

by Max Barry



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The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by **The Macabees** » Wed Apr 06, 2016 1:31 pm

QUOTE

Battle of Citadel

Barbakán Kudadel [*Part of the Attestor attack.*]

Another night shift for Lans Dardel, blood red and tired eyes straining to stay open while he looked at a pale green screen, which displayed an assortment of seemingly random data points. Random to the untrained eye, at least, although not to Dardel's. Far away from home, sitting in a cold room several dozen meters under a bed of concrete and steel, not only did the young *kabos* feel drowsy, but lonely and misused as well. Stationed in a country far, far away, in Gholgoth no less, his emotions did not need explaining. A soldier's life, especially that of an auxiliary — stripped from his homeland for more than two decades, oftentimes forever —, is not easy. At least the shifts in that frosty cellar were short, and the job was simple. Dardel forced himself to look at the screen, looking at the small dots move across the landscape.

He wasn't the only one in that cell, its concrete walls dull and barren, with hardly an item to decorate it apart from all the machinery and computers. Not that there were many other souls there; just enough to run the base's main airspace control and observation room, which amounted to five others. A skeleton crew really; sufficient to run the hardware during nights like these, when war was a distant threat. Maybe not so distant, with the Scandinavian Empire a couple of thousand kilometers eastwards. Still, tonight was a night of peace. Or, so they thought.

Whether it was Kudadel's own radar system, which wasn't incredibly elaborate on its own, or the Skyan's that caused the sudden influx of data, the fact wasn't particularly important. What *was* was the sudden klaxon that sounded surprisingly faint through the thick, dull grey walls of the compound. The air raid siren was going off. Luckily, the airspace control and observation room did not have a klaxon of its own, to spare the men from that annoying wail, but it was loud enough to penetrate even the three-feet of concrete that separated Dardel and the five others from the hallway that connected them to the rest of the base. Neither were the six men (two of them actually women) spared the bright and incessant streaks of lights coming from the red warning bulb hoisted high on the far wall, just under the ceiling. Grey walls were painted rouge and soldiers were spurred to action.

Action for these men and women meant hunching over and closely observing their monitors, of course. But it was vital work, to coordinate between the swarm of data and the dozens of anti-air

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batteries arrayed within *Barbakán* Kudadel. These batteries, which were an assortment of Praetorian mobile surface-to-air missile launchers and SPAA-1 self-propelled cannons, were now spewing thunder against dark skies, helping their Skyan brethren light up the clouds like lightning. Even as deep as Dardel was, well beneath the Macabean base, he could hear the faint rumble of artillery. He shuddered to think what it sounded like on the surface.

His screen danced as new data points fluttered into view and then disappeared. Missiles. Air-to-surface, surface-to-air, and air-to-air. They waltzed their particular song of death, streaking through the air like sharks towards the scent of freshly spilled blood. Their origins were many: Skyan missiles struck Scandinvan targets, and vice versa. Macabean and Skyan surface-to-air missiles climbed from the battlements below towards their prey, the Scandinvan airships and troop carriers filling the night sky. They followed unpredictable patterns and, despite being launched without intentional waste, the barrage seemed incessant. Young Dardel's eyes darted and twitched trying to keep up with it all, and the *kabos* resigned himself to following the important stuff — Scandinvan targets. He was drowsy no longer. His eyes were wide and bright.

If someone were to doubt the deadliness of the SPAA-1 it would be quite the mistake. Their dual 88mm cannons spat fire, streaks of ice blue and hot orange trailing a rhythmic release of round-after-round. CAPMES rounds were particularly mean contraptions and perfect for this kind of night. They were designed to release thousands of sharp bits of metals, which were meant to tear through wings, warheads, and — in this night's case — powered armored infantrymen. Like fireworks, but without the dazzling rainbow-colored lights, the Macabean munitions made their deadly patterns against the twinkling and half-hidden stars above. Crisscrossing the shrapnel were the missiles of varied origin, and the Skyan anti-air batteries were adding their own music to the battle's song.

Narata Beyón, the delicate lines of her face radiating a distressed beauty, turned away from her own screen. Young, but brilliant — a mind meant for better things than war —, her job was to filter the sensor array data to provide relevant information to the rest of the team, including Dardel. The actual filtering was automated, of course, so she dedicated herself to refining the algorithms behind her software. Truly a brain built for more productive, and less destructive, work. She stared for a while at Dardel, who was still entranced with his green-black monitor, and smiled. Even in a situation as grim as their own, love transcends. Even an early, just barely nascent love.

Dardel returned her stare, his cool blue eyes meeting hers. But, he did not smile. He turned away and stuffed his hand down his pocket to retrieve a folded letter. Opening it, he re-read the last letter he had received from his brother. Even in Gholgoth as he was, Lans could not imagine what Ernst was going through in Theohuanacu. He shuddered as he finished.

They killed her, brother. She's dead. I hope they take me too.

Dardel looked back up at Narata, who had turned her attention back to her work. She looked sad. Lans felt a pang of regret flash through his stomach; he could not bear hurting her. But, war is no place for love.



Gaztelua, Gholghant

[Co-written with Ghant; takes place the day after the attestor attack.]

Rikjaard was not shy in organizing a plate of food for himself, grabbing a few biscuits here and a couple of pancakes there. He did this while Henoor spoke. The Ghantish Steward was a stern man with

an evident gift for command; one could tell just by the way he spoke, at least the *Jogornos* certainly could. As Henoor explained the precarious role that Gholghant played in Gothic politics, Rikjaard quietly cut up his food and ate it while he listened carefully. When the young girl, or Henoor's grand daughter as it turned out, Rikjaard smiled but otherwise said nothing but a polite, "It is very nice to meet you, Elayne." He was never very good with kids, and having none of his own certainly played a factor in that attitude.

When the Steward of Gholghant offered the *jogornos* the floor, Rikjaard gently dropped his knife and fork on his plate and wiped the edges of his mouth with his napkin. "To be honest," he said, "the Golden Throne has no interest in forcing you into conflict with neither the Scandinvans nor the Kravenites. In fact, if we could avoid the drawing of sides in Gholgoth all the better — our objective is the invasion of the Scandinvan Empire, not to cause a region-wide conflict. Unfortunately, it seems this region is something of a powder keg and that sooner or later lines will be drawn. Regardless, I am not here to pressure you in any direction except that of neutrality."

He picked up his glass and took a drink of water.

Once he placed it back on the table, he went on, "All of this having been said, your insight regarding your control over the passageways between Gholghant and Jagada is on point, although I must be honest and say that I believe you overestimate the value of those waters. The Golden Throne's logistical efforts thus far have been immense and these plans did not even consider the entry of the Skyan Republic into the war. As you can imagine, then, our invasion of the Scandinvan will come from a completely different direction. Regardless, the southern route between the Skyans and the Scandinvans has value derived from the fact that it would shorten our supply chain. My role here is simply to gauge the likelihood of your neutrality, as we have the intention of running our cargo ships through the straits between Jagada and Gholghant. Clearly, doing as such will require your permission, but I am not here to *sell* you anything. The Golden Throne has a knack for adaptation; if we have to do things the hard way, we will, even if it means having more tenuous supply routes. There is no obstacle, no fear, no inconvenience that would stop us from seeking our objective."

Rikjaard looked at the girl again. Her innocence stung. Talk of war was not meant for the young — better that they did not know war at all. "None of what I have said so far invalidates the fact that the Golden Throne values its relationship with Ghant. And, of course, the Golden Throne is more than willing to 'scratch your back,' as you say, in return for Gholghant's help. We value friendship and loyalty. What you give us we are prepared to pay back tenfold. Hell, we would base tens of millions of men here to help defend you, and more in the event of a war that compromised your sovereignty. My original point was only that I am not looking to push you into anything. I am more interested in hearing about what *you* want and perhaps we can find harmony in our——"

A vibration on the inside of his robes distracted him. "Excuse me," he said, "it is an emergency call. I would not interrupt our discussion for anything less."

Looking at Rikjaard amicably, Henoor raised his hand and grinned. "By all means, take it."

The *jogornos* reached inside of his robes to retrieve his cell phone. Putting it to his hear, he initiated, "Johansen." He nodded, although the person on the line couldn't see him do so, and grunted whenever his input was needed. About thirty seconds later he turned the phone off and put it back in his pocket.

"My new aide," he said. "Apparently, she didn't think to alert me last night, as she assumed I was busy. I suppose her knowing that I would be at breakfast here does not count as me being busy." He sighed, then asked, "I am curious, and I warn you that this is tangential; do you employ aides?"

"Yes," Heenor replied bluntly, but not impolitely. "Through my Seneschal."

"Seneschal," inquired the *jogornos*?

Heenor dabbed at his chin with his cloth napkin, and turned his gaze to his granddaughter briefly before answering the inquiry. "Yes...think of a Seneschal as an...administrator, in charge of the routine aspects of a great household. Managing staff, domestic arrangements and various aspects of security, making sure the hedges are trimmed...that sort of thing. Very helpful sort of person to have at court, especially if you are not inclined towards mundane, tedious tasks that are important to running an effective estate."

"Ah," responded Rikjaard. "Then you or your...Seneschal" — he pronounced the foreign word slowly — "will have to share your hiring secrets, as I seem unable to find an aide worthy of the task." He permitted himself to laugh. "She has waited until now to inform me that the Skyan Republic was attacked by the Scandinvans last night. The attack, carried out by attestors, was repelled, but I do not know at what cost. The war literally escalates as we speak, and this offers me the perfect opportunity to ask you: what do *you* want?"

Slouching back in his chair, Heenor ran a hand through his hair, and took a deep breath before responding. "Not to get attacked by attestors," he replied candidly. "This is what I warned Jessica about...you keep playing with fire, and eventually you will get burnt."

"Perhaps it is the other way around. Skyan support of the Golden Throne was by no means guaranteed." Rikjaard's eyes broke off with Heenor's as he said, almost introspectively, "I don't think anyone in the Golden Throne expected to count on allies in Gholgoth. The Scandinvans have miscalculated." Bringing his gaze back to the Steward, "My nephew was not much older than Elayne when he died. We were all at the family vineyards and, I can never forgive myself for this, us adults were too busy with our own idiocy to pay any mind to the children. He, young Gorgo, had stolen a can of hairspray from his mother and had figured out how to use it as a flame torch. Of course, in the Sidi Rezegh country side much is dry and fires are easy to instigate. I do not need to go into detail, especially before your beautiful granddaughter, but I can tell you that the thing about fires is that they are hard to control and they are without master. The blaze will spread to the Scandinvans, and soon it will consume them. They will undoubtedly survive, and neither I nor Fedor have any delusions on this war's outcome, but by the time their country is ravaged, their people starved, and their soldiers killed they will know the cost to playing with fire. Much like Gorgo."

"A great tragedy, no doubt." Heenor leaned forward again and wiggled his lips as he thought about how to respond. "People like to play lip service in Gholgoth about regional unity, solidarity between Gothic Lords, but there is no such thing. It's the lie we tell ourselves to avoid the realization that this region is populated by dysfunctional cutthroats and petty despots." The Steward cast aside his cloth napkin. "We Gbantish believe in one thing, above all other things. Balance. That's what this region needs...and we won't have it so long as Gothic nations attack one another with malicious intent. The hounds of war have been set loose upon the region, and make no mistake, Havensky is a buffer between the wolves and the Gbantish henhouse. It would appear as though the Scandinvans might just force my hand, as they've forced yours, eh?"

Having lost his appetite, the *jogornos* pushed his plate away. "Fedor is too ambitious for his own good. If we lose this war, he has only himself to blame. In fact, the Scandinvans have little to do with his choice. They are merely the convenient enemy; a country whose affront to us could have been solved in another way. But the other way does not interest us now. We seek war." His eyes sparkled like dancing flames. "In any case, I can speak for the Golden Throne when pledging our resources to your defense. We ask only for your neutrality. If you'd like to offer more it will always be appreciated,

and repaid, but we will never ask you to put your people at risk without good cause."

"We have a saying in Ghant...'*hitzak haizeak dira*.' It translates to 'words are wind.' While we can exchange niceties about this and that, ultimately things are happening very quickly and danger is on the rise." Henoor examined Rikjaard carefully, stroking his chin all the while before continuing. "Tell me about Emperor Fedor...and his children, if you could."

"Fedor is a...mystery to most Macabeeans. He rarely makes public appearances, preferring to rely on his *krierlords* for all that is the 'public face' of his rule," he explained. "In fact, only the *krierlords* see him much, apart from his family. Even his family may not see him all that much as of late. When the Empire sees tough times, Fedor is the one hardest at work. Rumor is that his marriage is at risk because of it. Truth to be told, what I am telling you is mere assumption and speculation; I am not close enough to him to know him this personally. I *can* tell you, however, that his people love him as much as his children. And that he rarely goes back on his word — the Empire went bankrupt because of his stubborn loyalty to those he makes promises to. These are facts. You would undoubtedly profit more by meeting the man yourself. I can set that up for you, if you'd like."

"Perhaps in time, though I'd still like to know about his children...especially considering what I have in mind," the steward told him with a twinkle in his eye.

