

Coletti Warlords: Game On Askole

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Author's Note

The first half of Game on Askole is a prequel to Vexing Voss and the second part moves forward three years.

PART ONE

Prologue

My name is Sarah Jones. I'm a marine lieutenant and kickass fighter pilot. My mission is to save humanity from the Tai-Kok. How did all this start? It started with an alien blitzkrieg. The Tai-Kok shocked and awed our military with a spectacular display of force, hoping to destroy our will to fight. The news medias' horrific stories about the Tai-Kok's butchery made it clear. You fought or you died.

The Jones family's psychic abilities gave the world an early warning system, allowing people time to get to the underground shelters before the Tai-Kok could turn them into sushi. For those of us who have met the Tai-Kok in person, the image of these tall, hairless, skeletal humanoids with mouths' full of sharp metal teeth and three bloodred eyes are forever burned into our minds.

Those depraved ghouls literally live to eat. How they found our world or why they consider us lip-smacking good, no one knows. We did try to communicate with the murderous aliens, but their language consists of a series of cacophonous honks and quacks. Linguists have been working on translating it, but after the monsters slaughtered a school full of children, everyone was more concerned with finding a permanent way to stop them.

The one good thing that resulted from the Tai-Kok's attacks was it unified humanity. For the first time in recorded history, every country on Earth joined forces to fight the alien invaders, and Central Command was born.

The Tai-Kok ate their way across Europe and the Middle East until they had the bad luck to capture Assad, a suicide bomber, and take him aboard their ship for snack time. Back then, the monsters didn't search their food for weapons. Big mistake. Assad's entire family had been massacred by the monsters, and he allowed himself to be caught. Assad blew himself up over the Pacific, and the badly damaged ship crash-landed

outside Tucson, Arizona. We salvaged their technology and have been using it against them ever since.

Two months ago, while scanning the solar system for our enemies, my cousin Kaylee Jones made the mistake of psychically linking with Talree, a Coletti warlord. It turned into one hell of a “first contact.” The alien warlord immediately clamped on to her mind like a tick on a hunting dog. No matter what she did, Kaylee couldn’t break free.

That was when Talree made his big announcement. Kaylee was his mate. Big honor, Talree said. It didn’t matter if Kaylee was willing or not. She was his. Forever. Luckily, she fell in love with the big jerk, and the warlord cherishes her. Yuck. No alien smooches for me.

Kaylee’s warlord did agree to stop the Tai-Kok and Rodan from raiding our world. But the bad news was, warlords aren’t benevolent do-gooder types, and there was a price for them helping us. Our women.

After that, I wanted to know what the hell had happened to all their females. Big shocker—the Colettis’ tendency to take things that didn’t belong to them had consequences.

Six hundred years ago, the Coletti race had almost been wiped out in the Great Galactic War. The chemicals used in the war created a genetic anomaly, and only one female baby was born for every one thousand Coletti males. In other words, they were facing extinction

To save his people, Zarek, the Overlord of the Coletti clans, did what any fiercely protective warlord would do. He started raiding other planets and species for their prized psychic females. When the Overlord discovered the Jones family’s unique psychic powers and our blood’s ability to heal cellular damage, he promptly seized control of Earth.

The second Zarek signed the treaty promising to protect Earth from Tai-Kok and Rodan raids, Central Command arrested every Jones serving in the military. They

injected us with tracking devices and gave us to the Coletti. We had stopped the monsters from slaughtering hundreds of thousands of people, and this was the thanks we got?

General Georgina Tasker said surrendering us to the Coletti was for the greater good. Billions of lives in exchange for a few psychics. It was a win-win situation for Central Command. With the Coletti warbirds circling overhead, Central Command didn't need Jones Sirens to warn of an imminent attack or our ability to bring down the Tai-Kok ships.

Shortly thereafter, the warlords transferred thirty-five members of my immediate family to their new base outside Tucson. That was when the fun started. Each one of us was to be interrogated about our psychic abilities, medically scanned, and logged into the Coletti computer system like so much livestock.

Lucky me, I was one of the first to be delivered to the Coletti base. All those bastards were getting out of me was my name, rank, and serial number. I was a decorated Marine fighter pilot with eight hundred confirmed kills and they were batshit crazy if they thought I would hook up with an alien. Never gonna happen. Oorah!

