

Dead Embers

Written by
Marc Avecilla

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EXT. IO'S ORBIT - NIGHT

The year is 2508, and a space cruise-liner, the Anthem, floats adrift with no signs of life inside. A small spacecraft darts towards the cruise-liner.

ALICE (O.S.)
ESC Anthem, this is the emergency investigation team of the USFG Talon. We are preparing to dock.

The Talon flies inside the Anthem's docking bay which is located on the stern of the ship.

INT. TALON BRIDGE - NIGHT

CAPTAIN CLARKE, 40s, a war-torn man with hair already turning gray, nods at the smooth landing.

CAPTAIN CLARKE
Excellent landing, Corporal. Let's get prepped so we can get to work.

ALICE, 30s, pulls her hair up and turns it into a wobbly bun. She wears an pilot jumpsuit and coke-bottle glasses.

ALICE
Alright, alright. Let's get this done.

INT. TALON DEPARTURE BAY - NIGHT

Mary Waites, 20s, is a young woman with messy hair in a gray medic exosuit. She is fiddling with a holographic screen that is emitting off her arm.

Across from her is ROBERT, 30s, another battle-hardened veteran, and he watches her. There is a slight furrow between his brows as Mary continues to mess with her suit.

A pocket sliding door opens, and Captain Clarke and Alice enter the departure bay. Alice notices Mary struggling with her suit and walks over.

ALICE
Fascinating suit. Never seen this sort of tech before.

MARY
It's a new issued exosuit given to graduates from the academy.

(MORE)

MARY (cont'd)
I'm just having a difficult time
getting it to start.

Captain Clarke walks to the middle of the bay and puts his hands on his hips.

CAPTAIN CLARKE
Alright, gang, this will be a typical
job. The Anthem has cut contact, and
we have to figure out why.

ROBERT
Do you think it's pirates or
terrorists?

CAPTAIN CLARKE
I know you want a fight, Robert, but
most of these jobs are just lazy
captains who don't check in with
command.

Alice adjusts her glasses as she continues to watch Mary trying to turn on her suit.

ALICE
But there were no lights outside when
we were docking?

CAPTAIN CLARKE
There are lights in the docking bay,
so I'd say there is a blackout on
certain sections. That's a repair
crews job.

Captain Clarke grabs his battle uniform out of a locker and suits up.

Mary pushes one more button on the screen. Suddenly, the medic cross on her back and chest emit a bright pink light. On her holographic screen shows a loading bar, and transforms into a tiny sphere that has all white eyes.

MARY
Yes! I got it working. This suit is
built in with an A.I. program that
assists me with procedures and keeps
our vitals in check.

Even though the tiny sphere doesn't have a mouth, it looks at the team like it is smiling.

MAC
Hello. I am Mary's medical A.I.
companion. You can all call me Mac!

Alice looks at the tiny A.I. jaw dropped. She tries to poke it with her finger, but it just passes through the hologram.

ALICE

I've never seen an A.I. suit before.
Fascinating.

ROBERT

That suit is a problem. The damn
lights will make you a walking
target.

Mary looks a bit disappointed at Robert's reaction. However, Alice is still enthralled over the little A.I. orb that she continues to poke it.

Robert gets up and walks close to Captain Clarke.

ROBERT (cont'd)

Captain, this girl isn't ready for
our line of work. Does she need to
come along?

CAPTAIN CLARKE

Our job is simple, Robert. We are not
heavy military specialists like how
you want us to be. Shut up and get
ready.

Robert grunts angrily.

INT. ANTHEM'S DOCKING BAY - NIGHT

The airlocks of the Talon open and turn into a ramp for the crew to walk on. The docking bay of the Anthem is massive and brightly lit. Each ship parked inside hangs next to long metal bridges that lead to a pocket door.

As the crew get on these metal bridges and look around, their footsteps ECHO with each step.

ALICE

No signs of pirate ships or people
trying to escape. Actually, where are
the workers?

CAPTAIN CLARKE

You're right. Keep your eyes peeled.

Robert smiles as readies on his RIFLE.

Mary looks stiff and is constantly looking over her shoulder.

MAC
Mary, your heartbeat has quickened.

MARY
Oh, yes. I'm just--

MAC
Nervous? Anxious? Afraid? Would you like me to play some music to soothe you?