That took Rikjaard by surprise, although he showed no hint of it in his response. Still, what were the man's plans? "He has two children. Elasny, nine, was born during The War. She is the darling of the Empire, a sign of youthful hope in a time of blood and ashes. Karles is six, born after The War. The line of succession is unclear. Karles is, by historical precedent, Fedor's heir, but laws like that are difficult to host in a liberal, cosmopolitan empire. Elasny might very well be the first empress in the history of the Golden Throne, including both that of the current Second Empire and during the First Empire of old. But, that will probably remain an uncertainty until Fedor's death."

The glass of water was dangerously empty, so he had it filled again. He took another gulp and placed it back down. "I met Elasny once. She attended my ascension ceremony when I first joined the diplomatic corps. She is as sweet as her name suggests and as beautiful as her mother. Karles I have never had the honor of seeing. I am no *krierlord* after all. Fedor, and by extension his children, have little time for men of my stature."

"...I see..." Henoor shifted in his seat, and then he began to say what he intended on saying. "Here's what I'm thinking. We are in a position where we can be of mutual benefit to one another. We can offer the geographic location that the Golden Throne needs to project force effectively in Gholgoth, and you can offer us the means by which we can protect ourselves against the likes of Kraven and the Scandinavians. There's only thing that is more binding than ink, Jogornos, and that's blood. So here's my proposal. A betrothal between Elasny and my grandson Trystane, who will one day be Steward, or a betrothal between Karles and Sara, Princess Imperial of Ghant. We get something done in writing, and then we are at your disposal, and I will send a missive to the Emperor of Ghant explaining the situation and asking for military assistance, which he will give."

Interesting. "I will relay your offer to His Imperial Majesty. We can meet again when Fedor has made his decision."

"Excellent...you are welcome to remain here as long as you see fit, and should you decide to depart in haste, I certainly wouldn't hold that against you," Henoor grinned. "Especially with the attack on Havensky...it would seem as though there will be a sense of urgency now."

"I am afraid I must, Steward Zaldua. But I already look forward to my

return to the stunning land of Golghant." Rikjaard stood and moved away from his chair, taking care to then bow. When the Steward nodded, the *jogornos* turned to leave. He'd be back in Citadel City by that very night.

"Until then, Jogornos." Henoor moved slowly, rising from his chair and looking at his granddaughter, who was oblivious to the conversation that had just taken place. Then he was off, walking slowly out of the room via a rear door to attend to some matters of state.

Former Sr. II Roleplaying Mentor | [Factbook](#)

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Havensky
Diplomat

Posts: 888
Founded: Jan 01, 2008
Left-wing Utopia

Battle of Citadel: Enter the Brave

by [Havensky](#) » Thu Apr 07, 2016 7:58 am



[To the tune of Fearless, 2 Steps From Hell](#)
[Map of Citadel City](#)

Battle of Citadel Citadel City

The streets of the Citadel were eerily empty with the fog giving the city an almost ghost like appearance even in the midst of sunset. For the police officers that had been assigned to guard bunkers and keep watch topside, it would be the different sounds that bothered them the most. There was none of the noisy din of conversations being held on cell phones, the roar of the undertrain moving through the city, children laughing on their way home from school. Only the sound of fighter jets and rata-tat-tat of anti-aircraft guns. The lights were down in Citadel City making the city darker than it should have been. The only lights were above the bay: tracers, the glow of an missile's engine, and the explosion of aircraft.

The Armada had done a good job of halting most of the incoming aircraft. Most of the attacking aircraft had gone down in the forests of Havensky or Rico Bay. It didn't make watching the bombs fall any easier. Several skyscrapers near Grand Crossing took the brunt of the bombs with the smoke from their fires mixing in with the fog.

"Multiple impacts! Three in Homu, Six in Skyview, Five in Nest, One in Heart, One in Bayside. Over."

The viewscreen shifted to a live feed of the Nest District. Several pod-like shapes landing in the street causing large cracks in the concrete as they skidded to a halt. Above it, what was left of one of the Scandinavian drop planes dove towards the district. It's flaming hull screaming downwards until it made impact with one of the Skyfarms. The glass windows of the Skyfarm shattered instantly sending a tidal wave of broken safety glass down towards the empty street. The remaining fuel inside the plane exploded, sending waves of fire across the Skyfarms' crops across several stories. The building's fire suppression kicked in a valiant - but vain - effort to stop the flames. The building creaked under the heat and the pressure.

At street level, the pods began to crack open...

"How much damage?"

"One Skyfarm down, a building hit in Grand Crossing...the South Gate Bridge got hit - looks bad, the skyway is hit in several places. The Mokaan embassy has been hit, nothing left - Mokaan staff are OK. There's minimal damage from other bombs...they didn't go off...why didn't they... wait one...DROP PODS! METEOR! METEOR! METEOR!"

The call word brought the entire war room to action. Legion officers alerting the appropriate commanders, air traffic controllers scrambling helijets,

"Deploy 501-Avenger to Homu. 501-Heartbreak to Skyview. 501-

Brave to Nest, 501-Champion to Bayside - 503-All deploy Heart/Ironwing. 502-All defend the Citadel ", ordered Tsubasa relaying contingency plans that had already been established.

"All Bunker-Captains report evacuation complete."

Gonzales breathed a visible sign of relief. This was the most difficult part of the defense plan. It was a lot of effort to get a city of millions to all do the same thing at a moment's notice. It had taken years of planning and drills. It appeared, for the moment, that it had paid off and that residents for the most part were out of harms way.

"Thank the gods, anything happens at one of those bunkers I want to know. Are our birds in the air?

"All Vexer/Growler Squadrons on station now sir."

Above Nest District, Citadel City

The noise of the helijet drowned out the sound of the public service announcement messages playing on loudspeakers inside the Nest District. The first platoon of Brave Company, 501st Legion rode in the belly of Scarlet One.

"Brave Six, on station", radioed Captain Leon Bastrop as he leaned back into his chair on the helijet. He checked his rifle again.

"Damn, two weeks into the job and we're fighting slavers in the streets."

"I thought you liked to fight", remarked Brave's Master Chief Zenpukuji.

"Oh, don't get me wrong - I love a good fight just didn't think that I'd be fighting in the Nest!"

"1 Minute!"

The Legionnaires stood up and grabbed their ropes. Bastrop's communicator lit up.

"Alright, I want 2nd to hit right, 3rd to go left - Scarlet 5 head to the forward position to cut them off. We'll head straight up the middle."

The attack "Growler" helijets to the sides of Scarlet One began to fire their weapons to provide cover fire as Brave got closer to the drop pods landing site. The front of Scarlet One ejected several smoke grenades before tilting its engines vertical and drifting to a low altitude. Scarlet One opened its doors to let out Brave's First Platoon. Scarlet Two and Three dropped to side streets to corral the attacks in.

"Brave - Contact!!"

1st Platoon stormed down 71st Street towards the enemy drop pod. Almost at once, the team raised their rifles and sent a hail of bullets towards the crusaders wandering the streets. The ones not hit scattered in an attempt to find cover. It didn't help.

"Grenadiers!"

A trio of grenades launched high in the air over the cover fire and exploded at eye level. The resulting shrapnel eliminated the enemy attack. Brave moved down the street past the bodies and kicked their weapons away crushing their rifles under the heavy weight of the power armor.

Medic Erin Boyne kneeled next to one of the bodies and scanned the area.

"I've got a pulse on...two enemy bodies.. Control; Brave Niner - roll

heavy-ambo to my location."

Acknowledged"

Captain Bastrop reloaded his rifle with a sharp metal click.

"Control, Brave Six - ready for new target."

502nd Dauntless Mech Infantry Company
Dauntless 2
Heart District

Four Bearkat Fighting Vehicles roared across the streets of the Citadel. Their tracks leaving the slightest black mark on the pavement as they turned. The turret turning left and right independent of the rest of the vehicle. The infantry fighting vehicles were painted with a black and iron speckle. The side of their missile launchers were painted with a dragon skull above the words '502D'

"Step on it Whitewing!

Acknowledged Courage, enemy mobile suits at your location - Dauntless is two mikes out - can you give us a feed? Over"

The viewscreen inside Lt. Talon's helmet flashed with a tall grey figure launching a stream of flames towards Courage Company. Their rifle rounds bouncing off the heavy walking armor.

"What the hell is that?"

"MINERVA, can you identify?"

"Negative - no entry found."

"All Units, Control - Be advised, enemy mobile suits - designation FATBOYS - immune to 7.62 - engage with buster rifles and heavy weapons."

Talon could hear his counterpart call for a buster rifle followed by the loud crack of the high caliber round. The round penetrated the enemy armor, but didn't stop the attacker. It stopped as it took each hit but kept moving forward.

"Pull back and wait for the heavies!"

As Courage Company pulled back, the mobile armor turned its attention to a Veronica's Secret that it has passed. It uttered scripture in pained heavy breaths as it spewed a stream of bullets and flame into the window display.

"Damn it, I liked that store. Gunner, you ready?"

Corporal Acer twisted his wrist on the joystick and spun the turret right.

"Armed and ready ma'am"

"Good, Dauntless One engaging - driver slow up here"

The four Bearkats shifted to a herringbone formation using the corner of the buildings as cover. The side of the building boasted a Legion recruiting poster. The image of a master chief in red armor looking on as the first track inched forward peeking out past the corner.

"Suit! Sabot!"

Fire Sabot!"

The 25mm sabot rounds made a hard click sound as it entered the chamber and a distinct 'chunk chunk chunk' as they left the barrel and flew towards the Attestor. As the rounds flew through the air they became sharper until they impacted the Attestor. The rounds

went straight through and exploded behind it.

"HIT!"

The first Bearkat backed up behind cover as the second one launched a small drone to look for new targets.

Brave Company

"Brave, Control! Fatboy attacking Nest Bunker Five Tree Eight! LEOs under heavy fire - respond forth width!"

"Rodger wilco Control! Brave Doubletime!"

The robotic servos of the Skyan power grew loud as Brave Company raced towards the bunker. Two Growlers flew over their heads.

"Brave, Doors one and two on five-tree-eight breached! Where the hell are you?"

"Almost there! Brave! Shield and visors! Riot formation!"

The rifleman put away their weapons and brought their shields together and expanded them. Behind them, the sharpshooters placed their rifles between the shields. The formation looked very much like the Roman Legions of old.

As a group they marched down the stairs and began to send a hail of high caliber bullets down towards the Attestors. The Attestors halted their work breaching the last door and began to spit fire and lead at Brave Company.

The fire enveloped Brave making it difficult to see. The heat creeping in all around them. The front line's electronics shutting down amidst the heat. The sound of bullets hitting their shields as the sharpshooters fired back. Some of the Legionnaires switched to infrared in an attempt to discern what was not fire.

One shot. Two shots. Four shots. Eight.

Two of the Attestors fell. The third ran out of fuel and ammo. It dropped its weapons and then looked up at the sky. It turned bright scarlet red in the Legionaries infrared vision.

"Everyone down!!"

The Attestors exploded sending the Legionary company flying back the stairway. The bunker's blast door dented with the force of the blast.

"SITREP! Everyone ok?", he shouted into the communicator - a bit too knocked out to actually get up right away. He got up slowly as he listened to everyone check in.

Upon hearing that all of his people were accounted for Bastrop breathed a sigh of relief. He then looked down to see the burned bodies of the five police officers that had held off not only five Attestors but a dozen slaver crusaders. His heart dropped.

"Boyne! See the LEOs! Everyone else doing ok?!"

The Legionaries who had been in the front threw off their helmets and took deep breaths. The water tubes inside their helmets had melted. Several of the sharpshooters pulled out their tubes so they could drink.

"Control! Brave, Five Tree Eight clear! Multiple burn and heat injuries - roll...screw that - requesting evac! And we're gonna need an engineering crew to get this door open."

"Acknowledged, what's the status of the LEOs?"

Bastrop looked down to Boyne who just shook her head.

"Five LEOs down. I repeat, five LEOs down."

Zenpukuji looked around the bunker entryway.

"Gods, that's how they breached the blast doors so quickly. They stood right next to the wall and self-destructed."

He walked up to the blown blast door bending down and taking a look at the debris of two Attestors.

"It must have taken two. They lined up one at a time...exploded, and then another took his place.... until they got through..."

An uncomfortable silence followed.

Last edited by [Havensky](#) on Fri Apr 08, 2016 5:43 am, edited 2 times in total.

The Skybound Republic of Havensky
(Pronounced Haven-Sky)

Territory held in
[Texas](#) - [Gholgoth](#) - [Sondria](#)

**N&I RP Mentor Specializing in PMT, Character Development,
Worldbuilding, and Diplomacy - TG me for help!**



The Scandinavians
Senator

Posts: 4948
Founded: Oct 09, 2004
Capitalizt

by [The Scandinavians](#) » Mon Apr 11, 2016 7:13 pm



he hope of humanity had been seeping away for generations now from the democratic nations of the world. No longer did people toil for the common good of society, they merely labored to satiate their own lusts. Civilization no longer represented a common inheritance designed to be passed on to one's heirs. Now it merely was something meant to be enjoyed by the living so that they could maximize the utility and entertainment that they derived from it. The attack by the Attestors was meant to partially inspire people to become more introspective over the path that their nation was taking in its acceptance of a position which only favored the present needs of the government of Havensky.