Chapter One

The fact that I had eight hundred kills intrigued the Coletti. The chief interrogator was called Oydle. He had to be a hybrid or a ringer. I mean, c'mon, a fat Coletti? With that jelly belly, how did he fight? And what was up with his fancy red dress uniform? Did the Coletti consider interrogations a formal event? If so, the least they could do was put some sequins on my crappy orange jumpsuit and shackles.

Big surprise. The new Coletti garrison came complete with its own interrogation room. There were thingamajigs on the metal walls, which I assumed were cameras or monitors. The Coletti hoped to catch me using my powers. Which wasn't going to happen, no matter how much I was provoked.

My fingers twitched. I needed some grooming scissors. Oydle's bushy eyebrows looked like two woolly caterpillars had crawled up there and died. Tufts of hair stuck out in every direction, and don't even get me started on his warty, bulbous nose. Yuck, yuck, and yuck. Then there was his hair. I shuddered. Oydle's warrior braids reminded me of moldy dreadlocks. Yep. He could pass for an ugly troll out of one of those fantasy books Aunt Tess liked to read.

"Tell I what powers possess you."

A hard-to-understand troll. I gave him the one-finger salute. "My name is Sarah Jones. I'm a Marine lieutenant. My serial number is 888549405."

"Tell what possess." His snarl revealed two broken, yellowed fangs.

My eyes crossed. His breath was a lethal weapon. "My name is Sarah Jones. I'm a Marine lieutenant. My serial number is 888549405."

"How wham Tai-Kok?" Flies crawled across Oydle's face. He brushed them away. Twenty more of the pests landed on him. He swiped at them, but the persistent buggers kept coming back.

"Here are I," Aunt Tess announced in my head. "You owe me fifty bucks. I told ya I could infiltrate the Overlord's base."

"You did."

Oydle asked again, "How wham Tai-Kok?"

Aunt Tess snickered. *"I thought the Coletti spoke perfect English."*

"Usually. He's not quite what he seems."

"I agree. For shits and giggles, the Overlord and his minions are probably watching your interrogation on the warbird's big screen and eatin' their version of popcorn."

"Without a doubt, and they have all sorts of scanners trained on us too." I mouthed, *fuck you* at one of the surveillance cameras.

"Let's see how our pretend Coletti deals with a fly infestation of biblical proportions."

I grinned as Aunt Tess's flies arrived by the hundreds, and they seemed to love Oydle's scent. A lot.

"You tell—" Flies flew into Oydle's mouth. He swallowed them and smacked his lips.

Oh, ick. "My name is Sarah Jones. I'm a Marine lieutenant. Yada. Yada. Yada." I wondered how long it would take him to realize I was fly free.

"How wham!" He batted crazily at the flies. "Tell how wham."

Boy, would I like to wham him up the side of the head, but I was handcuffed to the chair. I knew the prick's goal was to push me into using my psychic powers. Fat chance. "My name is Sarah Jones. Oh hell, you should have the rest memorized by now."

"Tell how kill."

"You wanna know how to kill the flies? Well, first you need a fly swatter or some bug spray."

"Kill Tai-Kok! Kill Tai-Kok!" Oydle's level of frustration was growing.

I asked sweetly, "Aw. Do you need help killing the Tai-Kok too?"

"No. You how kill?"

"Me? With my laser cannons."

Oydle shook his head. "Use more."

"Sometimes a Sidewinder or R40 missile will do the job."

Bzzzzzzzzz. The hum of thousands of bees suddenly filled the room. My eyes widened at the size of the swarm coming out of the garrison's conveniently open air vents. Aunt Tess had been a busy girl. *"Any more surprises?"*

"Honey, you haven't seen anything yet."

Clusters of angry wasps flew into the room.

Aunt Tess was the best critter wrangler ever. Not one bee, fly, or wasp came anywhere near me.

"You blab now." Oydle swatted wildly at the bees dive-bombing his head. Which only pissed them off. They started stinging him.

To my surprised disgust, the bee venom had little effect on him.

"Blab or take by force."

There was no way in hell I was going to tell him what he wanted to know. Were my commanding officers traitors? Had they ratted me out? Maybe. For now, only my family knew I was very, very good at mind control and had awesome mental shields. The pilots in my squadron knew there wasn't an aircraft I couldn't fly or a lock I couldn't open, but only a few knew about my psychic tracking talents.

