and a demon. The serpieusson has done the same by giving me one of its scales, but I also do not intend to give this information to my father where again, it will turn against me. My obstinate silence is not really to his liking.

— I order you to answer your general.

Orders, more orders, still orders. He can only give orders anyway! Luke comes to my rescue before the situation gets out of hand and I get angry too, causing me a lot of trouble again.

— She simply explained to him that we only wanted to find him a territory less exposed to the human world and he agreed to follow us.

The general laughs and it is not pleasant.

— He decided to follow you of his own free will like a nice doggie?

— Exactly.

My father falls heavily into his chair, which cracks in reprisal. He is not fooled, but without proof, he can do nothing against our solidarity.

— This will be the official version of your report commander?

— Absolutely. This is how the facts unfolded.

I silently thank George for falsifying his report to save my butt. My teammates do not save me only on the field, they also do it in everyday life by serving as a bulwark between my father, and the world in general, and me.

— I'm passing things this time, but at the next misdemeanor, Dakota , you'll end up in the dungeon.

You would think he was doing me a favor, only, it was just a disguised threat. I'm sure he's not kidding. It's his way of directing the base. Just as disobedient prisoners who go to the hole, rebel soldiers like me end up in the dungeon. It looks like the Middle Ages. I have of course already spent a few stays in a cell, this is not the first time that I have upset him. My father keeps one moreover available just for me, my personal prison. I'm lucky. However, it is not the shock argument that will change my opinions. A cell measuring 2 by 2 meters with the only comfort of a metal berth and a toilet without any privacy will never change my deep convictions. In reality, what bothers me most about his punishments is not eating for the two days that it lasts. I am a fighter, my body, especially my muscles, needs protein to function. Each time I come out weak and Luke has to carry me and feed me. It's the most humiliating thing in the end, and I think my dad got it, because he's still waiting until I'm unable to support my weight to release me.

— let's carry on our meeting.

The general's loud voice brings me back to the present moment brutally. So this meeting will never end?

— In view of the latest elements, I want a microphone to be installed on Dakota as soon as you are out, even if there is no contact with the enemy.

I swallow my saliva crookedly and the faces of Jasper and Jared darken. They joined the military with passion, with faith, but they find it hard to tolerate the lack of free will that this life demands. With this microphone which will spy on my words, but also my exchanges with them, we reach heights in the lack of freedom.

— With all due respect general, a listening device could hinder the eye of a lynx in close combat, and so make her in danger.

George tries to play on the general's sensible point to win the case. He just forgot one thing, my father has no sensitivity, especially not towards me.

— Are you discussing my orders commander?

— No of course not.

My general's satisfied smile makes me clench my fists to stick my nails into my palms and whiten my knuckles. The problem is that an intervention on my part will only confirm his decision. Whatever I do, the general has spoken and I have nothing to do with it.

— Well. So go train yourself by plugging her a tracker. Like that, she will know how to react in the case of an attack so as not to lose it or be discomforted. Manage this as you want, but I want to hear everything that happens during your absence, without exception. The device is mandatory as soon as you leave the base. Ask the technical service for the best device. There is no way that there are blanks on the tape. No excuse will be accepted or you will assume the consequences. Is that understood?

— Yes my general.

We respond in harmony that seems to satisfy him as he dismiss us with a flippant hand sign, as if we were mere underlings and not an elite unit trained for the most dangerous fighting in the world.

This is why the six of us meet at the gymnasium, when my only desire is to slip into my bed and sleep for at least 48 hours to forget this damn day.

— Are you ok Dakota?

— Of course. Why would not I be? After the camera glasses, the snitch. Normal. What is the next step? A GPS chip implanted under my skin?

