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EON WARRIORS

HEART OF EON

Chapter One

She crawled through the tight space, huffing and puffing.

God, she would give anything to be back in her cushy office, or her high-tech, decked-out computer lab. Anything was better than trying to squeeze her curvy ass through a vent tunnel on an alien warship.

An Eon warship that she'd hijacked.

Wren Traynor bumped her elbow against the tunnel wall and pain shot up her arm. She swallowed a curse and kept crawling. Then her knee scraped on something sharp and she barely swallowed a yelp. That was going to leave a bruise.

The things she did for her sisters.

Suddenly, a clanging sound echoed through the vent tunnel. She stopped, her heart jumping. She knew what that meant. The warriors were searching for her.

And they were getting close.

In the darkness, Wren pulled out her precious tablet and thumbed the screen. It flared to life.

Hmm, time to keep those big, brawny Eon warriors busy doing something else. Plus, get a little bit of enjoyment out of things. She deserved *some* fun since her life had gone to shit.

It had all started five months before, when her older sister, Eve, had been framed for a crime she didn't commit and locked away in a low orbit prison. *Dickwad Space Corps*. Eve had dedicated her life to the Corps, but they'd turned on her in an instant. Then, if that wasn't bad enough, Space Corps had blackmailed Eve into abducting an Eon war commander.

Bad idea. Wren's throat tightened, and she sent up a quick prayer that her sister was okay.

Things had gone from bad to worse when the Corps had approached Wren, offering to free Eve...but only if Wren hijacked an Eon warship, the *Rengard*, using her genius hacker skills.

Oh, and on top of that, the nasty insectoid aliens, the Kantos, were planning to invade and destroy Earth. Yep, her life was complete shit.

Wren sighed. She missed her cushy office and computer lab, she missed her apartment, and she missed her morning lattes. She sighed again. Earth needed the Eon Empire's help, sure, but she was totally unconvinced that abducting them and hijacking their warships was going to convince them to hold hands with Terrans and happily go into battle to save Earth.

Man, her life had definitely gone gurgling down the drain.

You're in over your head, Wren. The voice of her cheating, lying ex-boyfriend echoed in her head.

Smug bastard. She poked her tongue out. No way she was letting that asshole suck up any of her oxygen. She'd kicked his cheating ass out months ago, and even the echo of his voice wasn't welcome.

She tapped on the tablet screen, pulling up the schematics of the ship. Over the last few days, she'd been painstakingly mapping the *Rengard's* layout. Mostly so she could find out-of-the-way washrooms where she could relieve herself, and to keep one step ahead of the warriors.

Suddenly, a deep voice echoed through the tablet's speakers.

"Woman."

She rolled her eyes. War Commander Dann-Jad was a man of few words. Especially when he was angry.

"Good morning, WC," she said.

There was a pause. "WC?"

“War commander is a bit of a mouthful. Although, it’s unfortunate that WC is an abbreviation for something *entirely* different on Earth.”

There was a charged silence. Wren could practically feel the *Rengard’s* war commander reining in his temper.

“Return full control of my ship to me. Now.”

Here we go again. She lowered her voice to match his. “You silly Terran woman, return control of my ship to me. I’ve asked you dozens of times, and every time you’ve said no, but I’ll try again.” Wren let her voice return to normal. “Screw you, WC. I’ve got a planet to save, and a sister to rescue.”

And her mission was to get the *Rengard* to a rendezvous point, where they would meet the Space Corps.

She still was uncertain as to how Space Corps thought they were going to subdue Dann-Jad and his fully trained warriors. The Eon warriors, although they shared the same ancestor with the people of Earth, were taller, bigger, stronger, and generally more badass.

Oh, and bonded to a kickass alien symbiont that gave them the ability to create cool armor and weapons with a mere thought.

Of course, during their game of cat and mouse, Dann-Jad had disabled the ship’s star drive. That meant they were crawling along at regular, old thruster speed. The journey would take weeks.

And Wren’s food supply was dangerously low. She’d run out of chocolate and coffee days ago. Her body was crying out for caffeine. Her rations were down to some freeze-dried disgustingness masquerading as chicken stew and cardboard-flavored nutrition bars. *Blergh.*

Not to mention she smelled bad. She sniffed herself and winced. She'd used her last wet wipe hours ago. She was moving well beyond the desperate need for a shower, and while she risked using the washrooms tucked deep in the bowels of the ship to relieve herself, she didn't dare spend any more time in there. That was all she needed, getting caught with her spacesuit around her ankles by the war commander.

Luckily, I love my sisters. She felt a pang of emotion, hoping, praying Eve and Lara were both okay. Lara had to be so worried.

"Wren Traynor," Dann-Jad growled, "As I told you before, the Eon now have an alliance with Earth—"

"Lies. You're trying to trick me."

"War commanders do not lie or trick." He really sounded pissed now.

"I've got things to do." She stabbed the button on her tablet to stop their little tête-à-tête.

She started crawling again, banged her shoulder, and cursed loudly. She turned a corner, and knew she was close to the *Rengard's* engine room. Scanning the metal wall, she found the maintenance panel she was looking for.

"A-ha." She pulled out her AllDriver and quickly worked the panel off. Then she lifted her tablet, tapping into the *Rengard's* systems. It was a risk, because if the warriors caught her in there, they could pinpoint her location. She tapped on the screen, her fingers flying as she activated the program she'd been working on. She *needed* to get the star drives back online.

She tapped again. *Yes.* Got it.

The vent tunnel vibrated beneath her. She wiggled her booty. "Yes!"

As the engines spooled up, she imagined War Commander Dann-Jad sitting in his cushy office near the bridge, calling her lots of names.

Time to go. She tapped the controls and initiated a jump to light speed that would send them closer to Earth. For a second, it felt like the air around her blurred.

