



Storming the Beach

The assault force emerged from the ocean as silent as wraiths.

Jake Hunter watched them from his craggy vantage point. With the distinctive crunch of leather, Jake clenched his gloved fist. His confusion and anger seemed to enhance his superpowers. And after all the betrayal, lying, and violence that had surrounded him recently, the powers felt stronger than ever. It felt as though pins were stabbing his fingertips.

'Rats . . . there go my gloves,' he muttered under his breath as his fingernails extended like cats' claws, thickening as they ripped through the tips of his gloves. They formed long razor—sharp talons that shone like black marble in the moonlight.

A week ago he had just been an ordinary schoolboy. And now he was a superpowered global fugitive wanted for theft, kidnapping, blackmail; and he was instrumental in the pending destruction of the planet.

Not bad for a fourteen year old.

The spear of rock he was standing on poked from the



Storming the Beach

they rode up his backside but he couldn't pull them loose for fear of slicing himself with his claws.

Jake rose into the air. It felt just like rapidly ascending in a lift. He focused his mind, realizing that he was going to need a lot of firepower if he was going to take out the invading party. His fingers stretched painfully apart as an invisible power swelled in his palms. He closed his eyes and it felt as though he was holding a pair of bowling balls at arm's length. When he flicked his eyes back open, they burnt like fiery coals. His vision was bathed in red, enhancing living creatures from the general background clutter by showing the electrical pulses through their bodies. He now saw them as shimmering figures, almost like angels. There was nowhere for them to hide.

Jake tilted forward and was suddenly rocketing over the palm trees. Within thirty seconds he was at the beach before any of the advancing army could reach cover.

To the men on the ground it looked as if a huge black vulture was descending on them. They all raised their rifles to fire as he swooped overhead, arms extended towards the ground.

Jake felt twin cones of force erupt from his hands and punch into the Enforcers. Some of the men were hurled through the air. The troopers left standing had the presence of mind to squeeze their triggers and shoot.



Storming the Beach

easily see the electric signatures of the troops who thought they were safely concealed in the jungle. He let out a heavy sigh, knowing he had better finish this off.

Jake dived straight down, arms outstretched, and willed another burst of energy from his hands. It zeroed straight for the second Sea Crawler.

The Enforcers cowering in the trees watched as an invisible hammer smashed the Crawler's cab a metre under the sand—the tail of the vehicle was left poking at an angle into the air.

'Sarge!' wailed a terrified young soldier.

'Pipe down!' growled a muscular sergeant with a Scottish accent.

Jake landed with a thump on the beach, facing the men. He allowed his long claws to tap rhythmically against his leg, in what he hoped was a menacing manner. His clothes absorbed the moonlight, and his glowing eyes gave him a fearsome appearance.

'Er . . . right . . .' he mumbled. He couldn't think of *anything* suitably threatening to say since his head was still swimming with recent revelations.

Then the ground shook, making every bone in his body vibrate and his fillings jangle. The braver of the troopers risked a glance behind, through the foliage, at the volcano. A massive plume of smoke spewed from the volcano's cone, lit by flaming debris.

It had begun.





Jake's antics over the last week had been truly awful, even by his own standards. But they were nothing compared to the erupting volcano and what it signified. Jake knew that the Core Probe had been launched and was now burrowing to the centre of the earth.

After the backstabbing treachery of the last few days, it looked as if he'd either be dead or in a cell on Diablo Island before he found out the consequences of his actions.