George wrings his hands. He looks uncomfortable when he has no reason to be. He had nothing to do with this kind of decision and even tried to help me. He prefers to leave me alone with Luke who is raising his hands in the air in front of him as a peace sign, and I feel guilty immediately. I'm not angry against them, but against Robert Jones, the man who claims to be my father when it suits him, but who doesn't have the attitude. What annoys me the most is that from the outside, we could consider his excessive surveillance as a mark of attention, of concern for my safety, but I know that it is not the case. All his devices are just a way for him to control me a little more, to keep hold of the unit that earned him his place at the head of the base.

— Sorry, my bitterness is not directed against you.

My heart brother hugs me while kissing my head. He is aware that these meetings with my father are a real test for me each time.

— DAKOTA.

George calls me from the opposite side of the gymnasium, his loud voice ringing against the walls. he is positioned just close by the punching bag. He also knows me well. This is exactly what I need to release the tension and allay my fury. So i join him by trotting while Jasper and Jared go up the ring to engage in a friendly boxing fight. Or almost. I wouldn't like to take some of the beating they do. My commander conscientiously bandages my hands and then helps me put on gloves. I spend the next hour in enchainning directly, hook and uppercut. Contrary to what was said in meetings, I don't need to learn to fight with a snitch. Whether I lose it in battle or has no importance, because, first, it will never prevent me from saving myself, priority to my buttocks, and second, whether the recording is complete or not, my father will find a reason to blame me. Finally, I find it hard to relax and ignore the harsh remarks of the man I should count more than anything.

## Chapter 4

Dakota

After training, we all end up at home, as often. My apartment is almost too small to accommodate five males swollen with testosterone, but I am extremely uncomfortable in an environment other than mine, so they are kind enough to agree to hug a little so that I can be myself.

— What do you want to eat Dakota?

Good question. What could cheer me up and soften my bruised little heart?

— No matter the food, as long as you eat it on my dream body, you will be in seventh heaven, doll.

I explode with laughter in front of Jared who swells the pectorals by raising his eyebrows suggestively. Luke walks behind him to pat him on the back of the head as I struggle to catch my breath and tears drop from the corner of my eyes. Now, more than food, I need my friends and their antics to lighten up this trying day.

— Seriously dude, does it work with girls your hopeless dredge?

— Of course. Have you seen how seductive am i? No one can resist my charm.

— Your insignificant charm you mean?

I let Jasper and Jared bicker nicely and join George, who is desperately looking for an edible commodity in my fridge.

— What do you want me to prepare with a piece of moldy cheese and an expired bottle of milk?

I give him a shy contrite smile. At the same time, we went on a mission for a week and the general didn't give me much time to fill up on the pantry. On the other hand, even in normal times, without missions or otherwise (which rarely happens, demons do not know the concept of holidays), you cannot say that I am a homemaker. No one has taught me how to cook, and I hate cleaning, being content with the bare minimum to maintain a welcoming interior. My fridge is never topped with delicious dishes. It's already a miracle when it contains edible food. On the other hand, a multitude of leaflets for home delivery of dishes are magnetized above.

— Can we order Chinese?

— Are you sure you want a Chinese cookie with a prediction? We cannot say that the day has brought you luck so far.

— Not false.

Luke arrives from behind and puts his arm on my shoulders, sticking his warm body to mine. It is in these moments of complicity that I regret not being able to really see him. Not being able to observe them all other than through a green filter that probably distorts the smoldering joy on their face.

— You seem pensive.

I jump when I hear Russel behind me. I did not notice his presence in the kitchen. For an elite soldier familiar with the most dangerous fights and missions on this Earth, I let myself be surprised like a beginner.

— I'm going to order pizza.

— This is exactly what you need. Fat and heavy that will make you drowsy and sleep like a baby.

— Also take some ice cream that you can lick on me.

Jared can't resist.

And at the same time, that's exactly what I needed: remarks, friendly hugs and George's paternal compassion. This is how we all meet around the coffee table, double cheese pepperoni pizzas spread out in front of us, a beer in hand and a turnip, said the cavemen, on the screen. I wake up two hours later, the soporific side of the pizza having had its effect.

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