

To fight, to stay, to stand, was to die.

They came on the dawn. Fort Blindshot's spectacular sunrise turned to bloodshot crimson as the meteor fell, screaming, to the earth. With its impact, the ground broke, the forests burned, and the salt-seas boiled to a bloody froth. As orbital bombardment followed the initial groundfall, as tsunamis broke the glass-like stillness of the sea, as the island's volcanic caldera split and bubbled and broiled, earth turning to liquid fire as it was wrenched apart, they came to their posts.

Sera Kaern had trained her unit well. Arcona's armed forces, their center of gravity massed at Fort Blindshot, were not simply a disciplined fighting force. Her men and women were fighters cut beyond the common cloth, warriors that had not been born and bred into their mark, but *carved*, in stolid stone and solid oak and sure-grown bone. They were Sera's soldiers. So many of them were her friends. Her family.

And when the tide broke, they scrambled to their posts. Armor mottled in grey and green, to blend into the dark tropics of Selen and Eldar, or clad in simply in their battle dress, caught before they could be armored, they rushed to their positions. Gunners and riflemen assembled in their squads, finding their positions on the outer perimeter, their squad leaders directing sectors of fire, digging in. The heavy guns were the first to fire, their batteries fully manned, their plasma searing into the sky, flying in the face of crimson fire. The speeders followed. Then, the fighters, screeching into the air before their foe's bombardment could burn them on the ground, each flight that took to wing a pang in Sera's hearts.

They would not all return. If any returned at all.

Sera donned her armor as the horizon turned to flame. She took up her spear as the perimeter sensors rang, as fire began to rain upon them. She reached her place in the line -at the center, where she belonged- as the first of the beasts ran, their crystal-pierced jaws slathered with drool and blood, into a wall of

blaster fire. They didn't stop. Nor did the soldiers that followed them. Or the monsters that followed the soldiers.

Sera's soldiers poured fire hot enough to melt dirt to glass and fuse stone into their ranks. Her heavy guns rang with salvo after salvo, reducing one enemy craft after another to so many puffs of crystalline shrapnel, shining as the pieces fell from the sky. Her squadrons shifted, and darted, and flew high, in and out of Selen's atmosphere as the clouds turned to smoke and the lower reaches of space were filled with burning debris that fell to earth like a shower of bloody comets.

She could not direct them. She was no tactician. She was simply their warder, their trainer, their leader...their friend. And she could not save them all...she could not save one. This battle was not hers to win. There was not decisive blow for her to strike, no general for her to slay, no beating heart of darkness to pierce with her spear.

But there was a line. A line in the sand of Fort Blindshot, stained by the blood of her men and her women, her people, her soldiers.

There was to be no relief. No reinforcement. No salvation. Only fortune would save them.

But they stood. They stayed. They fought together. For those they left at home. For the fallen they left behind. For those who stood at her side.

Sera stood among them, her one good eye shining, her hearts singing, the fire of her soul flaring in the Force, bright enough to blind each and every seer of shadow, warden of truth, and bringer of false light.

And, as long as she could, she would fight.