Fear was the intended harvest. The Attestors and the attached Casteless Crusaders were ordered to specifically target a number of different locations throughout Citadel City. These namely were a series of Protestant churches whose very existence defied the established mandate of the Scandinavian Church to be the sole shepherds of the Scandinavian faith. By bringing down these structures a greater message to the world. There would only be room for the Scandinavian Catholic Church within the world in the end.

The units were dispersed in short order as their drop pods were specifically slated for these tasks so that they could land near their intended destinations. When they landed they came out with a blaze of glory. The Attestors led the way with their heavy power armor serving as a shield for the Crusaders and their weapons serving as a hammer to smash the enemy. However, with the advantage of surprise, the landing units were able to take up their task in short order.

With not but missiles the Attestors launched a barrage at a half dozen of the larger Protestant churches in Citadel City. They then took up their positions to await for the counterattack. The Attestors stood proudly in the streets and the Crusaders went into cover. They would only have a few minutes of time before they would face fire from enemy guns. They would need to be ready to face certain doom at the hands of an enemy they had been taught their entire lives to utterly despise their foes as degenerate heathens.

The burning fires of the various churches was a symbol of the false faith practiced in Havensky. They had offered a false version of Christianity to their flocks in order to accommodate the liberal sensibilities of the nation that they inhabited. Something which was contrary to all proper thought to a Scandinavian. Christianity is meant

to stand above the concerns of this world. It is intended to be immune from the corruption of those too weak to follow down the path to salvation. The only proper remedy to this would be the destruction of these churches false facades and totally bring down any semblance of their order.

We are the Glorious Empire of the Scandinavians. Surrender or be destroyed. Your civilization has ended, your time is over. Your people will be assimilated into our Empire. Your technological distinctiveness shall be added to our own. Your culture shall be supplanted by our own. And your lands will be made into our lands.

"For five thousand years has our Empire endured. In war and peace we have thrived. Against overwhelming odds we evolved. No matter what we face we have always survived and grown. We shall always be triumphant." -Emperor Godfrey II

Hope for a brighter tomorrow - fight the fight, find the cure



Havensky
Diplomat

Posts: 888
Founded: Jan 01, 2008
Left-wing Utopia

by **Havensky** » Mon Apr 11, 2016 8:13 pm



Citadel City

To the tune of No Honor in Blood, Two Steps from Hell

The Battle of The Citadel had lasted almost exactly fifty-three minutes. Most of the slaver forces had been blasted out of the sky. The Skyans had overwhelming force and home field advantage.

The last Attestor's pod had been dropped mid-crash and veered wildly off course landing sideways in front of the Library of the Republic. Only one Attestor had emerged from the pod - which had been quickly blasted into nothingness by a passing Harpia fighter.

The last Attestor looked for targets but could only find the massive cathedral-like skyscraper that housed the Skybound Republic's store of knowledge. The Attestor began shooting out the stained glass windows of the empty building. Occasionally, it had tried to knock over the owl statue. As the owl statue weighed several tons, it didn't budge nor seemed to care.

The Skyans had made this Attestor a low priority. It wasn't near anyone's home and caused the least risk to life. Towards the end of the battle, Scarlet Squadron shifted its focus towards this lone Attestor. Out in the open and alone, it posed little threat to the attack helijets as they circled it.

Captain Rook took the controls and aimed the 30mm gun towards the enemy. He pulled up his communicator and had MINERVA translate.

"Your comrades in arms have been defeated. Those we have not shot out of the sky have been destroyed by the Legion. There is no escape. There is no chance of victory. There is no need for you to die. Put down your weapon, get on your knees, and put your hands on your head."

The Attestor turned towards the helijet as if it understood. The mobile armor lighted up his flamethrower and aimed it at the helijet. Rook simply hovered higher.

"Do not throw your life away. Throw down your weapon. I repeat, throw down your weapon."

"We brought your redemption. We bore the word of Erid to your blinded people. We sowed the seeds for the return of the Glorious Empire to its hereditary holdings. We herald the dawn that was promised to the children and ascendant of Erid so long ago. I go to my reward knowing that my labors have earned my salvation, the uplifting of my name from the muck, and the offer of paradise to your vile blood. Honor to Erid's legacy! Glory to the Almighty!" The Attestor proudly proclaimed via a prerecorded message. With its statement finished the Attestor went limp and toppled over with a loud thud onto its back.

"So be it. Find peace in the embrace of your Creator.", replied Rook.

The Attestor exploded.

"Control, Scarlet Five. All Threats eliminated."

* * * *

It took longer to clear the city than it did to fight off the invaders. To be absolutely safe, each street and building had to be searched.

The Imperial Armada of Dephire had deployed scores of Templars to aid in the battle. As they arrived after the Legion had eliminated most of the Attestors, the Templars helped to clear the city.

The north end of Citadel City was lit up brightly, when the rest of the city remained dark. During the battle, the city had blacked out all of the lights. They turned back on as Skyan, Dephirian, and Macabean forces moved through the city and was deemed them safe allowing the residents to come out of their bunkers.

Glitch Labs Portside Innovation District

Lady Regina "Glitch" Raven stood alone on the balcony of the Glitch Labs as she watched Dephirian Templars in jet black armor patrolling along Memorial Avenue. Memorial Avenue was so named because statues of fallen members of Legionary Armada lined both sides of the streets.

"It's odd seeing the Templars here and you not be here Wilhelm.", she said to the night air.

The Templars stopped at a taller bronze statue located almost directly across from Glitch. The Templars stopped and paid their respects. Some saluted, others knelt and said prayers. The Dephirian Templar General had lived a life trying to redeem himself after betraying his country and he accomplished such by committing the ultimate sacrifice in protection of Empress Tynsei. The records were sealed, but Glitch had served with Wilhelm on the mission inside Norska. He had flirted with her incessantly. She never allowed it to go anywhere, but she had missed his voice at times.

She had also missed Tycho Onyx. Also gone from this world. Tycho had gone to fight the Kraven occupation in Vetalia - alone and with no backup. He'd been killed in action before the rest of the Legionary Armada could liberate the city. She had been told that Tycho had a similar statute in Ghray. Both statues were copper red at present, but soon would turn green with time - joining countless other bronze statues in both cities. She hoped that none of her other friends would become statues anytime soon.

beep-beep-beep

"Raven"

"Lady Raven, the Fatboy that they brought in intact is ready for you."

"I'll be right down"

The Templars passed her street and the lights on her block lit up. Wilhelm's face became clear again underneath the street lights. The Dephirian flag waving alongside the Skyan ones.

"Sayonara Wilhelm"

Nest District

It took a little over four hours before the all clear was given in the last district.

For Nest Bunker 538, it was a tense process. The children had been

unaware of just how close they had come to having the Attestors burst through. They had known the police officers had rushed out of the bunker and hadn't come back. They hadn't quite been told yet what had happened.

After the bodies had been removed from the entrance, the bunker's occupants had been led out with police officers escorting them.

Jake and Ammie led the kids up the stairs. Jake looked across to see the city intact - until he finished his turn and the broken Skyfarm came into view.

He fell to his knees.

"It's gone...all of it... the corn, the fish, the tomatoes.."

One of the kids put a hand on Jake's shoulder.

"Don't worry Mister Flugler.. You can have some of our tomatoes."

Whether due to the stress of being so close to death, the loss of his farm, or the act of kindness, Jake began to cry.

The Citadel

"How many?"

Queen Jessica Heart and King Lucas Ironwing sat in the Citadel War Room surrounded by Heartbreak Company crowding the room which was shared by several dozen officials.

"Two pilots, nine Legion, six police officers - about three dozen injured but stable. Zero civilian casualties."

"No civilians? At all?"

"Yes Prime Minister, it seems our defenses were sound. We estimate 5000 enemy troops defeated and several hundred drones destroyed. We have some damage to the skyway, but the undertrain seems to be in working order. There are a few buildings we should demolish for safety reasons, but nothing we can't rebuild in short order."

"What about the Capper dreadnaughts?"

"They followed our orders to stay docked at Scorpio station. It seems their willingness to talk is sincere."

After a moment, Press Secretary SJ Gregg spoke up.

"We need to get everyone top side and on camera as soon as possible. People need to see that everyone on the High Council is alive."

"Really?", asked Ironwing, "Is that really all that important right now?"

SJ stared the King down.

"Yes sir, the people need to see that they're government still works and you all are a part of that. They need to see you alive, well, and ready to take some action. I'll get some drafts to the Queen."

A half hour later, the cameras were set up just outside The Citadel. An unfortunate habit of the press office was to have speeches written for every possible contingency. After a few minutes of back and forth, the Queen was ready for her speech.

"As you are aware, at approximately 17:10 this evening air and ground forces from the Scandinavian Empire attacked Citadel City. Their attack was a failure, with the city sustaining minimal damage and zero civilian casualties. Two pilots, nine Legion, six police officers lost their lives defending this city and it's people. The People of Havensky mourn this loss

of life and are thinking of their families at this time.

This will be a short speech. We, The Skyan People, have spent many of our words in the pursuit of peace. We have spoken at the Gothic Council in ULE City. We have spoken to our neighbors to the east. We have spoken to our friends in the Golden Throne. We have spoken to many many people all in the pursuit that we may solve our differences.

The Slaver Empire obviously isn't interested in talking.

For too long, the Skybound Republic of Havensky has tolerated the existence of slavery on the grounds that it was 'in the interest of peace' to do so. What was has our tolerance of this despicable, unlawful, and wretched institution earned us? An attack on our sovereign territory.

Today, at this moment, that changes. There will be zero tolerance of the slave trade near Skyan territory or near any Skyan vessel. All military vessels are henceforth ordered to seize any and all slave carrying vessels they encounter. The Skybound Republic will issues bounties towards any slave that is brought to Skyan territory and freed. The Skybound Republic will also issue Letters of Marque for the destruction of all slaver assets.

I am aware that by normal diplomatic standards, such actions are acts of war. Let it be known that the Skyan People found themselves in a State of War with the Slaver Empire of the Scandinavians the moment they put enemy troops inside Skyan territory. While the Skyans are interested in a peaceful resolution to this matter, do not think for one moment that there will be no retribution for their actions. The Legionary Armada has been ordered to take such actions to make the Skybound Republic safe - and we shall not be fighting alone. Already, the Golden Throne of the Maccabees has pledged their support to defending this city. Already our alliance with them has helped in the defense of this city with Maccabean Air Defenses shooting down multiple Slaver Aircraft. The Templars from our friends in Briska have helped us clear the streets.

Be it known, that the Skybound Republic will continue to keep the sea and sky lanes open. There will be zero tolerance for any attempt to impede free trade and transit throughout the Safe Passage routes.

I have ordered Ambassador Bexar to ULE City where he will stay in the Skyan Embassy and receive any ambassador from the Slaver Empire of any Gothic nation willing to aid in a peaceful solution to this conflict. However, as the Slaver Empire has offered no reasonable demand or explanation for their attack we have no choice but demand the complete surrender of the Slaver Empire and the dissolution of slavery in the Gothic territories.

Be it known, The Skyan's preference is for peace - but do not mistaken our amicable nature for weakness. The Skybound Republic will defend our liberty from the forces that seek to take it from us!

On the behalf and behest of the Skyan People, we reach our arms out in friendship to all those who would join us. Goodnight."

The Scandinavian response was a simple benediction:

*The world that you know shall soon end in fire.
You are but a summer flower that will die during the first frost.
We are the children of Erid and we have weathered all that nature
can muster.*

*Our Prince shall end humanity's night and bring forth the dawn.
His will shall bring about the beginning of paradise on Earth.
The promise made to those of the blessed shall come to fruition.*

*Your nation now exists only by the grace of borrowed time.
Enjoy what little time you have left.*

*The Glorious Empire of the Scandinavians shall restore itself.
All that is yours is stolen from us and we shall take it back at any
cost.*

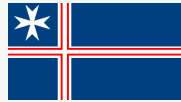
The Almighty shall give us victory over the heathens.

*For there is no innocence to be found amid the heathens.
There is no mercy which can be shown to the tainted.
There is no truth which can be gained from them.
There is no strength in their ways.
There is only weakness, doubt, damnation, and misery.*

The Skybound Republic of Havensky
(Pronounced Haven-Sky)

Territory held in
Texas - Gholgoth - Sondria

**N&I RP Mentor Specializing in PMT, Character Development,
Worldbuilding, and Diplomacy - TG me for help!**



The Scandinavians
Senator

Posts: 4948
Founded: Oct 09, 2004
Capitalist

by **The Scandinavians** » Fri Apr 22, 2016 8:36 am

QUOTE

(Attestor Attack)

The path that each man must take is one of harsh truth in the Scandinavian Empire. Those who are believed to betray their place in society face the removal of all their place in society, the removal of their immediate family from all social ranking, and the relegation of their futures to the bottom of the system. They would be made casteless for their crimes. Or they would simply be made to disappear if they were thought to not have passed on their taint to their kin.