Oydle grabbed my braid and yanked my head back. "Warned. Me take lie."

"Say what?"

The creep tried to force his way into my mind.

I giggled at the intense tickling sensation. "Is this a new interrogation technique? Tickle torture?"

"No. You fear power mine."

I laughed. Zarek, the mighty Overlord of the Coletti clans, might be able to breach my mental shields, but Oydle? No way in hell. "My name is Sarah Jones. I'm a Marine lieutenant. My serial number is 888549405."

"Get ready. My strike force is in position," Aunt Tess informed me.

"Semper Fi." This was going to be fun.

A wasp landed on Oydle's bulbous nose.

The idiot whacked at it and yelped when the wasp bit him.

Huh? Wasp toxin did affect him.

The insects attacked Oydle. His slapping and stomping reminded me of a Texas line dance. *Smack. Clap. Stomp. Stomp. Clap. Smack. Clap. Stomp. Stomp. Clap.*

Aunt Tess's strike force consisted of a couple dozen tarantulas and scorpions. They surged up Oydle's legs, and he totally lost it. He wasn't a Coletti. Warlords never hollered like little girls. The wuss pulled his laser pistol and started blasting away at the insects.

I hopped my chair behind a desk complete with a futuristic holoscreen. I flinched as a beam struck the holoscreen. *Bam!* It exploded in a shower of sparks. I tipped the chair over and winced as I hit my head on the desk. Maybe it was time to start using my powers.

Nothing Oydle did got rid of the insects. The stun beams only pissed off the little varmints, turning them into a marauding horde straight out of a horror movie. They swarmed over Oydle, covering him from head to toe and biting the shit out of him.

A big, fat skunk scampered into the room. Aunt Tess was an evil, evil woman. The little stinker sprayed the crap out of Oydle. Pee-yooo!

"Time to get the hell out of Dodge," Aunt Tess said.

"You betcha. The skunk spray is pretty awful." I hit the shackles with a tentacle of power and presto. They released.

The interrogation room door slid open, and Aunt Tess motioned at me from the hallway. "Let's go."

Projectile vomit spewed from Oydle's mouth.

I gagged. And I thought it smelled bad before. My Spidey sense abruptly flared to life. It felt like a prickly cactus had taken up residence in my mind, but my internal radar had never failed me. "Incoming hostiles, Aunt Tess."

Ten seconds later, immense power rippled around me, and Voss, Zarek's formidable battle commander, teleported into the room. His black battle suit emphasized every bulging muscle, and the expression on his face threatened my bladder control. He blocked me from leaving. "Going so soon?" His English was perfect.

The sneaky bastards had been watching. "Yeah." I pointed at Oydle and the teeming horde of insects. "I'm getting away from that. You really need to hire a good pest control company to come in and exterminate." I switched to mind talk. *"Get out of here, Tess."*

"Too late. Damn. He's built like the Rocky Mountains."

I caught a fleeting glimpse of her backing away from an enormous Coletti warrior in the corridor.

Crap, she needed help. I fainted to the left, then bolted around Voss.

He grabbed my ponytail and hauled me back. "Do you really think you are strong enough to defeat Rho or me?"

My temper flared to life. "Never underestimate a Jones." I whipped my head around and crunched down hard on Voss's fingers.

"Do you have a death wish, female?" He pried my jaws open.

Like I could answer with a mouthful of Coletti? I hooked my right foot behind Voss's heel in a fast sweep and knocked him off his feet.

The Battle Commander hit the puke-covered floor and vanished. *Poof!* Ten seconds later, Voss reappeared and pinned me against the wall. Teleporting should be illegal.

"Nice move, little female."

I eyed the scorpion sitting on his shoulder and grinned. "Thank you."

Voss turned his head and sighed. The scorpion raised its stinger. With a flick of his finger, the Battle Commander sent the insect flying across the room. It landed on Oydle's warrior braids. The poor guy took one look at it and screeched bloody murder.

"Good shot." I chortled.

A low growl rumbled in Voss's chest.

"You kinda sound like a grizzly bear." I cocked my head and examined his nice sharp fangs. "Kinda act like one too. Big, aggressive, and bad-tempered."

"Do not provoke me again. You will not like the consequences."

I put on my best terrified expression. "Oh my God! Please don't hurt me. Please don't hurt me. Please. Please. Please don't hurt me. Please. Please."