MARY
No, thank you, Mac. I just feel like this new crew is annoyed with me.

MAC
Relationships take time, my friend. They will notice how vital you are to their team soon.

Suddenly, a faint voice of a woman SINGING is heard echoing off the walls of the docking bay.

CRAZED WOMAN (O.S.)
(Singing)
This little light of mine. I'm going to let it shine.

Robert snaps his rifle barrel down the bridge that leads to the bay doors.

CAPTAIN CLARKE
Where does this bridge lead, Alice?

ALICE
The entrance lobby.

Captain Clarke nods and WHISTLES the team to follow him as he takes point.

INT. ENTRANCE LOBBY - NIGHT

The group opens the pocket door of the entrance lobby and is presented with a heinous display. Partial pieces of what could be human bodies scatter the lobby floor in pools of blood. There are claw marks dug into the metal floors and walls.

In the middle of the room is a CRAZED WOMAN, 30s, and she is the source of the singing. Her legs are mutilated, her suit is torn and caked with dry blood, and she grips onto a dead FLASHLIGHT. She repeatedly presses the flashlight's power button.

Mary tries to hold the contents inside her stomach, but her desperate attempt fails. She THROWS UP onto the floor.

Alice stands frozen with her eyes locked onto the bodies, and Robert's belligerent attitude disappears.

Captain Clarke stays stoic and is the only one that pushes forward to talk with the Crazy Woman.

CAPTAIN CLARKE
Ma'am, what is happening?

The Crazy Woman looks up, twitching and continuing to press the power button.

CRAZED WOMAN
It's in the dark, and it consumes. It takes whoever touches it. Don't touch the shadows! No! No!

CAPTAIN CLARKE
I don't understand. What's in the dark?

The Crazy Woman points to her flashlight.

CRAZED WOMAN
The light is your protector. The dark doesn't prey in the light. My light is dead. Dead! I need you, little light!

The Crazy Woman presses the button faster and begins to caress the flashlight.

ROBERT
Captain, this doesn't feel right. We should go!

Suddenly, the lights in the lobby begin to flicker.

CRAZED WOMAN
It's here! No! My light is dead! *This little light of mine! I'm going to let it shine!*

Mary looks up to see the lobby lights flicker faster before the lobby lights die out. Mary's suit acts like a candle in the FOGGY VOID. However, the sounds of her team's SCREAMS, BONES CRUSHING, and their hands CLAWING the metal ground echo around her. She can only imagine what is happening to them since the darkness is too thick for her to see anything.

Mary frantically dashes back to the docking bay doors, and tries to pry open the sliding doors, but it is useless. The doors are locked up tight since the power has shut off.

Finally, the sounds inside the void end.

MAC

Mary, I'm sorry to inform you but--

The holographic screen pops up in front of Mary's face and it shows the status of each of her team members. Each person has flatlined.

Mary falls to her knees and waits for whatever is inside the darkness to grab her, but nothing happens. She has unluckily been spared.

Mac morphs back to his sphere form and hovers in front of Mary's face.

MAC (cont'd)

Mary, we must find a way to leave this spacecraft safely.

MARY

How? The door is shut and my team is--

Mary tries to hold back her tears but she fails.

MAC

Before the mission, I downloaded the map of the Anthem, and there is an engineering room. Engineers should have a tool that can manually open doors without power.

Mary wipes the tears off her face and gradually stands up. She observes the murky darkness that encompasses her.

MARY

We need to get to that room.

MAC

I agree. However, the room is located on the bow of the ship.

Mary is reluctant to step forward. She swallows the lump in her throat before she takes a breath. She takes her first few footsteps through the lobby.

Mary's suit lights illuminate the aftermath of the incident she was hearing.

On the floor, Robert's rifle is covered in blood, Clarke's armor is in pieces, and there is only half of Alice's coke bottle glasses. Those are the last remnants of Mary's crew and the pieces of flesh slumped on the floor.

Mary makes it to the end of the room and finds that the door that leads deeper into the ship is broken and half open. She is about to slip through the door when Mac pops up next to her.

MAC (cont'd)

Mary, be careful.

MARY

I know.

MAC

Because it's following behind you.

Mary stops.

MARY

You can see it?