The pilots of the Attestors largely belong to the category of people who were abducted by the Emperor's Shadows or the Inquisition. Thereafter they were made into a new image. One which could be of service to the designs of the Empire. They would be living weapons stripped of their memories. They would be offered a final chance to earn redemption for their past sins. They would show the world that they were indeed worthy of once again being considered among the faithful of the true blooded people.

After being put through the memory suppression and general training they were consigned to serve as an Attestor. They, at least in this military action, would only have a very short lifespan. They were meant to be thrown away as a form of payment. Their blood would mete out justice to those who attacked the imperial family and in turn earn salvation for the Attestor pilots.

The death of most of the Attestors was meant to be earned via them being eliminated in combat, the activation of an explosive mechanism, or the overheating of the pilot due to the lack of proper cooling systems. They would be effectively be grilled alive inside of the pilot's pod. A feature which none of the Attestors were made aware of. They simply had been told they would earn for themselves a path to paradise by dying in battle against of the enemies of the Glorious Empire and the Almighty.

Despite the best precautions nothing exactly falls into place. The plan for all the Attestors to have their pilots die had failed. One of the pilots had managed to survive the counterattack. By some small grace his unit had not overheated and the Attestor's armor had prevented the cab from suffering any direct damage. Thus ensuring a certain form of treat for the enemy to dissect for what little knowledge he might be able to provide.

We are the Glorious Empire of the Scandinavians. Surrender or be destroyed. Your civilization has ended, your time is over. Your people will be assimilated into our Empire. Your technological distinctiveness shall be added to our own. Your culture shall be supplanted by our own. And your lands will be made into our lands.

"For five thousand years has our Empire endured. In war and peace we have thrived. Against overwhelming odds we evolved. No matter what we face we have always survived and grown. We shall always be triumphant." -Emperor Godfrey II

Hope for a brighter tomorrow - fight the fight, find the cure

by **The Macabees** » Sun Apr 24, 2016 5:24 pm

La Frontera, Mokastana



The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

Kriermak 'Gholgoth' sets sail...

QUOTE

Palm trees swayed gently in the breeze to the squawk of the gulls cruising above. A middle-aged woman walked the cobblestone pathway that arched around a large private marina, a pepper-haired man's hand interlocked with her own. Storefronts lined their other side, each building sporting tile roofing of a different color and large decorative windows up on faux second floors. Behind them rose tall, white, concrete hotel and condominiums. They greeted a new age of capitalism and foreign money. But this manifestation of Mokan civilization's achievements seemed all but interesting at that moment, with the man and the woman looking in the other direction over the tall, white masts of the private boats lined up in rows within the marina. Against the horizon beyond stalked the giant, grey-black-and-blue ships of the Macabean *Kriermada*, the indigo skies around them angry with aircraft and other activity that was a largely a mystery to the two people observing the mass exodus of foreign warships.

The woman's grip over the man's hand tightened and the corners of her beautiful hazel eyes strained in concern. "I am glad they are leaving," she said, quietly.

"They are not so bad, you know," answered the man. The sun slowly being swallowed by the cosmos, he took off his light brown panama hat and held onto it with his free arm. He led her forward and they turned their attention inward as they walked in silence until the man said, "Besides, not all of them are leaving."

She sighed, "That's too bad. I don't trust them."

Hers was a common opinion. For a land of 700 million, the sudden appearance of tens of millions — and growing — Macabean soldiers brought with it the inevitable culture shock. Mokastana's coastal cities were already filling with 'tourists,' with most of these congregating around bars, gentlemen clubs, and other 'entertainment establishments.' The mixture of alcohol with men (and women) trained for violence too led to predictable results, with the Mokan government pressuring their Macabean allies to restrain their soldiers. The rumors that circulated Mokastana hardly made matters better. News sources were reporting a continued troop surge, with perhaps hundreds of millions of the Golden Throne's personnel to be stationed in Mokastana for the short term. It all made for a remarkable economic opportunity, but also for a deeply divisive situation that affected the livelihood and comfort of the Mokan people.

"Merce" — said the man — "creo que exageras." *I think you are exaggerating.* To men of business and all those other Mokans who embraced the new liberal order, the enormous Macabean deployment was a one-of-a-kind opportunity. These were the Mokan middle class; perhaps not the wealthiest, although these no doubt benefited the most, but these were the kind of people who could afford to send their kids to school. A country in transition, there were still many Mokans who couldn't, and these were the ones who benefited the least and held the most distrust. Merce's — short for Mercedes' — husband was a man of moderate wealth, of course. He gestured towards the ships slowly retreating into the sunset, and said, "There are countries that many consider lands of opportunity. Vast amounts of people emigrate to move to these countries, to provide their families with more food and a better life. But, some people, a very tiny subset of society all considered, are lucky enough to have that opportunity exported to them. We are living that now. Where else do you think the money that made your new car possible came from?" She hesitated to reply, and let go of his hand.

"Dinner was good," said Merce, finally. "It is a shame that we don't do this more often. It's so wonderful to leave the house and have fun."

He smiled and grabbed her hand again. "Well, that's just the thing. Merce, you should know, I am very well off. We have more money than we used to. I've always thought I've provided well for you and the *chicos*, making possible a beautiful house, a good education for

our boys, and allowing us to live a comfortable life. But, we considered all of this a luxury. No more. Our luxuries have been upgraded to things like this. We can travel, even. Maybe even visit Belmontin or Aqua Anu, or maybe even Lamoni. Those are beautiful places, they say."

"I suppose they're not so bad," she said, referring to the Macabeans. She giggled and her smile slowly grew until it spread across her face, her teeth sparkling in restrained satisfaction.

In the distance, the sun crowned the earth like a slim, lilac halo. Darkness was setting in. Even the seagulls no longer squawked and they had, for the most part, gone home. The couple stopped, looked at each other, and then turned around to head back to their car. Before they left, they both turned to look at those Macabean ships one last time and to wave.



Tiwanaku, Theohuanacu

Reunions...

Blood is not so bad when your mouth has been encrusted in your own since before you can remember and especially when the blood is just a symptom of the much greater inconvenience that is torture. The fresh stuff comes out easier too once a few of your teeth get knocked out. It slowly dripped from Ern Dardel's mouth, collecting in a stewing pool on the hard, grim concrete floor of the small prison cell.

"Put grub in ye gullet, yet mutt," barked one of the guards. Tall and wide, the man shadowed over Dardel's hunched body, which seemed as if it were one tired arm away from collapsing onto the ground.

The second guard was just as tall, but much thinner. What he lacked in muscle though, he made up in hair. His umber mane flowed well below his shoulders, much like the pirates of old stories of the days of wooden pegs and eye patches. He looked as mean as them too, a thick, musty scar slicing through his right eye made of glass. He laughed an evil laugh, almost like a cackle, and said, "I dare ye to eat, boy." With a club embedded with dozens of dull stones he menacingly patted his left hand, while he grinned at his partner. Their victim simply looked towards the ground, writhing on the borderline of consciousness.

"I told ye to sword ye face in ye bowl, mutt!" shouted the broad-shouldered one.

Ern lifted his head ever so slightly and after contemplating the value of his life and the option of just simply giving up, and letting them kill him, he inched his way towards the "food" in the silver dog bowl placed two meters away from him. His left arm was tucked into his body, and it looked swollen and broken. He moved with intent lethargy, pain shooting through his bones with every slight movement, stabbing him like knives. But to disobey is to get beaten, and the young Macabean infantryman was tired of the beatings. Spots of blood traveled with him and they came out from behind him, as if marking his painstaking path. In some agony-hazed corner of his mind he wondered whether the guards would really let him eat this time, or if they had another cruel trick to play on him. But those thoughts were weak, the impulse to avoid being hurt any more being what compelled him the most.

The lanky one, his commanding voice freezing Ern, reprimanded, "Ye dare disobey me?" He lifted his club up over his shoulder and brought down on the Macabean, who fell crumpled onto the uneven bricks of concrete below with a gruesome *smack* as his face hit the hard surface.

The other man snarled and unveiled a long, rigorous whip. He unrolled it and snapped it into Ern's back. He did so again. And again. And again. One cannot say that Ern was weeping. His eyes were filled with tears, but they were of agonic misery rather than emotion. With gritted teeth he hissed in pain. With all the energy he could muster, Ern pleaded, "Please stop. P-p-please."

"Ye fuckin' weaklin'. I hold no sympathy fer ye." The taller man, with the whip, spat on him. The saliva spread into Ern's hair, adding to whatever other gruesome rubbish had amassed there. Sometimes, when Ern was really weak and unable to move even a muscle, the rats excreted their stool on him and which collected on his naked, unbathed body. The guard whipped him again and the other clubbed Ern in the head again, a wound from the day before opening like a volcanic rupture, spitting blood and mucus all over. Dardel lay there unmoving. Now he had truly given up.

The taller, thinner pirate gave a pretentious sneer and then nodded to his partner. They picked Ern up by his arms and dragged him to the bowl, pushing his face into what looked like wet dog food. Ern ate with inhuman desperation. His captors had succeeded into turning him into an animal, nay a monster or *creature* of some sort. The tattered Macabean had barely time or oxygen to spare for a whimper, he ate so ferociously. His glory ceased in minutes, picked up by the arms once again after finish his food and dragged out of the cell, into a dark hall that led to a room lined on both flanks by rows of small cubicles made of stone. Barely visible in the dim light, that dared to enter through the small crack just below the upper edge of the walls, where the shackles anchored into the floor. In the shadows awaited another pair of shackles. One of the cells was open, its steel door lifted up parallel to the ground. In that one they shoved Ern, the skinnier man crouching down and snapping Ern's hands into the manacles farthest to the back of the catacomb-like-coffin. Only his feet, just below the shackles around his ankles, saw any of the sun's illumination, and even then only for certainly few hours of the day.

Blinded by shadows, the light retreating with the movement of the sun, Ern lay sprawled on the prison's floor while his ankles and wrists chaffed under the cuffs' rusted metal. And so he started to howl an awful, painful groan that sounded more animal than human. His cry throbbed with torment, the anguish carried by his moan reverberating down the narrow prison hall behind them. Whether the small, coffin-like cells to either side of him and behind him had any others — other prisoners like Ern — he did not know, because they never responded, never joined in his suffering. And so he moaned alone and, when the memory of the only person who mattered to him came to him, he cried out her name with an oppressed, but nascent rage, "Mariel! Oh, Mariel. I love you and I will see you once again soon." He finished that with a whimper, like a beaten man who lacked faith in a life no longer worth living.

"Ern?" risked a female voice. Her voice bounced off the cold walls, which dripped with the night's building condensation, and so her words came from everywhere and nowhere at once.

He jerked his head in one direction and then again in the other, wildly searching for the origins of that voice. "Who is that?" he asked, his voice shaking.

Silence for a short while. Then, "It's me, Mariel."

This time, Ern's whole body jerked. He yanked at the chain holding his arms and legs down, thrashing his body every which way in a fit of exasperated madness. His throat throttled with a scream that pierced through the walls mere centimeters away from his head. Could it really be her? Hadn't she died? She had. This was an illusion, a trick those bastards were playing on him. "Shut up! I won't fall for it." But how do they know her voice?

He heard crying, her gentle whimpers cleaving through his weakened heart. Was that really her? It couldn't be. If it truly was, it would be

the end of him. She was better off dead than in the hands of their pirate captors. Ern squirmed, his physical hurt now magnified by a medley of confused emotions. "Shut up!" he repeated. "Shut the fuck up! Your dead! Your fucking dead!"

"Th' farrg be wit' th' damn commotion?" said a harsh voice from down the hall, followed by the dreaded sound of boots against the bleak concrete pavement. The man bellowed again, "Who dares cry?"

His boots scraped past Ern's tiny prison cell and the Macabean felt some relief. But then a stone sunk down into his stomach again. He heard the man come to a stop and then, one-by-once, the *clink* of a released manacle. The woman — Mariel, he knew now — started to sob harder, but she was too weak to put up resistance of any kind. Ern could hear her feet and knees drag against the concrete as the man took her away. She let out a high pitch scream that must have been heard as far as the front lines. It faded and soon the hall was silent again.

Ern lay there defeated, his arms and legs restrained by metal shackles. Even when her distant yelps and shrill screams filled the room again, as they tortured her in who knows what way, he did nothing. He could do nothing. Yet, she was in a state worse than death, and for Ern that was Hell manifested. The pirates had crushed his will, his *raison d'être*, and now they had the only thing he cared about — Mariel. And in his painful enslavement he brooded. He lay there and plotted his escape.



Battle of Rosquense, Theohuanacu

Part II...

Dead men, their clothing in tatters with more than blood and guts than material anymore, lay strewn across the rubble-rich battlefield. Pieces of building crumbled across the ground, some clusters of brick and wood larger than a whole man, let alone the mauled men writhing nearby. Some were missing arms and legs, others the entire lower half of their bodies, and there were many others with much more creative injuries. The newfound cemetery extended as far as 'Three-Legged' Carol could see. So many of his men were already dead, so many more injured, and the Macabean attack only just begun. It wasn't just the human cost that gave Captain Carol much to woe, but also the loss of some of his key material assets. His main defenses against the Golden Throne's air power had been destroyed and many of the buildings that he counted on for his men to hide in, with the purpose of an ambush in mind, no longer stood. But, alas, such is war and, truth be told, Carol had expected this kind of damage. They were dealing with the Golden Throne, after all. As such, he returned his attention to the battle at hand and felt not a single regret as he prepared what remained of Rosquense's defenses for the oncoming Macabean onslaught.

