

Thursday Prompt- Newsletter

Barbara stared at the blank document in her word processor. The cold air bit at the layers of camouflage she wore. In the glossy blue light of her lantern, the journalist reflected on the week. They had convinced Bullock there was a story to chase. Something about Echo-7's demise didn't sit right. Something about Abigail wasn't adding up. They'd made calls to all the PMC outposts but no one had seen her. One would think that after surviving whatever it was that took out Echo-7, that the merc would seek some downtime.

"It was her former C.O. for christ's sake," Barbara exclaimed softly as she leaned back in the fabric camp chair. The wind tugged at the flaps of her tent, sending a chill down her back.

"Beating your face on the keys again, I see," Peterson's voice pulled Barbara's sleepy brown eyes to the man she called editor and friend. She nodded wearily.

"Yeah. It just doesn't make sense and I don't even know how to put that to word," She said, slapping a hand down on the edge of her laptop with a sigh. Peterson leaned over and set a cup down. From a thermos, he filled it with coffee.

"Thanks," Barbara said, lifting the mug and sipping the dark fluid within. It pushed back the tiredness and even tickled with warmth.

"Maybe you're thinking about it too hard," Peterson suggested, taking a seat on the edge of the cot.

"Well you tell me. She spends an entire week driving full throttle right into the infection zone and then what.... Just stops? It's been three days and she hasn't come out," Barbara let out an exasperated sigh and slapped her hand on her forehead. The brain inside ached for sleep and her body was sore for a shower.

"You think she's onto us," Peterson asked. His blue eyes glinted in the glow of the lantern as he adjusted his spectacles.

"Maybe," Barbara admitted. They had to go fast to catch up with the merc. There was barely enough time to pack a field camp, let alone go through all the proper planning procedures. Still, there was something exciting in those first days setting out into the infection zone. She'd heard the rumors. Retros moving like a sea of twisted flesh, just roaming and searching for something to kill and convert. And yet, the infection zone was hardly any different from the safe zones. Everyone spoke of the danger but so far the only threat to Barbara was a cold. Her nose sniffled and she let her hand fall limp upon the fold out desk before her.

"Why did she come here," Barbara murmured out loud, staring up at the beige tent roof.

"Who knows. A merc like that... she's seen things. Maybe things she just doesn't want to talk about," Peterson commented as Barbara's eyes slipped over to the stack of records she was able to requisition. Henley had been nice enough to drive all the way back to collect them. All by himself. Barbara smiled. He wasn't as much of a coward as everyone said.

"Yeah," Barbara commented, lifting the multi-page profile military intelligence had turned over to them. An entire lifetime of service condensed into a few pages. It was hard to imagine someone so larger than life could be reduced to just a few sheets. And yet, Abigail Adams didn't have much of a life outside her service. As far as their press corps had been able to dig up. No family, no personal contacts. No one knew her for her. Just the legends and the field reports.

"Well, the longer you try to force it, the more painful it's going to be to edit, so maybe try and get some shut eye and we'll see what the murky merc does in the morning, huh," Peterson offered his advice as he rose up.

"Murky merc... I like that. Maybe you should do the writing and I should do the editing," Barbara replied with a chuckle. The weight in her chest told her sleep was far from her mind. Peterson scoffed and rested a hand on her shoulder.

"No thanks," he said, releasing her, "I've left my gift of gab to you, kiddo. Try to get some rest."

Peterson left, leaving Barbara's eyes to wander back to her black word processor. Her mind tumbled through what she knew. Echo-7 was an elite team lead by an elite commander. Abi had former connections to the commander. Could something have happened. She made it and the entire squad died. Not just dead, erased. No bodies, no recovery. Why...

Pressure in her chest, Barbara rested her fingers on the keys. Her mind raced once more as the coffee cooled beside her wrist. They needed to put something out or Bullock would reign them in. Taking a deep breath, she began typing, the keys clicking noiselessly into the fabric tent.

Murky Merc Mystery Deepens...

It's been one week since we entered the Infection Zone in pursuit of an exclusive story with legendary mercenary Abigail Adams. While we have successfully located Ms. Adams she is entirely unapproachable. Her flight from the Mixed Operations Zone was marked by rapid pace and an almost feral determination. Based on the records we've been able to uncover, her behavior is erratic and not in keeping with the legends that surround her. Any attempt to track down someone who knows her personally have failed. The woman is an enigma. Something else. We're hoping as we observe her patterns of behavior, that we will uncover an opportunity to learn more about her last mission and the fate of Echo-7.