

Awakening

Kyle Biery

The man coughed up blood as Lian stomped her foot onto his chest, ending his life with the crack of his ribs. The metal titan scoffed at him before continuing on.

“You choose to become a robotic being to save your own life and everyone wants you dead for some reason or another,” she said. Her AI let out a laugh as he hacked at a nearby door.

“What did you expect? The pirate gangs want you for your parts while the relic hunters want you dead because you resemble a precursor relic too much for their liking.” The ancient doors slid open, allowing them to continue. Lian hesitated as she examined the entrance. “Best not wait around. There’s bound to be more pirates on their way. You know how these Icelandic pirates get with their loot, especially precursor relics.”

Lian quickly entered after hearing him. The dark grey hallways were broken by the occasional soft blue light lamp that made her lower her gun. She snapped it back up after shaking her head. “This place is messing with my head. Feels like I have bees running around up here.”

“Well, they’d have plenty of room, cavewoman,” Wheat said, laughing after.

Lian paused and whacked the back of her neck. “I will yank you,” she said, making his laughter stop.

“You wouldn’t.”

“Try me, bitch.”

Wheat remained silent.

Lian continued down the corridor until it turned into the main vault.

“This is a primary vault. There should be a large number of relics in here somewhere. They’re probably hidden behind a security measure though.” A blue pulse erupted from Lian’s back and swept over the room. “There we go. Look up and left about five feet.” She did so only for him to sigh. “Back to your right an inch or so.”

“The glowing green button?”

“You thought it’d be something else?”

“Fair enough.”

Lian moved to the far wall where several cracks ran up along it. Her sharpened metal claws dug into the rock and she slapped the foot-wide green button.

“Uh-oh. You seem to have triggered a secondary security measure.”

“Details, Wheat.”

“There’s a self-destruct mechanism or something. There’s a lot of power being redirected into the vault.”

“Counter-measure?” Lian asked as she watched a door next to her open.

“It’s inside the vault itself. It seems like something is waking up.”

“Joy.” She said as she stepped through. She stopped after a light flickered on, revealing a metal frame that towered over her by a good five feet. “What is that?”

“No idea but that’s where all the power is being routed to. It’s probably the guardian.”

Wheat started scanning the room and highlighted glowing blue orbs. “Those orbs are regulating the power. Take them out and the mech will overload.”

Lian rushed over and reared back her fist. A single punch shattered the orb. The metal frame shuddered behind her and its eyes snapped on, glowing a sinister red. Its arm started reaching for her before flopping back against its mounting.

Lian repeated this four time more before the guardian let out a loud groan and flopped back against its chair. A thin trail of smoke slipped out from its chest and lazily drifted.

"Is it dead?" She asked, approaching it with her rifle raised.

"Scanning."

Lian poked its hand with her rifle.

No response.

"Scanning."

She put her rifle on her back and hoisted herself up onto the guardian's chair, where she straddled one of its legs to examine the head.

Glowing red eyes snapped open and stared into her lone blue one.

"Shit." She let out a squawk as its hand swung up and grabbed the back of her head.

"Not dead, not dead," Wheatly said, screaming in her ear.

"I can see that."

"Foolish child." She froze at the Guardian's very human voice. "You think yourself in control, but you have no idea what you have done."

"Now that I think about it, I think those orbs were restraints." Wheat's voice was very quiet.

"Could have said that five minutes ago, Wheat."

The Guardian threw her out of its chamber, where she crashed against the wall and stayed stuck in the metal. It stopped and seemed to stare off into the distance.

“Our plan was a success. The world has been fragmented,” The Guardian said. It quickly moved to the wall and tapped a holographic display, making a map of the world appear.

“Attention all Combat Frames: Protocol 9 has begun. Initiate production lines.” It turned to her.

“From one former human to another, thank you. You have opened the door to a brave new world, whether you wanted to or not.”

Nearly three thousand miles to the south, a lone combat frame twitched and disconnected from the terminal he had been using. Desmond stared at the console.

“Well, shit.”