Their war birds still circled above, the rumble of a larger jet a permanent presence above the thin white clouds. It never attacked, but Captain Carol knew it was a much more dangerous plane than any of the other ones he had seen so far. Too often he had witnessed the same birds from his ship, the *Midnight Blossom*, and too often did they bring with them danger. Putting that aircraft aside in his mind, Carol made his way to a surviving street fortification on the outskirts of the town, from which he survey the field beyond. In the distance, glittering against the sun, were the menacing silhouettes of three armored columns advancing parallel to each other. Carol took his binoculars to his face and examined what he could see. From their shapes, he could make out the Nakís and the troop carriers they escorted, a colossal trail of dust rising and falling behind them. Beyond that Carol could not see much of any value, only the obvious fact that there were many more forces following the

vanguard. He sighed. Today would see much death and his men would most likely bear the brunt. These burial grounds would come costly to the Macabeans.

The pirate captain put away his binoculars and promptly turned around to head back into the two. The Macabeans were close and the attack would begin soon, so Carol rushed to prepare his men. His battle plan was ready and the men in place, but there were some last minute check-ups. He headed back to his bunker, which was open and ready for his arrival. Just outside, a couple of his commanders were waiting for him and they followed behind him once he started to descend into the room below. A guard closed the cellar doors from the inside, behind them. "Be th' emplacements ready?"

"Aye, cap'n," said one of the two commanders.

"Jolly. Th' men. What be th' count?" They walked into a second, much larger room. Other ranking pirates were sitting there, swords on their belts and rifles in their hands.

The other commander gulped, then said, "Losses were heavy, captain. A third of the lads are still breathin'. Some 'o them wit' peglegs," he paused, then said, "others wit' none at all."

Carol stopped, the two men behind them struggling to stop themselves before bumping into the captain. He turned around. "Davy Jones' treasure chest holds three thousand new souls, ye shout?" He shook his head, and said, "It be an undoubted shame. I ought to pull us out 'o here now, but we have a bloody responsibility. 'N that be to make them Imperials bleed fer our fallen brothers."

It did not take long for the first beats of 'Imperial Rain' to arrive. The tremors of guns firing in the distance carried all the way to Rosquense, and if anyone had not felt those then the wailing siren of artillery rounds cutting through the air made room for no mistake. Then, the ground shook as round-after-round struck the earth with mighty explosions in the wake. Rosquense trembled under the weight of the Macabean bombardment, whatever still surviving on the surface now clinging on the edge of a fiery cliff that was quickly crumbling away under the barrage. But, Carol had expected this, just like he expected the first grumble of the assault vehicles now slowly entering the town. He could not see the armor with his own eyes — and, oh, what an impressive sight that would have been —, but he could almost feel how the Nakils were interspersed with the personnel carriers, in just the sufficient numbers to provide devastating fire support. A shiver ran down Carol's spine, for this was not the first time he had fought the Imperials and he was under no deception as to their capabilities, but he quickly suppressed it before any of his men could take notice of it. Only fearless men could survive days like today.

A young boy, no older than seventeen, ran into the room seeking Carol. He nodded his assent and the boy said, "Imperials spotted to th' west, cap'n."

"Aye, thank ye jim laddie." The boy's face filled with obvious satisfaction that he had done something a legendary pirate captain had approved of. Before he could turn to leave, Carol barked, "Where's your weapon?" The boy was rifleless, running from group to group spreading the news. That was no state to be in on the eve of the Macabean attack, unless you were looking expressly for death.

The kid's cheeks flushed. "I left it wit' Turner, cap'n."

Carol's stare held no room for patience. "Get ye damn ta hell rifle before ye get yourself killed laddie," he ordered, with an exceptional layer of severity to it. The young boy scurried off in another direction without another word.

The first clatter of gunfire picked up near the outskirts of Rosquense, in various directions. There was a sudden explosion and then another one, and then an impressive *boom*. They had gotten one — either a

Nakil or one of the personnel carriers, the Shalmaneser as they were called. A cannon thundered next, and then there was another explosion like the last one, and finally the blasts and detonations of missiles and cannon fire burst into a fast paced rhythm as the fire fights evolved into a large battle that slowly grew inwards toward the town's center. Carol had arrayed his men to best take advantage of the chaos created by the initial Macabean air strike and the subsequent artillery bombardment. Based mainly in underground bunkers like these, groups of roving buccaneers were ready to come out and spread into the decrepit buildings, from which they could ambush the Macabeans flooding the streets. And the battle unfolded as such, with pockets of fighting throughout Rosquense. The serenity of his own bunker was unnerving, with Captain Carol itching to join the fight. But, he had more important things to do than needlessly expose his life with no other purpose than bloodlust.

After some time, he rose and the two other commanders came to their feet alongside him. "Let us make th' rounds. Before we forego too much 'o th' fightin'."

To the rear of that second room was a large, vault-like door, which when opened revealed a series of underground passageways going in different directions. They marched off into one, its walls of the same dirty of the earth held back only by a pattern of wooden ribs that followed them down into the dimly-lit darkness. Small bulbs hanging from the root-sewn ceiling, pieces of live wood looping out from an exit hole before carving back into the dirt, did almost nothing to provide light. They shimmered with each successive *boom*, whatever little light they did provide fading.

They reached an intersection, one wall painted in white with what looked like a map signalling what lay down the various tunnels. Up ahead, directly across from where Carole and the others had come out of, came a cacophony of sound. While they could see nothing, it sounded much like music of a gunfight. Carol raised a fist and the three of them came to a sudden halt. "Prepare ye-selves fer battle," he commanded.

They trotted the rest of the way and before they were even aware the shine of a bright room was upon them. When they entered the cellar they were without pause engulfed by the chaos. Carol's soldiers, young lads fighting for their lives, the majority of them not over the age of twenty. From where he stood, inside the structure, he could not see the enemy. He could only hear the screams of his wounded and sense, deep in his bones, the piercing, unbearable silence of his dead. That above the discord of gunfire and the constant *clink, clink, clink* of bullet-on-armor impacts. A swordsman, his foreign rifle in hand, jumped into the concrete-built basement and looked at the captain with wide eyes. The boy shook his head slowly, clearly frozen in a state of deep shock. Perhaps it was the sight of Carol. Or maybe he was recoiling from the gruesome violence of battle he had undoubtedly just experienced. "Run, cap'n. Run," he whispered.

The pirate soldier smiled and then laughed. He swung his rifle's strap around his neck, so that the gun came to lie against his chest towards the ground. Digging into a number of pouches arrayed around his belt, he revealed two small mines and the necessary accessories to build a trigger. The gunfire coming from outside was growing, and eventually someone defending out there swung the cellar doors shut. There was the screech of someone pushing something into place over the doors, and finally all external noise was muffled almost the point of extinction. An eerie silence prevailed, while the soldier prepared his trap. He looked at the captain with eyes of insanity, clearly no longer in the same world as his commander. When he finished placing the two mines and building the trigger, he retreated into the shadows far to the side opposite of the captain.

Then, the screech of whatever obstacle had been placed over them being pushed away again. No noise came back, despite the lack of mass to muffle it.

"Let's be off back. Thar be nothin' we can do here." Carol slowly stepped back, and when he was just about to walk into the commander behind him he turned around and quickened his pace in the direction he had come from. When they had made some distance back into the depths of the tunnel they could hear the steel doors being blasted into oblivion. The subsequent *thud* and the tremor it sent made them pause and turn around.

There was a Macabean soldier standing there, perhaps a foot taller than he truly was — he must not have been a short man —, black armor with a suppressed edge of brilliant light. The dust he had brought up was just settling again, before two more armored soldiers jumped into the battlement. They were impressive beasts. Their faces were fully covered by a glass and composite helmet, and in fact none of their skin shone beneath that thick suit of armor. It was like nothing Captain Carol had ever seen. They were not like the soldiers he knew; they were aliens. He had seen, and indeed fought, them before. Never with much success, for they were formidable foes. One never fought one-on-one against them and came out alive. But Carol had seen too much, experienced too much, to fear them. So he unholstered his side arm and started to draw it out.

The Macabean infantrymen raised their rifles, but before anyone could do any shooting there was a loud *crack* that whiped through the space and then a sudden explosion. The tunnel filled with rocks, dirty, and a storm of rubble and dust that quickly sped towards Carol. The three men coughed when it overcame them, and in between hacks the captain got his two subordinates to turn around and follow him back towards the command bunker — if it was still there, or under his control.

As they neared the intersection again they were caught up to by a group of his men that had come from another direction. Their ad hoc uniforms were in tatters, and blood trickled from their skin, without sign of whether it was theirs, an enemy's, or a comrade's. They still had weapons, but their arms hung limp, as if they were no longer capable of even lifting them to defend themselves. It was a pitying sight. But, right now, Carol had not time for pity. His face was hard, emotionless, his mind racing in the cold rationality of command.

"Why be ye retreatin'?" snarled Carol.

The men had pleading faces, their begging suggestive of the fact that things had not gone well wherever they had come from. One replied, "They overran us, cap'n. From th' sky they fell. They were upon us in death's hour."

Carol looked down the fourth tunnel. It led to another encasement somewhere near the outskirts of Rosquense. Pointing down it, he ordered, "Ye lads be off below that way 'n ask fer th' segment matey. be tellin' him that th' cap'n calls fer a general withdrawal." Before they left, he added, "Be tellin' him to meet me at th' mouth 'o Barney's Cavern."

"Aye, captain," they said, before heading out.

A blast's bang blew in from the direction of his command bunker, and he could only guess at what that meant. Each of his men carried the explosives necessary to collapse the encasements, and one by one they did do just that. The Macabean attack had been swift and overwhelming, the wounded pirates barely capable of putting up fight enough to slow the enemy down, and with his bunker gone the fight was a sure loss. Rosquense had fallen.

He stopped the men behind him with two hands, turned around, and said, "'Tis the hour we be off to Barney's Cavern ourselves." They went in another direction, off into the darkness, south towards Palenque and some new battle.



Havensky
Diplomat

Posts: 888
Founded: Jan 01, 2008
Left-wing Utopia

Comings and Goings

by [Havensky](#) » Sun May 08, 2016 7:22 am



Skyan Airlines Flight 338 Närväryn, Xirnium to Citadel City, Havensky

The hum of the Pelican jetcraft's engine reverberated throughout the cabin of the passenger aircraft. Lieutenant Commander Gavin Squall was dressed in a simple hoodie next to a young woman under a small woolen blanket embroidered with red herringbone stitches and cut. The unfamiliar feeling of an engagement ring poking at him as he held her hand.

His new fiancée, Edwige Nalôrna, was sound asleep which was fine by Gavin. Even after three weeks of vacation, his sleep schedule never quite relaxed enough to avoid him waking up early. For the first time in awhile, Gavin had felt rested and relaxed.

The plane shook a little as it hit a bit of turbulence and Edwige tossed and squirmed in her seat. The trip had cost Gavin a few months salary, but the first class tickets had been worth the extra expense.

And, truth be told, Gavin had plenty of danger pay stocked away.

Gavin resisted the temptation to look at his phone. They were a few hours out from Citadel City and they had promised each other no digital devices. That rule had gone out the window after he popped the question - had to text family and all - but for the most part, they had stayed offline and unaware of the world.

The plane bumped again a bit harder which made him worry that Edwige would wake up. He looked over to look at her again as the ring pressed against his hand.

"Commander Squall?"

"Ma'am?", he responded as he turned his head a bit confused. The flight attendant smiled apologetically.

"I'm sorry Commander, they have a message for you in the cockpit and they say it's important."

Gavin Squall's stomach dropped.

"Ok, I'll be there in a moment."

Edwige turned over in her chair still half-asleep, rubbing at her huge reddened eyes. "What's wrong?"

"Elen aä feuyavatâra melaän," Gavin said in very decent, even reassuring, Middle Närvärynese. ("It's probably nothing.") Gavin had made an effort to learn something of Edwige's language and culture, and under the stimulus of her flirty encouragement, he had proven an excellent student.

But Edwige could tell he was trying to keep her calm and was having none of it. "He called you commander," she pointed out, in English (her 'this is me being serious' language). "Nobody here knows you."

"Yeah... I know." Clever as well as pretty, this one. "Vastalâda aä, neumaessä." ("I'll be back love.")

Gavin Squall got up from his seat and followed the attendant towards the cockpit and waited for the door to close behind him.

"THIS HAD BETTER BE GOOD"

Citadel War Room

Citadel City, Havensky

It had been eighteen hours since the attack on Citadel City by Scandinavian forces. Most businesses had closed for the day, but the streets were still crowded with a mix of construction equipment and residents eager to let off some stress after the night's long ordeal.

