

Mobile Mercury

Open

She drips red, but not blood. It's darker than any blood, the darkest maroon, with a silver glow. Screaming at the top of her lungs, "Take me, take me instead!"

The red drip, drip, drips off her skin... until it starts to quiver and shake, it jumps back onto her, like a swarm of tadpoles lunging into her pores. She's digging into the mass that's in front of her with her hands like a dog, desperate to get to what's at the center of it. "Take me! Take me!" She bellows desperately. "Take me instead!"

Under the skin is a crackle like fire, like blood has turned into marbles that click clack up and down the arms. Eyesight to gray, then red, then gone. The ground is puddy, malleable to her will, soft as quicksand. The enemies scream, her loved one cries, but the end of this is near.

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Calia, the daughter of Decca royalty, was given up for experimentation at a young age by her parents. The experiment was a steroid named "Mobile Mercury". It flows like beads of blood, formed to imitate blood cells, it makes the host stronger, quicker, more responsive to their surroundings, a truly destructive weapon. Though, Decca never knew just how true that would become.

Calia, being a part of the first wave of test subjects, was given up on after a couple of years. The early renditions of the steroid did not prove dominant in her system.

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She stands tall, rich black hair falling just at her shoulders, brilliant blue eyes and a matching wrapping around her neck like a cape torn at the shoulder blades, black tights with mechanical boots integrated in her suit flowing from her thighs to her feet.

As the final escape ship starts to take flight to the neighboring planet, the ramp at the back of the ship starts to lower.

“Calia, what’re you doing?”

“Calia, put the lift back up.”

“Calia, what. Are you doing?”

She begins to put one foot in front of the other, loosening her grip on the handle that sits above her chair. As the ramp starts to crack, debris rushes inside the ship, blurring the vision of Calia’s parents towards the front. She steps off as the ship accelerates, preparing the engines in her boots for landing as she hears her mother’s final cry for her.

Her father, “What’s she done.. What’s she done now?”

Her mother, “Turn around! We have to go back for her!”

“We can’t...”

“NO!”

“We can’t! She’s.. Made her choice.”

Chapter One

The colony of Decca that once stood tall is now reflecting red and yellow flames atop their households and technological towers. The Laboratory district is like it, though most of the labs and the school are intact. The water once shone a bright cyan now flows in reds and whites.

Gardens and tight alleyways between each house populated the housing district. Some roofs reflected rich red like the sky, some of the older were like an aging copper green with moss growing around the seams. The architecture is built of clay, plaster, wood, and stone. They were certainly not the most advanced colony on the planet Arborumn, but they prided themselves in their deep beliefs of tradition, yet couldn't refuse the advancement of technology completely. Hence, the Lab district. On top of the sturdy wooden beams of each was sat aged clay tile roofs that bent beyond the lengths of the walls. They looked like the shell of a dragon stretching beyond the edges of each wall, coming to a point at the top.

Most of these homes were identical, there were only two or three variations in the design. All but those that were built for royalty. Including Calia's. Her room was really a house in itself, across from her parents in a corner overlooking the lake. She grew up in this room since her parents had it built when she was three years old. Another was built like it neighboring her parents with a yard in between.

Calia, falling from the ship that had only reached a few stories before jumping off, flexes her calves to activate her rockets to resist gravity. As soon as she hits the ground the engines on her boots spark and crackle, but without much hesitation she starts making her way back home. In front of her stands a large gate way, behind it is a long mechanical hallway that expresses the wear and destruction of the war. This was used as an

emergency escape route for the housing district. Normally, the royal district had their own escape route, but it was blasted to pieces by an opposing colony.

She slows her steps as she approaches the gate. “This.. is it.”

She stares down the large dark hall, glaring right back at her, as she hears groaning emitting from the passage. The empty drowning echoes creep down the hall into her ear.

“He could be anywhere. If I misstep once.. He’ll take me under like everyone else.”

Her body stands completely still. Her calves feel singed from the beaten up rockets inside her boots. She can smell the sour toxicity in her nose, leading down her throat, with an acidic burn on the tip of her tongue. She begins to shake.

“I have to go.”

She slowly, yet confidently, runs down the hall. “I need my Mercury Sensor.” The air is heavy on her lungs already, her calves are feeling lightly rug burned from her malfunctioned boots, she breathes heavily, “It was on my bed-side table... *gasp* I know it’s typically used to mine Mercury *gasp* but I need to try and stay away from him for now.”

Mercury is in rich abundance around Decca soil. Scientists used specialized vacuums to extract it from the Earth, as drilling would only lead it to seep away. After a couple decades, it became more difficult to find - to combat this, Decca created the Mercury Sensor to help detect rich pools of Mercury. Calia was given one as a present by her parents when she was younger. She’d always excitedly run around the hills waiting to hear the *beep* *beep* *beep*.

Calia makes it to the other end of the hall, opening up to a gleaming garden rich in vegetation and small trees with pools of water to her right and left. Light blue sparks fly near the surface, chirping in unison, usually feeding off of the pure water. This water, like the rest, has turned dark red and white. The light blue sparks are slowly dying, one by one. Just ahead of her is an entryway to the housing district, framed by two homes. Before her, she sees burning rubble of houses and metal scrap from Battleships.

“It’s blocked, every which way.” Calia trembles, “He could be anywhere, I can’t just stand here. He could be anywhere, I have to move - He could be right here.” She looks left and right, searching for anything she could do.

“I can scale the hillside.. No, it’s too steep.”

She gently steps over toward a tree overlooking one of the water pools. She grabs on to a tree limb with her right hand, pushing off the ground with her left foot. She grabs another with her left, pulling herself up, her knee hits the trunk of the tree and her boot lets out a blue flare out of the rocket. “Agh!” A short impulse sends her higher into the tree. She grips one of the limbs up top and eases herself down onto a sturdy branch, thicker than most of the others.

“My rockets are still operating.. Sort of.”

She looks over into the house nearest to her. “My rockets..”

Calia hops down the tree and readies herself to charge. Her calves still feeling heavy, she begins to run at the short house on the left. She begins to feel the wind carry her, she pushes and pushes and pushes. Her muscles in her legs begin to tighten, her forehead dripping sweat as her head starts to ache, she leaps into the air and flexes her calf muscles. Blue sparks emulate from her rockets as it launches her further into the air. She grabs

the edge of the roof tile with both of her palms, gripping as hard as she can with a thousand beads of sweat dripping down her face, she lifts herself on top of the roof.

“Looks like these boots don’t have much charge to ‘em..” She feels the edges for overheating, “If I can get to the school, maybe I can fix them.” Calia lifts herself on her feet, she overlooks the town. On fire, desolate, bathing in the raging red light of the sky. It’s all red. This whole colony is purged in blood. Darkness.

The skin on Calia’s arms begins to curdle like her blood is spazzing beneath. She desperately grabs onto her left arm, “Not again, not now!” She drops to her knees on top of the roof, trying to leverage her feet in the right position to stick. “I should be safe from him up here. I can wait this one out.. I can wait..” Exhausted, she lets the weight of her shoulders take over as she drops to the surface of the roof.

“...How am I *gasp* supposed to last like this?...”

Chapter Two Draft coming soon