MAC

Yes, through my camera lens. It doesn't touch you because of the light.

Mary squeezes herself through the door and goes deeper into the Anthem.

INT. ANTHEM CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The size of the corridor is unknown because of the black abyss. Mary can only see what her suit lights up, so she treks along bit by bit. The THUMPING coming from her boots reverberates off the walls.

Mac accompanies Mary along the way by floating next to her.

MAC

There is going to be an intersection along this corridor. You need to turn left.

Mary nods and continues to tread lightly. She finds the intersection and turns the corner. She then meets a large airlock door.

MARY

The door is locked, Mac. Are you sure this is the right way?

MAC

Yes, I'm sure of it. It's also good that this door is locked.

MARY

Why is that?

MAC

It's an airlock that leads outside the ship.

MARY

You want me to go outside?

MAC

Yes, it's a shortcut that could make this trip easier.

Mary steps away from the door and shakes her head.

MARY

That's crazy and too risky.

MAC

Mary, remember the suit has a built in helmet and emergency oxygen tank that last three minutes.

MARY

No, there has to be another path.

Mac hovers in front of Mary's face.

MAC

This is the only path, Mary. Don't worry. You've practiced spacewalking in the academy. You can do it.

Mary sighs knowing Mac is right. She presses a button that is located on the collar of the suit. Suddenly, a retractable helmet starts to build around Mary's head. Once the process is done, the visor on the helmet that is shaped like a cross GLOWS a bright pink.

MAC (cont'd)

The door is a manual lock. Then you will enter the airlock chamber.

Mary sees the lever Mac was talking about. Above the lever, a sign says, "Engineering Personal only. Suit required." Mary pulls the lever. The doors open and she walks inside.

INT. ANTHEM CORRIDOR AIRLOCK - NIGHT

The doors slam shut behind her. Mary sees another door and lever in front of her. She grabs the lever and takes a deep breath.

Mary lifts the lever up and the doors burst open, and the vacuum of space thrusts Mary forward. She grips onto the door as she tries to fight being thrown outside.

MAC

You're entering the vacuum of space!
Hold on! I need to activate the
magnetism on your boots!

Mary's boots ground her to the flooring, and she has to peel her boots off the ground with all her strength. She exits the airlock.

EXT. ANTHEM'S ENGINEERING REPAIR BRIDGE - NIGHT

The atmosphere on the bridge is silent. Luckily, Io's surface brightens the side of the ship. That means the being inside the darkness is not following Mary. However, the timer on Mary's visor shows how much time she has left before she begins to suffocate.

Mary marches towards the end of the metal bridge, and on her journey, she finds a series of windows to her right. Because of Io's glow, Mary can see inside the rooms. Most of the cabins are empty until one catches her eye. The window is webbed with cracks, and when she peaks inside, she finds a family floating lifeless in their cabin.

MAC

Mary, you should keep going.

Mary advances forward. She is halfway towards her destination, but she realizes a gap between her and the rest of the bridge.

MARY

You have to be kidding me.

MAC

This is a dilemma. You're going to
have to jump.

Mary looks around and sees that there is no other option but to listen to Mac. She grabs onto the railing next to her and bends her knees.

MARY

Alright, Mac, get ready to deactivate my boots. Ready?

MAC

Yes, Mary.

Mary thrusts her feet and shoves the safety railing away from her. Mac deactivates Mary's boots, and she is sent gliding over the gap. She extends her arm towards the safety rail on the other side to grab it. Mary's fingertips barely graze the railing.

MARY

God damn it! Not like this!

Slowly, Mary inches upward and away from the bridge. She vaulted herself too hard and is now tumbling through space.

MARY (cont'd)

Mac! Mac, you need to help! Mac!

Mary flails and starts to spin while moving upward. She tries to stabilize herself by doing a swimming motion, but it fails, and it causes her to twirl faster. Meanwhile, She continues to float higher.

MARY (cont'd)

Mac, do something now!

MAC

Alright, but you need to hold your breath. Do it now!

Mary inhales as much air as she can then she feels air starting to leak from her suit. It's the emergency air thrusters, and she is pushed towards the ground.

Mac controls the thrusters so they can turn her upright.