Legionaries and other allied forces had a greater presence on the street and the skies were unusually clear of aircraft. Most flights had been diverted away and it had caused a tremendous backup at one of the region's busiest airports.

The War Room hasn't slowed down since the attack it had merely switched staffs. Cots had been set out in the hallway to allow staff members to get some rest without needed to go very far.

The Citadel's Communications Section had been swamped with incoming telegrams and messages pledging support, decrying the attack, or just plain asking for a meeting. At the same time, the Communications Section needed to relay orders to various forces throughout the region.

"Have we located the Jogornos Rikjaard?"

"Yes sir, he's stuck in Gholghant - all the flights are still screwed up.

"Get a damn helijet and get him here ASAP. Send a secured telegram saying that his forces will not only be allowed to use our bases but that we'll be joining him in combat.

"Otho and his family are on their way to the Citadel now.

"The Ambassador from the Drakonian Imperium is en route via secured transport."

Despite the buzz of activity, there was one meeting request that was overdue for a response.

Ensign Nyota tapped through her communication terminal to bring up her next call.

"Are we connected?"

"Yes ma'am, he's on the line now."

"THIS HAD BETTER BE GOOD."

"Commander Squall, this is Citadel Control. Be advised that last night Citadel City was attacked by the Scandinvan Empire... Attack has been repelled. Turn on your secured device and prepare to receive instructions. Your flight is being diverted to Citadel Airbase. A transport will be waiting for you. Confirm your understanding."

Squall took a deep breath, "Acknowledged"

"Citadel Out."

Flight 338

Squall gave the phone back to the attendant.

"You knew, all this time?"

"We didn't want to freak anyone out... We turned off the wifi and kept things quiet. We were going to tell people just before we land."

Squall nodded pulling out his mobile device from his jean pocket - letting it go through the process of turning on.

"Thank you ma'am."

Squall walked back to his seat and sat down. Edwige turned back to him with a worried look on her small, sleek, high-cheeked face.

"It's going to be fine - but there's been an attack on Citadel City....", Squall said quietly in her language. Odds were, Edwige would be the only one who would understand.

"Naä edan!" ("Oh no!")

Squall nodded gently as the tablet lit up with several dozen notifications.

"The hell?", Squall said quietly as he read the priority messages.

[...Kraven Reich offered support during the attack. Reich seeking a meeting with an envoy on open water. You are to embark immediately upon arrival at Citadel Airbase. Transport will be waiting for you. This meeting is to be top secret. You are to...]

"They're sending you back out aren't they?" She bit her lip, her eyes growing uncommonly wide, praying she was wrong.

"No, I'm still a desk jockey - but this assignment is... I can't really say here."

Edwige could read the stress on Gavin's face like the pages of a well-known book.

"You're right, it'll be fine.", she said, squeezing his hand. The cabin's public announcement system came on.

"Hi, folks.... listen... We've had some news from Citadel City. Last night shortly after we took off, the city was attacked..."

Last edited by [Havensky](#) on Thu Jun 07, 2018 7:56 pm, edited 5 times in total.

The Skybound Republic of Havensky
(Pronounced Haven-Sky)

Territory held in
[Texas](#) - [Gholgoth](#) - [Sondria](#)

**N&I RP Mentor Specializing in PMT, Character Development,
Worldbuilding, and Diplomacy - TG me for help!**



The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by [The Macabees](#) » Sun May 08, 2016 9:35 pm

QUOTE

Above the Scandinvan Skies

Suicide mission...

The launch was harrowing. The voyage across Earth's low-orbit was stomach-churning. Then came the sudden jolt of the free-fall stage. There, far above Earth below, ten strangely shaped and metallic capsules released four pods apiece. These were literally ejected 'downwards,' towards the gorgeous blue-green planet. And then it rained.

Sargént Jarl Gabán smiled as he heard that eerie *click* and jerk of the released restraints. Around him and before him stretched a metallic tube and out, not too far in the distance, was Earth. Beyond that, he could not see much, as his helmet blocked much of his vision. His body felt detached, as if subjugated by the suit. His armor was truly impressive. It was painted in a light tan tone, the scatter of black spotting unpredictably spaced, like the hide of a hyena. A suitable suit of armor for a man who went by just that name. The inside of the monitor was alive, most of the screen looking to track and analyze threats, with different statistics and readings along the perimeter. And then one, drifting on the edge of space, could hear the wind up of the electric rails evenly spaced around the *sargént*. That was the only warning of the almost immediate shudder that rattled his suit and shot him out, plummeting like a missile towards the surface many, many thousands of kilometers below. He was a

rock, although here he fell at no different pace than the thousands of comrades falling all around him. They called it an *Ironstorm* at the briefings. Two thousand hand-picked special forces soldiers from across the various military and bureaucratic branches speared head-first towards Scandinvan's dark grey skies.

Strategos Verán Fortosis described it like a massive multiplayer game of Russian roulette, minus the online part. Gabán slowly turned his head and looked at the man far to his left. The soldier was unarmored. He turned to look to his right, noticing that this soldier *was* armored. They had been told the mixture would be about fifty-fifty. High Command did not know what sort of reception to expect, and so it varied its assets. These were the men and women of the *Jor'Adurin*, a special operations team assembled to carry out intelligence operations in a country that few foreigners knew anything about. Sources to learn the language were scarce. Those that existed either disappeared or were found murdered, even before the declaration of war. Intelligence on their military was close to non-existent, apart from reports and evidence from the Scandinvan campaigns in Pudu. And they had no contacts waiting for their arrival at the surface. Two thousand soldiers, who would literally start from scratch at impact, shrieked into Earth's upper atmosphere, a thin cocktail of gasses burning at their edge. He wondered how the unarmored man was protected from this. It was probably a shell of some sort. Much like Gabán's own power armor, it most likely fed him a liquid of varied medications, to combat nausea, vertigo, and fear. Gabán smiled in grim determination.

He did not so much as flinch when he fell through the clouds and the green ground below accelerated toward him.



Somewhere Outside of The Black Citadel, Fortress Norska

"Fortress Norska? They say it resembles the trenches of the Great Civil War."

The Kraven Reich's deployment of two superdreadnoughts did not come as a surprise. An inconvenience, certainly. A surprise, no.

It did not take long for Rikjaard's office to receive a wire with instructions to request a diplomatic meeting between himself and a representative of the Reich. A quick telegram to the Reich's embassy in Automagfreek accomplished just that, and so it was very soon after his visit to Golghant that the *jogornos* found himself on an aircraft *en route* to Fortress Norska. Sleek, with wide grey wings in the shape of a delta that spanned over the dark blue ocean below, the plane glided over the ruined lands of the Fatherland. There were no windows on the aircraft, but Rikjaard could see the landscape below through a personal *virtdisplay*, as if his eyes were the cameras and he were an angel soaring over Hell below. He shuddered, looking at the permanent battlefield — or what looked like it — that was Fortress Norska. Trenches and barb wire fences littered the surface like an obstacle course, Kravenite soldiers prowling about and the civilians maneuvering where they were told to. Having enough of what there was to be seen, Rikjaard moved arms he could not see to pinch something at an invisible wrist he knew to be there. Suddenly, he was no longer free-floating over ten thousand kilometers above Kraven, but in a cushioned seat aboard that silver, hawk-looking jet. The *jogornos* afforded himself the sharp tingle that went down his spine.

To his quite extensive knowledge, he was the first Macabean to officially step foot on Kravenite soil. Not even the great Jonach I himself had visited this forsaken land. For reasons he believed self-evident, Rikjaard did not consider himself lucky to be in the vanguard. There was something about this country that made him wish he was

back in the Skyan Republic, and it was more than he had just seen. He knew about the Kraven Reich, the ghost of Father, and what they did to the peoples they subjugated. He hid his nerves, though; now was no time to quaver. Strength could only be met with strength — especially in the Kraven Reich.

The door leading to the pilots' cabin opened and out walked one of the bodyguard's assigned to the *jogornos*. Not that they would do much good in these circumstances, but Rikjaard supposed that at least they made him *feel* safer. He nodded at Rikjaard, who asked, "What is it?"

"The Kravenites, they have hailed us, *jogornos*," said the bodyguard, who was a full hand taller than Rikjaard when standing and built like a dresser. The man meant that the locals had asked the aircraft to identify itself, which no doubt the pilots readily did. No sense in being shot out of the sky, after all.

"Thank you," replied Rikjaard. As the other man walked away, back into the pilots' cabin, the diplomat started to put away various loose papers arrayed on the table beside him and elsewhere. A stewardess brought him a beverage he had asked for much earlier, and when everything was neatly organized in his briefcase he took the short glass and sipped on its dark, hazel contents as the jet made its descent.

Last edited by [The Macabees](#) on Mon May 09, 2016 8:44 pm, edited 2 times in total.

Former Sr. II Roleplaying Mentor | [Factbook](#)

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The Scandinavians
Senator

Posts: 4948
Founded: Oct 09, 2004
Capitalizt

by [The Scandinavians](#) » Tue Jul 05, 2016 7:42 pm



“ **The Macabees wrote:**
Above the Scandinavian Skies
Suicide mission...

The launch was harrowing. The voyage across Earth's low-orbit was stomach-churning. Then came the sudden jolt of the free-fall stage. There, far above Earth below, ten strangely shaped and metallic capsules released four pods apiece. These were literally ejected 'downwards,' towards the gorgeous blue-green planet. And then it rained.

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The basis of Scandinvna society was its complete homogeneity. This notion has caused the Scandinvans to become effectively cut off from the rest of the world. Thus the thought of foreigners entering the Empire as anything except slaves was a foreign and frightening idea to many. This sort of attitude had prompted the Glorious Empire to install a rather impressive series of fortifications, anti-air defenses, missile grids, and detection systems.

These systems however were not ideally geared towards an attack that followed the same sort of generalized pattern which had been employed by the Scandinvans in their attack on Citadel City in Havensky. Therefore they were caught mostly unaware by the use of orbital insertion. The reaction from high command was however quite prompt due to the ongoing tensions ensuring that the defenses of the fatherland were readied against any potential attack committed by ICBMs.

The response was thus roused quite quickly. Command, assuming it was some sort of bombardment, ordered the air defense grid activated which unleashed a series of missiles at the oncoming object. The missile defense batters throughout the central Scandinvan mountain range dispensed the wrath of the Emperors upon the oncoming targets without abandon.

The general consensus among the officers was that the oncoming rain was an attempt to disable key portions of the defensive infrastructure as a way of getting back at the Empire for launching the raid on Havensky or for having sponsored the pirates which had taken up arms against the Golden Throne. Nonetheless, action had to be taken. At this moment the Sons of Erid could not afford to be weak enough to so readily allow an attack on the homeland to greatly damage it. Something which demanded that the high command take whatever action was needed to minimize any harm that the attack might inflict.

The high command activated special hunter units to begin to hunt down any possible collaborators who might have been providing the enemy with target locations or provided live firing details. An issue which required that they wait until after the fact in order to properly assess the damage that the attack might bring. A point which the high command was not truly concerned with. For lives lost were just that, but credibility lost for the regency could pose an immense deal of harm to its longevity. All variables had to properly be accounted for least everything fall apart around them.

Regardless of the damage done, the salvo of deployed high altitude missiles had been deployed and only the resulting contact between them and the incoming objects would be able to properly paint the situation's developing narrative.

We are the Glorious Empire of the Scandinavians. Surrender or be destroyed. Your civilization has ended, your time is over. Your people will be assimilated into our Empire. Your technological distinctiveness shall be added to our own. Your culture shall be supplanted by our own. And your lands will be made into our lands.

"For five thousand years has our Empire endured. In war and peace we have thrived. Against overwhelming odds we evolved. No matter what we face we have always survived and grown. We shall always be triumphant." -Emperor Godfrey II

Hope for a brighter tomorrow - fight the fight, find the cure



The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by [The Macabees](#) » Wed Aug 03, 2016 7:08 pm



Checkpoint, Outside of The Black Citadel

They will belittle you and they will mistreat you, but not because they seek to hurt you. They don't understand the concept of special status. To the Capitol Police, you are just another person who will be punished with death if you attempt to subvert their system of control."

— *Lasagos Anasis Forjer*

Rikjaard had never seen a country as despicable as the Kraven Reich. It was a society devoid of freedom. Worse still, in that regard, than even Lyras. At least in Lyras citizens could walk the streets without suffering the fear of death at a moment's notice. At least in Lyras life holds value. The same is not true of the Reich, where an AI's mission to protect society led to the devaluation of the element that makes society what it is: humanity.

The *jogornos* chose not to look at the soldier — nay, that organic automaton —, as *it* executed the man mere meters away. He kept his mouth shut, though. These...*capitol police* — a term that's hard to say without wanting to spit its filth out of your mouth —... did not care about Rikjaard's position or power. Any challenge to their authority, and they would kill him all the same. So, when they pushed him towards that bare, mostly-empty room, he conceded without resistance. And despite that burning feeling of responsibility to say something, *do* something, he restrained himself and made do with what he had.

"You will be notified," said the soldier, right before closing the door behind him.