Voss clamped a hand over my mouth. "Are you done?"

I nodded.

He removed his hand and stepped back. "Are all Jones females like you?"

"Pretty much. If you're looking for docile broodmares, that ain't us." Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Rho, the mountain, pounce on Aunt Tess. There was a brief tussle as Rho easily overpowered her. He carried her into the interrogation room.

"You okay Sarah?" Aunt Tess's tone was a bit too syrupy.

"Yup. You?"

"Been better." Aunt Tess drove the heel of her combat boot into Rho's knee. "Put me down."

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"No." Rho's voice was a gravelly rumble.

When Aunt Tess got that peeved look on her face, bad things happened.

"They say the Coletti don't have balls. Shall we find out?" Twisting in his grip, Aunt Tess kneed Rho in the groin.

Her blow didn't seem to affect him a bit.

"Guess the rumors are true."

"Your pitiful blows cannot damage me, female." Rho's face was crisscrossed with pale scars that added to his menacing air.

"That's Lieutenant Colonel Jones to you, buster." She pried at the muscular arm wrapped around her chest. "I don't answer to *female*."

"But you are a female," Rho deadpanned.

Aunt Tess regarded him incredulously. "Seriously?"

A stun beam sizzled by the Battle Commander's ear. He snapped, "Oydle!"

The wannabe Coletti warrior's shrieks stopped abruptly, and he quit firing. His face and hands were covered with red welts. He panted like a woman in labor. With that belly, he could be pregnant. Maybe he was an alien hermaphrodite getting ready to hatch.

The skunk scampered out of the room. I heard several startled shouts in the corridor. Aw, the little guy was making new friends.

In a quiet, terrifying voice, the Battle Commander ordered, "Send the creatures away, Tess."

"What makes you so sure I can control them?"

"The battle on Jabal. You used your talents, with the Overlord augmenting your powers, to compel the Afulas and Kotsors into attacking the rogue Colettis."

I smothered a groan. She was so busted. The alien crocs and monster spiders had made short work of the bad guys. A sudden thought hit me. Oh my God. The Overlord had been in my head too. How much did he know?

"Let us go, and I'll be happy to oblige," Aunt Tess countered.

The Battle Commander smiled a scary-ass sociopath's smile. "Send them away. Now."

The flying bugs left the room. The scorpions and tarantulas quickly followed.

I scowled. "Wait a minute. This whole interrogation was a ruse. Why?"

"Quinn." Aunt Tess gasped. "They want Quinn."

Shit! My cousin Quinn was an extremely powerful psychic, and the bastards couldn't afford to let him live. A cold fury flared inside me. No one messed with the Jones clan. I took control of Oydle's mind and ordered, "*Stun the Battle Commander and his goon.*"

Oydle obediently shot the Battle Commander. A crackling red energy storm ricocheted around Voss's battle suit before dissipating harmlessly.

Bummer. Other than a few random muscle twitches, Voss was unaffected by the stun beam.

Rho, a fast-draw expert, blasted Oydle. The warrior collapsed as violent muscle spasms shook his body.

Well, shit. I scooped up Oydle's laser pistol. The next thing I knew, I was locked in a bone-crushing grip. Voss increased the pressure on my right hand until I dropped the pistol.

"I won't let you kill Quinn."

"We want Quinn and your male relatives alive and reasonably unharmed," the Battle Commander murmured in my ear.

"I thought you boys were only interested in broodmares," Tess retorted.

"Males can be converted as easily as females."

Aunt Tess and I exchanged stunned glances. In unison, we asked, "Why convert the men?"

"The Jones family DNA is quite unique. Our scientists think combing our DNAs with the Jones clan's will reverse the cellular damage done in the Great War and accelerate our birthrate," Voss answered.

"Oh joy," Aunt Tess remarked. "You convert our men, and they go out and hopefully sire female children?"

"We do what we must to survive."

"So do we. The Jones family has never lost a battle." I wiggled in Voss's painful grip. Yeow! He was cutting off my circulation.

Voss grinned down at me. "We are aware of your family's tactical skills. Once you are converted, you will make excellent Coletti warriors."

"I can't tell you how happy that makes me."

"Yeah, popping out little warlords has always been our dream," Aunt Tess added. Oydle puked again.

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Want to know what happens next?

<http://www.loose-id.com/coletti-warlords-game-on-askole.html>