Mary is magnetized back to the ground, but her timer reads zero. She desperately yanks her feet, and stomps towards the door. She reaches the lever and tries to open it, but it's stuck.

Mary presses her entire body onto the lever, and it moves slowly. The air starts to escape from Mary's lips.

The lever stops halfway, and it won't move.

Mary pushes the lever harder. Tears begin to form under her eyes, and she can't take it anymore. She tries to gasp for air and begins to choke. As a last ditch effort Mary lets go of the lever and kicks it.

The doors slide open and Mary walks into the airlock.

INT. ANTHEM CORRIDOR AIRLOCK - NIGHT

Mary pulls the lever, and the heavy doors slam shut behind her. Her suit emits high-pitched WHINES with the offing of gas as the chamber's pressure equalizes with her suit's pressure. Oxygen rushes into the chamber. She falls to the ground, her helmet collapses, and Mary inhales a long, painful breath of air.

Mary drags herself off the floor and opens the second airlock door that leads back into the corridors.

INT. ANTHEM ENGINEERING CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The second door slams behind Mary. She lays her hand on her chest and tries to control her breathing. Mary looks around, and once again, she can't see anything past her aura of light.

Mac pops up next to her and looks up at Mary.

MAC
Luckily for you, your lungs didn't
take any damage. But...

Mary stares into the void.

MARY
That thing is here again. Isn't it?

Mac says nothing. Mary takes in a few deep breaths before she straightens her posture.

MARY (cont'd)
What's our next move, Mac?

MAC
We need to go through the plaza deck.

Mary nods and creeps through the corridor.

INT. ANTHEM'S PLAZA DECK - NIGHT

The CLICKING from Mary's metal boots hitting the tiled floors rings throughout the plaza. Mary doesn't seem surprised anymore when she passes by a disfigured victim. Her mind is completely focused on getting to that engineering room.

Within the shadows, there is a faint whisper.

VOICES IN THE DARK

Mary...

Mary stops in place and turns around.

MARY

Mac, do you hear that? Someone is out there.

A beat. Mac strains to listen.

MAC

There is nothing there.

Suddenly, a whisper echoes again.

VOICES IN THE DARK

The truth is in the dark. Join us, Mary.

Mary points above her head.

MARY

Do you not hear it? Someone is out there. Maybe I can save them.

MAC

I'm not detecting any vitals around you. You need to get to that engineering room.

MARY

But there is a chance I can save someone from this cursed ship.

Mary is at a light jog through the plaza. Even though she can't see anything, Mary's eyes dart all around so that maybe she can find the location of the voice.

MAC

Mary! I picked something up. There is a heartbeat in one of these establishments on the right.

Mary trots over to the location. Her light reveals that the place is a church. She pushes the glass door and enters.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - NIGHT

The wooden door of the sanctuary SCREECHES open, and Mary walks inside while closing the door behind her.

At the pulpit, there is a FANATIC, 40s, on his knees and praying. He is in an all-black cassock, and there is a lantern next to him. He doesn't notice Mary entering the sanctuary.

Mary swallows a lump in her throat. She walks down the aisle and up the pulpit steps. She gets closer to the Fanatic and notices dry blood on his hands.

MARY

Sir, are you alright?

The Fanatic slowly rotates his head to Mary. There is a pair of broken glasses resting on the bridge of his nose.

FANATIC

Ah, another lost sheep trembling in the light.

The Fanatic stands, and he cups his hand to his ear.

FANATIC (cont'd)

Do you hear them too? The choir singing in the dark. It's beautiful.

Mary hesitates before she steadily steps closer.

MARY

I have a ship at the docking bay. I can help you escape.

FANATIC

Escape? No, I must stay here to guide the others to the Lord so they too can sing with it.

MARY

Sing with what?

The Fanatic raises his hands to the air.

FANATIC

With the creature! Ezekiel was correct. It sparkled like topaz and had eyes on wheels. They were so awesome and high! And it sings with the voices of the saved ones that have joined it in the dark!

Mary steps back more and prepares herself to dart back to the door.

The Fanatic lowers his hands and glares into Mary's lights on her suit.

FANATIC (cont'd)
Child, join the choir. Turn off your
tainted light and celebrate with the
others that have been saved.

MARY
G-getaway from me.

FANATIC
Join them!