This trip would no doubt leave deep scars in his mind. The sounds of women being pulled into the streets by their hair, wailing as they saw their men lined up against the wall and executed by an impromptu firing squad, would forever haunt the *jogornos'* dreams. That desolate wasteland known as Fortress Norska, a soil oppressed by the spilled blood of its people, was to have a deep impression on him. An unfortunate impression, indeed, knowing how important it was to upkeep good relations with the Reich, despite the ethical difficulty of doing so. He fought that wave of nausea one gets when a memory one rather forget escapes those frail mental chains to the surface.

He decided to take a look around the bare room.

Rikjaard eyed the camera tracking his movement. He smiled to himself, taking whatever satisfaction he could from knowing just how much the Reich feared the people...no, slaves, as that's what Kravenites really are...within its borders. A fear born of the understanding that true power resides with the People. With nothing much to do — he didn't even bother to take out his laptop, doubting very much that there was an internet connection here —, the temporarily sequestered *jogornos* lifted the jug of water, and not

seeing a glass of any kind he took a big gulp. He slammed it back on the table and took a seat. The chairs, he needn't say, were *very* uncomfortable. What else could you expect here? He had nothing much to do, and so he waited in that room while his mind covered the points he'd bring up to whatever representative he spoke to. And seeing what he saw so far, there was a quickly growing doubt that he'd meet with a reasonable human, or a true human at all. And what could he say to an organic machine, like one of the Capitol Police?

This was why, if this war with the Scandinavians ushered in an era of Macabean involvement in Gholgoth, it was hard to imagine a world where the Golden Throne and the Reich were friendly. But the *jogornos* could keep up appearances for as long as they were needed. It wasn't a Macabean problem anyways, so why make it one?

Regardless, Rikjaard made a quick mental check: *discuss the bolstering of Macabean defensive assets in Gholghant and the Skyan Republic*. He stowed that away in the back in his mind.

He could not stop that hideous, hair-raising tingle from going down his spine, as if his hosts could read his thoughts. And so he waited out the rest of his time in tedious patience, preferring to think as little as he could as he waited to speak face-to-face with the representative assigned to him.



Gaztelua, Gholghant

"Marry your daughter off as you must. My opinion hardly matters at all anyways."

— Empress Sophie

[**OOC N.B.:** This takes place *following* Fedor's stop at Morrdh, during the current imperial tour.]

With Rikjaard understandably busy, following the Reich's deployment of two superdreadnoughts to Skyan waters, His Imperial Majesty Fedor decided to take a clandestine detour during the ongoing world tour he was undertaking with his wife. Sophie, for her part, decided to take the quick lull to fly back to Fedala, to be with the heir and his sister. Fedor's decision to personally attend to Henoor of Gholghant was not just out of acknowledgment of Rikjaard's schedule, but also because in these matters it was best for royalty to meet face-to-face. Especially when it has to do with the marriage of an imperial daughter.

The Emperor arrived to Gaztelua in the early morn. His voyage was clandestine and as spontaneous as an imperial detour could be. Steward Henoor knew that Fedor was coming, of course, but there was no fanfare awaiting him. This was a war zone and there was no intention of putting His Imperial Majesty at risk. Instead, an armored sports utility vehicle sat parked on the tarmac, away from any civilian terminals, and Fedor was quickly transferred from his jet to the automobile. Three navy-blue-suited men clung to either side of him, the third behind the group, and they got into the car with him — one in the driver's seat (there had been no one in the vehicle), one in the back with His Imperial Majesty, and another in the passenger's seat.

Fedor arched an eyebrow and tapped lightly on the window to his right. *Thump, thump*. Bullet proof glass it was, although the emperor wondered just how "bullet proof" this glass really was.

"A glass epoxy composite, Your Imperial Highness," said the bodyguard sitting in the back with him.

For a second there, Fedor wondered whether the man could read his mind. A foolish thought, though. He simply grimaced in response, and the bodyguard did well to silence any further commentary. The emperor turned his attention back towards the window, looking towards the jetbridges attached to dozens of giant airliners, which extended from the concrete terminal like fingers.

Now the one in the driver's seat spoke. "Perhaps you should sit in the middle, Your Imperial Highness. You would be safer there."

"I shall sit where I please," said Fedor, deep, rumbling voice cold and grave.

He turned his attention to his thoughts. It was amusing to think that he hadn't been to Gholgoth yet, and that his first visit had to be under such surreptitious circumstances. Not all entrances can be grand, Fedor supposed. Besides, history is often made in the most covert of circumstances. Important people make important targets, after all.

Above them, a Ghantish jet broke the sound barrier, as it darted over the city in patrol. Two of them danced this way and that, through the clouds, using their advanced radars to guard the skies. In a flash, a mere instance, one could be seen jumping from a cluster of clouds to the next, but it would not be there for very long. In the city below, some fathers stopped to point upwards and show their mouth-agape sons Gholghant's proud jet fighters.

The black vehicle was not shy in its intent. It sped through the busy city streets, changing lanes and driving through just-turned red lights, bullying its way towards the palace. There must have been some advanced communication, because the SUV was waved into the complex without wait or holdup. They drove into a reception plaza, where a valet patiently waited to take the car and park it. Fedor's bodyguards exited first, with Fedor moving much more gracefully and elegantly. Dressed in a modern suit with a trim and tapered cut, his shoes long and square-toed, and his hair in a slicked back undercut, he looked every bit a young playboy who had inherited an empire. But, do not be fooled, he had earned that empire as much as any man had. That truth was written in the blood.

A small group of Henoor's own guards approached discretely, and one or two entered conversation with one of Fedor's bodyguards. They talked for a few seconds, and then the merged group made its way into the palace, where Henoor was awaited them.



Car'gún Díelaht, Halfway Point Between Gholgoth and Greater Díenstad

"We are building a gateway to Gholgoth."

— *Stratadmiránt* Jurman Pantoslayer

Giant barges towed even larger — mammoth, really — floating 'blocks.' Dozens, maybe even hundreds of them, converged onto this particular spot of beautiful, blue ocean. There was nothing for thousands of miles in any direction; nothing except blue waves and their white mist.

They said that the waters below were infested with twenty-meter-long sharks of dark stripes, extending down their backs like a gradient. Their teeth, some said, were two meters long apiece, and they could chew through metal cages. Sometimes, if the schools of fish along the coastlines were large enough, some would venture and prowl the seas of northeastern Greater Díenstad. They were known

to kill human prey, but since not many who encountered them survived, it was difficult to place just how many lives they were responsible for taking. Certainly, few of the sailors who had fallen overboard were ever found again, although they could have died for a variety of reasons. Still, whenever one looked into the cold ocean, it was difficult not to shudder at what lurked beneath the surface. And when a fast-paced shadow shot across the rippling waves, a dark black fin carving through them like a sharp, broad knife, that shudder came with a piercing tingle of electricity along the spine. There was a reason few men had explored these seas before the modern day, and even these days few civilian ships made the long, expensive voyage.

Of course, many of the ships that *did* cross these ways were, of course, buccaneers. How could they not? Few organized navies patrolled these routes, the cargo ships that did travel these lanes usually carried luxury goods (remember the [Alchian-Allen effect](#)), and...sharks. What better place for a pirate than these vast, forgotten oceans?

No more, however. Because across that vast expanse now sat a brilliant, dazzling fleet, which ships were strung out in tactically-positioned groups from Earth's end to Earth's end. Over twenty thousand ships lay arrayed there, their grey monotone hulls and sharp corners almost overwhelmed by the large flaming ball that was the sun behind them. Not all flew the aureate naval flag of the Golden Throne; in fact, half or more proudly displayed that of the Kingdom of Imbrinium. The moderate currents of air that swept through islands, towers, and the broad cannons of the warships carried with them the noise and tongues of sailors from many nations — Díenstadi, Imbriniumian, Theohuacan, Indran, Havenic, Zarbian, and Guffingfordi. The tremendous projection of the Golden Throne, and her glorious ally Imbrinium, was at display in all of its glory. The thousand-ship fleet of Myceanea, sailing towards the sandy beaches of those Illyrian Trojans, paled in comparison.

It was all a very expensive gamble, indeed.

But, tell me. What great moment in history hasn't been a gamble? What historic date has not been the product of uncertainty? When Brutus and his fellow conspirators assassinated dictator Julius Caesar, were they certain of success? By all means, no. *Alea iacta est* — curious that the forces at work behind Caesar's rise were also the cause of his ultimate demise. Curious, but not coincidental.

Along the far flanks, those large barges pulled those goliath-like base-modules into position. They came together with heavy *thuds*, the sound drowning out all else in its path. Their surfaces were largely barren, no obvious structures on them. That all came later, as the material was brought in by other supply ships or landed in by high-orbit aircraft. Already, the center modules were populated by comparatively minuscule buildings and towers. There were RADARs, including the long skeleton of a particularly wide array — OTH-R —, missile emplacements, close-in weapon systems, and plenty of other pieces of equipment built around a complex of long landing strips and internal elevators. There was also, interestingly, a network of tram-track, made for a number of heavy, and fastened, trams that could ferry personnel throughout the base as efficiently as possible. This small city was expanding in all directions, its pace limited almost exclusively by how quickly those engineless hulls could be brought-in from Imbriniumian factories and pushed, and then locked, into place. All over, independently moving vehicles crawled over the hull like worker ants, belonging to maintenance crews forever making sure everything remained in tip top shape.

Car'gún Díelaht, ancient Díenstadi for 'The Great Gateway,' was to be permanent. Its structure now was designed for quick and cost-effective assembly — quick a relative term, of course —, with plans for improvements ready to be implemented after the war. It would forever guard the waters between Gholgoth and Greater Díenstadi, not only serving as an early defense against a Gothic counter-invasion, but also as a station from which to hunt down corsairs. For

now, during war, this would have little benefit. But, after the war, there would be a flourishing of luxury trade. A pleasant thought on a pleasant future, but a thought living in the present world of war and destruction nonetheless.

Overhead, jets screamed as they ripped through the air. In broader ellipses, spread over the many fleet groupings, Blackjesters made their graceful patrols. Some of them were so far away that they were merely black specks over other black specks lined up against the horizon — the battlecruisers of the fleets' advanced picket. These wove around other aircraft. A flight of bombers were just landing onto the airfield below, quickly taxiing to an elevator which would store them in cold, broad hangers below-deck. All the while, civilian orbital craft were coming and going, three swooping down right then from high above to deliver materials and arms. Others, these much larger and slower, transported the troops who would soon form part of the initial landing force for the great invasion of Scandinvan.

Along the north- and southeastern fringes of the central-most section of the floating base were fjord-like entrances, through which flowed cargo and supply ships. Literally hundreds of them sailed in and out, most traveling between Greater Díenstad and *Car'gún Díelaht*. The northeastern docks would serve to service the fleet as it approached Scandinvan. For now they remained vacant, guarded by fortified gun and missile encasements waiting to protect their temporarily dormant domain. The thousands of ships at rest, or streaming from the base to where water met sky, was a truly impressive sight to behold. Here was the machinery behind the war; the heart of the invasion.

Last edited by [The Macabees](#) on Wed Aug 03, 2016 8:18 pm, edited 2 times in total.

Former Sr. II Roleplaying Mentor | [Factbook](#)

[The Macabees' Guides to Roleplaying, Worldbuilding, and Other Stuff](#)
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Morrdh
Powerbroker

Posts: 8417
Founded: Apr 16, 2008
Democratic Socialists

by [Morrdh](#) » Thu Aug 04, 2016 1:48 pm



(OOC: Part re-post from another thread, part catch-up)

The Admiralty Building Morrdun Commonwealth of Morrdh

The Royal Morridane Navy's Naval Intelligence Division had long since operated on what it called 'The Desk System', figuratively speaking there was a 'desk' assigned to a particular location of interest. Though with each figurative 'desk' there would be a varying number of actual physical desks depending on important it was, ongoing operations on Indras had their own room whilst the Mordent Conflict had consumed an entire floor and tucked away in some corner was a desk for some back-of-beyond region where a nation had happened to purchase a Lyran Arms Longsword-class warship. The 'Gholgoth Desk' occupied a reasonable sized room and each of the physical desks in that room dealt with a single Gothic nation, the desks for Havensky and the Scandinvan Empire had seen their workloads steadily increase with a corresponding ripple being felt in the paperwork on neighbouring desks.

The Gothic Beast was stirring.

Admittedly that wasn't an entirely correct statement, Gholgoth had not been 'slumbering' for wars had still been fought and deals brokered. It would be more accurate to state that the Gothic Beast was reacting to an external factor, namely the Golden Throne that was assembling its great warfleet in spitting distance of the Commonwealth. Now the Scandinvan Empire had attacked Havensky, the latter of which had been determined (as reasonably could) as being an ally of a sort for the Golden Throne. A barrage of questions had been unleashed upon the Gholgoth Desk; Would the Golden Throne bring forward its own attack? How were the other Gothic nations reacting? Was there any threat to the Commonwealth?

Only time would tell.