She knew they were now rushing along at the speed of light.

Then suddenly, the ship jolted. Wren's forehead smacked the side of the tunnel. *Jesus.* Rubbing her head, she felt the speed drop away and the vibrations of the engines die.

Damn the man! She screeched and thumped her hand against the wall. Pain radiated up her arm. "Ow."

"You are not hijacking my ship," Dann-Jad's voice came from her tablet again.

He'd hacked her tablet again. Damn, whoever his hacker was, they were good.

"I already have, WC."

She heard his growl. "I'll make you regret your actions."

Too late. She already did.

Wren dragged in a breath. Well, now it was time to keep her war commander busy. So busy, in fact, he wouldn't have time to stop her the next time she got the star drives back online. She swiped her screen, her tongue between her teeth.

There. She grinned and imagined his face. *How do you like that, WC?*

Oh yeah, the small pleasures. It paid to take them when she could find them.

She heard another vicious growl through the tablet, and she could almost imagine him with cartoon steam pouring out his ears.

Now, time to get those star drives working again. Wren started crawling.

With a growl, War Commander Malax Dann-Jad tugged at the collar of his black uniform. The high-tech fabric was damp with sweat, and perspiration sheened his bare arms.

“Airen!”

His second appeared in the doorway of his office. She was also sweating.

“War commander.” Her brown hair was pulled back in a braid, and a few strands were stuck to her damp forehead.

“Status of the ventilation on the bridge level.”

“We’re still working on it.”

Cren. How could one small Terran woman cause all this upheaval?

Malax slammed his fist against his desk. Second Commander Airen Kann-Felis didn’t flinch, but the woman’s black-green eyes moved to stare at the wall. She’d been his second-in-command long enough to know to ignore his bursts of temper.

“Work harder.” The helian symbiont circling Malax’s wrist pulsed, reacting to his emotions.

“The Terran has scrambled several systems. The team is doing everything they can.” Airen released a breath. “Malax, if we can pump some *daros* gas into the ventilation system—”

“No. She is not to be harmed and I can’t risk the gas getting into the rest of the ship.”

“It wouldn’t kill her.”

“Are you an expert on Terran physiology, Airen?”

His second sighed. “No.”

“Find another way.”

“Yes, sir.” Airen pursed her lips, swiveled, and left.

For days, his ship had been under Wren Traynor’s control. Lights had been going out, they’d had ventilation problems, and she’d had them jumping all around the Syrann Quadrant before he’d managed to shut down the star drives.

His warriors still couldn't find her, and they'd been searching every maintenance conduit, ventilation tunnel, and storage closet for days.

He pulled in a ragged breath. Malax liked control. Being a war commander was in his blood. He'd been born for the job, like his father before him.

By Alqin's axe, he would take back his ship.

He touched the comp screen on his desk, and a picture of Wren Traynor appeared. He stared at her face. She was flanked by her sisters in the image. According to the partial transmissions he'd managed to receive from the *Desteron*, both of Wren's sisters were now, unbelievably, mated to Eon warriors and safe aboard the other warship.

He'd tried sending the transmissions to Wren as proof, but she hadn't let the files through and accused him of trying to implant a bug in her tablet.

His gaze fell on the image again. Wren's sisters were far taller than her. Eve Traynor had managed to abduct the most decorated war commander in the Eon fleet right off his ship. Somehow, after an attack by the Kantos, Eve and Davion Thann-Eon had ended up mated. And then Lara Traynor, after stealing several sacred Eon gems, had ended up mated to the warrior sent to track her down—Davion's security commander, Caze Vann-Jad.

With the Kantos looming, Earth had gotten desperate. One part of Malax understood. The Kantos were ruthless and unforgiving. The bug-like beings swarmed planets, decimating everything in their path. In a risky move, Earth's Space Corps had sent the Traynor sisters to kidnap, steal, and hijack as a way to gain the Eon Empire's attention.

The plan, Malax admitted dryly, had worked.

He looked at Wren's face. She was different from her sisters. The older two were clearly athletic, and both had harder, tougher lines on their faces that said they were used to command

and combat. Both were a part of Earth's Space Corps—Eve, a Sub Captain, and Lara, a special forces marine.

Wren was shorter, smaller, and softer looking. It was clear she laughed a lot just from looking at her face.

Malax had grown up with sisters. He had four of them. And after his father had died, Malax had become his family's provider, their protector. So, he knew how to deal with females.

But Wren Traynor was eroding the last of his patience.

His ship was in disarray and at risk. And only his top-level warriors knew, but the *Rengard* had some top-secret, experimental technology buried in the heart of its systems.

Tech he knew their enemies would kill to get their hands on.

Without full control of his ship, any enemy could move in on them. Malax gripped the edge of his desk. It was his responsibility to keep his ship, its tech, and its warriors safe. His gut hardened, old memories bombarding his head. His helian pulsed again.

He pulled in a deep breath. He would *not* lose any of his warriors. Not again.

Once again, he touched his comp, trying to contact her. The warriors on his communications team had done outstanding work to allow him to access her system. Not full access, and not enough to find where she was hiding, but enough to communicate with her.

"Wren Traynor." He stared at the blinking screen, waiting for an answer. "Woman, respond."

"I'm *busy*."

He frowned at the tart response. "Busy destroying my ship."

"God, you're moody."

Malax gritted his teeth so hard he heard a cracking sound in his jaw. "You've hijacked my ship, making it and my warriors vulnerable—"

“I’m too busy to talk right now, WC. Take a chill pill, and we can do some verbal sparring later.”

The comm link went dead.

Malax wanted to throw something at the wall. Digging deeper than ever for some control, he sat back in his chair, tugging at his collar. He was angry, hot, and cranky.

And one tiny, Terran woman was to blame.