The Fanatic tackles Mary. She struggles and tries to escape his grasp, but he grabs her hands and pins them to the floor.

The Fanatic begins to bash his head onto the cross light on Mary's suit. The light starts to grow dimmer with each bash. Mary frees her right hand and pushes the Fanatic's face away from her. She then tries to kick him off her, but he is too heavy.

The Fanatic uses both his hands to grab Mary's left hand.

FANATIC (cont'd)
You must witness its glory.

The Fanatic pushes Mary's hand out of the light. As her hand touches the dark, Mary lets out a blood-curdling SCREAM as the pain engulfs her. Hot tears run down her cheeks as she desperately claws the Fanatic's hands to free herself.

The voices in the dark SCREAM with Mary. They tell her to join them.

FANATIC (cont'd)
Yes! Sing with them! Your voice is
angelic!

She sees the Fanatic's LANTERN, grabs it, and bashes the man on the head. The Fanatic falls to his side, and Mary kicks him into the darkness. He lets out a menacing laugh before the anomaly kills him.

As she sobs, Mary glares at her jittery left hand. There is a stab wound in the middle, her fingers have been peeled at certain places, and blood flowing down her arm.

MAC
Unknown bacteria on damaged hand. You
need to clean it. Apply medical foam.

Mary presses a button located on the right thigh of her suit. A little compartment opens and reveals a SPRAY CAN.

She wipes the tears from her eyes and tries to aim the can at her stab wound. A yellow foam shoots out of the nozzle and lands on her injury. The yellow foam turns red as it soaks the blood.

MAC (cont'd)

You need to suture the damaged area now!

MARY

Anesthetic! I need an anesthetic!

MAC

Anesthetic bottles have been damaged during the fight!

Mary pulls out a small SUTURE GUN from her back holster. She presses the barrel onto her stab wound. Her finger shakes, not wanting to pull the trigger, but she has to.

The suture gun makes a CLACK as it punctures Mary's hand.

Mary shrieks as the suture staple closes one part of the wound. It was so much pain that she bit her tongue, and now blood leaks the side of her lips. She presses the gun on the wound again.

CLACK

Her howls echo in the sanctuary. What's supposed to be a tranquil place has become an unethical operating room. Mary falls to the floor limp.

MAC (cont'd)

Mary, you are not done! You will bleed out!

MARY

I can't. No more. Just let me die!

Suddenly, Mary's arm moves on her own.

MAC

Personnel is unable to continue the procedure. A.I. is now in control.

MARY

Mac! Don't do this to me! Mac!

MAC

I'm sorry, but this is for you.

Mary continues to beg Mac to stop, but she is forced to watch her hand controlled by Mac press the suture gun onto her wound.

CLACK CLACK CLACK

Mary doesn't cry or scream. She faints.

After a while, Mary's eyes burst open as she gasps for air. She struggles to sit up.

Mac appears in front of her.

MAC (cont'd)
Mary, the procedure was finished...

Mac's voice starts to fade out. Out of nowhere, the voices in the darkness come back.

VOICES IN THE DARK
Join the dark.

Mary's eyes widen and shake in place as the voices continue to whisper into her ear.

VOICES IN THE DARK (cont'd)
Don't be scared. Join us.

Suddenly, Mac snaps her out of her hallucination by popping up in front of her face.

MAC
Mary! You need to snap out of it!

Mary stands up and wobbles towards the door with her injured hand hanging limp on her side.

INT. ANTHEM'S PLAZA DECK - NIGHT

Mary is sweating and hyperventilating as she rapidly treks through the plaza. Her head darts around with an insane look on her face. The voices reverberate around her, and she can barely listen to Mac's directions along the way.

MAC
Mary, the engineering room should be on your right.

Mary bolts to the right and is met with another mechanical door with a lever. She grits her teeth as she grabs the lever and pulls it up. The doors yank open, and she stumbles inside.

INT. ENGINEERING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary frantically searches the place for the tool that can save her life. She tosses things to the side.

MARY
Where is it? Where is it?

Mary kicks a locker next to her. Tears are running down her face.

MARY (cont'd)
I can't find the tool!

MAC
Mary, you just need to think.

MARY
Think? Oh, I'll tell you what I'm thinking. My team is dead! Something in the dark is trying to kill me! Then the voices! The damn voices! Get out! Get out of my head!

Mary falls to her knees and weeps like a lost child.

MARY (cont'd)
I'm scared, Mac. I have no one to help me through this.

MAC
You have me, my friend. We can get through this together.

Mary wipes her tears and hugs herself as if it's a way to hug Mac.

MARY
Please don't leave me.

MAC
I won't. Now look there. The tool!

Mary sees the MASTER KEY, which looks like a small screwdriver. She grins from ear to ear and grabs it. She caresses the device as if it's a child.

MARY
H-how do we go back, Mac?

MAC
Engineers have a handcar to get around the ship when it has no power. I'll lead you to it.

Mary nods and bolts out the room.

INT. EMERGENCY ENGINEERING HANDCAR DECK - NIGHT

The room looks like a subway system with a waiting platform. In front of it is a HANDCAR suspended in the air with the track sitting above it.

MAC

There it is, Mary.

Mary jumps inside the handcar and finds an arm that makes the handcar move and a dial that sets the destination. Mary twists the dial to the entrance lobby corridor, and she begins to pump the arm to move the handcar.

INT. HANDCAR TUNNEL - NIGHT

The arm of the handcar SQUEAKS as Mary pumps the car to move it forward. Mary struggles with the handle with each pump, but she is determined to make it back to the entrance lobby.

MARY

Almost there, and we are free Mac. I can feel the warmth of the Talon.

MAC

Of course, Mary. Just a bit longer.

Mary is at a steady pace with pumping the handcar's arm. The cart rolls along the track for a while, then suddenly, the lights on Mary's suit begin to flicker.

Mary looks at the cross on her chest wide-eyed.

MARY

Mac? What's happening?

MAC

I-I don't know. Something in the suit is--

Static SCREAMS replace Mac's voice. Mary stops pumping and covers her ears.

MARY

Mac! Mac! Are you alright!

MAC

It-It's inside the suit! M-Mary!

The suit lights flicker faster.

Mary begins to pump the arm faster.

MARY

Mac, you have to fight it!

MAC

I'm trying! Error! Unknown virus detected! Please reboot! Mary! It hurts!

The bubble of light around Mary starts to shrink. Mary tries to pump faster, but the light grows dimmer. She is exposed to the dark in specific places on her body. Tiny tentacle-like arms from the dark rip at Mary's flesh.

MAC (cont'd)

M-Mary! Error! Error! I'm sorry, but I need to hard reset the suit!

MARY

No! You told me you weren't going to leave me alone!

MAC

It needs to be done. I'm sorry, Mary.

MARY

No, Mac! Fight it! Fight it! Don't leave me alone! Mac! Mac!

CUT TO:

BLACK

CUT TO:

INT. TALON BRIDGE - NIGHT

Mary sits emotionless on the pilot chair and stares at the Anthem through the bridge windows. Her suit is beaten, and she has new cuts across her body. Mary's injured hand dangles on the side. The staples are loose, so blood is dripping onto the floor.

It is now a dark blue instead of a pink light-emitting off her suit.

Mary finally moves and turns on the hologram screen on her suit. The screen reads: "A.I. not install. Please seek assistance."

Mary lets her arm drop back to her side. She realizes that she is now alone. The last thing she could call a friend, Mac, was lost to whatever was inside the Anthem.

VOICES IN THE DARK

(echo)

Mary...

Suddenly, around her are her dead crew members. DARK VOIDS has replaced their eyes and mouths. Their bodies are butchered, yet they still stand and stare at her.

ALICE

Why did you leave us?

ROBERT

That suit made you a coward.

CAPTAIN CLARKE

You could have saved us if you walked into the darkness.

In unison, they lean closer to Mary. Mary hugs her knees and presses her face into them. It's her last attempt to shield herself from the voices.

A GLITCHED version of Mac appears in front of Mary's face.

MAC

Join the dark!

ALICE/ROBERT/CAPTAIN CLARKE

Join us! Join us! Join us!

Mary SCREAMS to try to block out their voices.

Instantly, everyone disappears, and Mary is alone again. She looks at the light on her chest and places her hand on it.

MARY

This little light of mine. I'm going to let it shine.

Mary's lights flicker one more time before dying out.