Over The Sea of Moka North-Eastern Greater Dienstad

Avro Shackleton MR.2 WR705 of No.57 Squadron, RMAF Coastal Command, [grewled](#) through the skies to the east of the peninsula of Floridadel Moka. It supposedly flew in international waters on a routine maritime patrol, anti-submarine and anti-smuggling being RMAF Coastal Command's bread and butter to addition to search and rescue responsibilities in support of the Morridane Coastguard. This was true to a point but No.57 Squadron had been given extra orders to observe Warfleet Gholgoth, reporting what they saw in a post-sortie debriefing in addition to taking as many photos as they could of the various Macabean ships that made up the armada. It was the best opportunity the Morridanes had to gather intel on the fleet of the Golden Throne and they most certainly weren't going to pass it up.

Shackleton WR705 was one of several maritime patrol Shackletons that had flown patrols over the Sea of Moka and skirted the outer edge of the Macabean warfleet, the vintage aircraft being a near constant sight in the northern sky for the sailors of the Golden Throne. It was WR705 which was present when Warfleet Gholgoth set sail, the aircraft radioing when it could confirm that the vast grey armada was indeed stretching out into the great ocean. In a short time WR705 received orders to shadow the Macabean, another Shackleton was being prepared to takeover when WR705 had to turn for home when her fuel started to run low. As the Macabean ships passed beyond the aircraft's operating range a Type 22 frigate, HES *Bloodhound*, of the Royal Morridane Navy would be detailed to shadow the fleet as it left Dienstadi waters.

Irish/Celtic Themed Nation - [Factbook](#)

In your Uplink, hijacking your guard band.



Imbrinium
Diplomat

Posts: 589
Founded: Mar 03, 2008
Ex-Nation

by [Imbrinium](#) » Wed Aug 10, 2016 3:46 pm



"Only the dead have seen the end of war"

Plato

Cormond

The weeks following the end of the regional war, the situation in the kingdom was still tense the news was full of funerals of the dead coming back to the homeland from Mordent. There where hundreds still missing and hundreds to be identified from body parts blown across the battlefields in Mordent.

The Crown was busy making calls to the hospitals checking on wounded soldiers and funeral daily, so many that other members of the cabinet where having to show up to show support from the government. The kingdom was still on a war footing but little took notice at first but as more and more reservist where called up and military movements of men and equipment still seen headed to ports around the Kingdom somewhere starting to question what was going on.

In the inter-circle of the crown where in meetings everyday on how best to break the new war that the Crown was already involved in secretly. The king and even the queen where involved in the planning since the queen's home region was Gholgoth. The plan so far was to send 5 million troops spread around The Golden Thorne's bases to help out where or if needed. Another 6 million troops along with 15,000 ships where to be deployed to Gholgoth to assist The Golden Thorne in its operations. There was already a secret command setup to share intelligence and oversee operations in The Golden Thorne areas of operations. One command setup in the Crown and one in the TGT. The King and Fedor had in secret signed a joint forces

agreement making such troop deployments and joint commands possible.

Some members of the House of Commons requested counsel with the upper house of Dikaio and the house of Royal about actions of war in a time of peace. These members where to get the counsel but the news in which they were about to hear was the news they wanted to hear or the news the kingdom wants to hear following a war.

Parliament house in Cormond:

It was earlier in the morning the great hall where both houses are of meet for open discussion. All members of both the houses of commons and Dikaio where having their own little talks in groups, these groups only meet like this every so often, but this was a special meeting called by the King, and Queen and the MOD.

Some of the highest ranking generals and members of the MOD and the Military where ordered to be present during this meeting. The king's motor pool showed up outside amid heavy security and press outside. The lead speaker of the house of Dikaio's announced everyone to rise as the Royals made their way in the great hall.

The royals took their positions in the front of the great hall, as Sir Ferri Colombano took his position behind the lead speaker's podium.

"Today we are all called here under the question of the position of the kingdom, the kingdom is at war, and this war is with country of The Scandinvans. We are at war by request of The Golden Throne to the commitment to anti-slavery laws of the kingdom. This kingdom has stood at the fore front for years as an anti-slavery nation and now it has to stand behind words with actions. For far too long the kingdom has stood by and turned its head to the slavery that was taking place within our own region, this is the time to act and act now we should, there have been agreements signed pledging support and actions to defend the region by force."

"Today we have the house of royals here to rally the cause and why this has been done the way it has been done. But first there is an intelligence briefing from the Lady Demi Efthalia of the MOD and Sir. Livio Greco."

After the lengthy briefing by the intelligence community Sir Colombano took the podium and announced that the house of royals would be speaking next. The Ard Rí walked up and stood behind the podium.

After the applause and everyone sat down the king spoke.

"Ladies and gentlemen we are here today in a day of recovery from the last war in the face of a new war this war is different, this war involves slavery. Slavery his become a problem in this region again but not from the countries we already identified as slavery nations this comes from an outside nation in an outside region. The Scandinvan's have came into this region supplying pirates and taking slaves back to the region of Gholgoth. Everyone is this room knows all too well about this region. Our citizens of this region have been kidnapped and taken to The Scandinvan and made to become slaves for their nation."

"We must stand with our allies and our values and stop this nation in his tracks; this nation is not only a threat to this region but to the region of Gholgoth itself. They have attack friendly peaceful nations and threatened one of our closed allies and the home nation of our queen. Our intelligence agencies as you all heard earlier, that this nation is a threat to both regions. And we should stand and fight this threat unless we fail ourselves and our people."

"Am here to ask for your vote to proceed to war inside Gholgoth to attack and defend our allies and protect out people. Thank you"
Both houses stood and applauded as the king took his seat.

Sir Colombano walked over to the podium and introduced the next

speaker which would be the queen. This was not unheard of but very rare case where the queen speaks to both houses of parliament.

The queen walked up behind the podium amid applause.

"Ladies and gentlemen as a queen I know it's rare that I speak to you on affairs regarding the state. But I come to you as a citizen of the kingdom and from Gholghant; I became a citizen by joining the military as a doctor and served in the reserves to uphold the traditions and laws of the kingdom I call home. But I cannot forget my home for which I was born and raised, which is in danger of being attacked from a barbaric nation that holds no regard for human life besides what they can do as slaves. In these times we cannot support or allow this to happen to our allies or to the people inside our region from being traded for weapons and supplies. As a member of the Gholghant royal family I have a chance to speak to the Glothlords and may be able to talk them into handling this nation themselves. To do this I plan on going to Gholghant and request to speak to the Glothlords to see if they will not force this region and kingdom to force it on The Scandinavians. I hope my coming here and the fact that I would be going with the fleet to Gholgoth along with two of my children which serve in the military."

After a break of a couple of hours for lunch and meetings between the houses everyone entered the great hall for a vote on whether to enter a new war outside the region.

The vote took about an hour and the vote was close in the House of Commons the vote just passed with 51% and the house of Dikaio the vote passed with 53% of the house which is very close compared to other votes on war outside the region.

When I was young I used to pray for a bike, then I realized that God doesn't work that way, so I stole a bike and prayed for forgiveness. "Deus vult" is Latin for "God wills it" and it was the cry of the people at the declaration of the First Crusade by Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in 1095.
#MAGA, WWG1WGA , Q



Havensky
Diplomat

Posts: 888
Founded: Jan 01, 2008
Left-wing Utopia

Buy War Bonds Today

by **Havensky** » Sun Aug 14, 2016 2:09 pm



Task Force Kacer

Task Force Kacer's flagship *Red Queen* cut through the waters away from the shores of the Golden Throne alongside the ships of the task force. The long sleek thin battleship sliced through the rough waters of the open sea in contrast to the Assault Carrier *Athena's Call* whose broad hull was more of a plow that crashed through the waves. On all twenty-four ships, the forty-foot blue 'Winged Lion' ensign flew through the wind.

On the bridge of the *Red Queen*, Admiral Colina Murciel sat in the commander's chair looking over the latest intelligence reports on Scandinavian naval activity. Throughout the task force, crew members were busy making preparations to switch from a anti-piracy task force to a full combat strike force. Task Force Kacer was going to Gholgoth.

From her quarters, Captain Chispa laid down in her bunk with her video screen on listening to the news. All her friends in the Citadel had checked in. Squall and Edwidge had been out of the country. Glitch and her lab were unscathed. Hurk and his unit was all accounted for. The Ironwings were, of course, safe. The Iron Guard had placed them so deep underground during the attack that a nuclear device would not have given them a single scratch.

She didn't think she'd be going back to Gholgoth so soon. She returned with mixed feelings. She had been rotated out of Heartbreak in part to get away. However, when the Citadel was bombed almost all task forces and expeditionary fleets had been called to Fort Defiance.

Even now, half the fleets from Texas and Sondria had been given new orders and were converging onto Skyan Gholgoth and to the war that would follow.

The video screen made a familiar sound. The opening to the Skyan War Hymn and another advertisement for war bonds. A wisp of a woman with dark hair and a bright pink stripe in fill pilot's uniform stood in the middle of a large factory building next to an assembly line. Missiles in various stages of assembly rolled down the line with workers manning robotic arms that were placing them together. Chispa recognized her instantly as the Skyan Armada's latest ace pilot.

"My name is Lieutenant Nikki Kurai and I'm at the MTD facility in New Foundry. When I shoot down slaver planes I use these MTD Tachi missiles to do it. These missiles travel 873 meters a second and are absolutely deadly. We use the Tachi because we Skyans are outnumbered by the slaver horde 3 to 1 and I need every shot to count. Here in New Foundry, workers like Wendy are working overtime to build these missiles so I can keep our skies safe."

Wendy peers into the camera and smiles, waving a robotic arm. Kurai begins to walk down the line heading towards the delivery doors.

"However, a state of the art missile like the Tachi is expensive - almost a million credits each. My I9 Accipiter carries six and a Storm-Class Airship can seventy-five. To keep our Armada flying, we need your help - with war bonds"

A military long haul truck pulled up to the delivery dock inside the factory and workers began to quickly load the truck.

Your contribution to the war effort keeps workers like Fred and Jake on the job working overtime to help arm our troops. If every citizen in Havensky bought a \$20 bond not only could we keep my squadron armed - we can take the fight to the slavers."

As Kurai walked out of the factory, a shadow came over her and the camera panned up and refocused on a giant manta shaped airship the size of a football field. The airship was wide instead of the usual Skyan dagger design. The hull was painted the same sky blue of the Skyan flag with a golden winged lion on each wing. Small turrets could be seen dotting the wings.

"This is the "Flying Fortress" Class Airship and with your help we can field many more across Gholgoth and into the heart of the slaver capitol"

beep-beep, beep-beep, beep-beep

Chispa turned her watch off and got out of her bunk, grabbed her helmet, and began to move up the ladder towards the flight deck. As she walked out onto the flight deck, crew members were cleaning up the bulkheads, prepping equipment, and performing maintenance.

She saluted the crew chief and boarded *Colbalt Six* and began the flight pre-checks. All greens across the board.

Cobalt Six/Athena's Call, clear forward, nav-con green, interval check, thrust positive and steady. Good hunting.

Chispa pressed forward on the controls of her helijet and began to head out ahead of the task force. In the distance, she could start to see the outline of an armada stretching out all across the horizon. At first, they were small dots in the distance. The dots grew and multiplied as she flew closer. The large dreadnaughts now clearly visible on her radar.

"Kriermak Gholgoth, this is Cobalt Six of Skyan Task Force Kacer reporting in for our rendezvous. All ships and aircraft present and accounted for. Kacer Six sends her regards."

"Acknowledged Cobalt Six; Task Force Kacer is cleared to assume forward position."

Chispa sent along the message to the Admiral and moved her helijet off to the side of the formation and watched as the Skyan Flags of Task Force Kacer slid past the battle ensigns of the Golden Throne's invasion fleet.

OCC:

[Show Spoiler](#)

Last edited by [Havensky](#) on Sun Aug 14, 2016 2:10 pm, edited 1 time in total.

The Skybound Republic of Havensky
(Pronounced Haven-Sky)

Territory held in
[Texas](#) - [Gholgoth](#) - [Sondria](#)

**N&I RP Mentor Specializing in PMT, Character Development,
Worldbuilding, and Diplomacy - TG me for help!**



The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

☐ by [The Macabees](#) » Thu Sep 01, 2016 8:38 pm

QUOTE

Somewhere, Scandinvan

[Post written in cooperation with Scandinvans. Continues from [here](#).]

*"Day 2: I am alone. I am, as far as I know,
the sole exponent of the Empire's intelligence
network here. I will survive, I will report, and I
look forward to the day I meet my comrades
from the beaches."*

— From the journal of *Sargént* Jarl Gabán

All around him, his comrades dropped like flies. Some of them were torn to shreds, others saw their protective shells penetrated, their bodies decomposing under the atmosphere's burn. He thought, at one point, that he could literally see the meat erase itself, leaving only the bones of one body. It was then that he decided to focus on the ground. *Sargént* Gabán frowned, his face hidden behind that thick armored suit encasing him. He frowned at the fact that he felt fear. He did not *experience* fear, for the constant pumping of drugs into his bloodstream forced him to acknowledge nothing but aggression, while masking the pain. Rather, he quite literally *felt* the fear deep within his ones. It was an instinctual understanding that things had not gone according to plan; in fact, they had gone so awry of the original plan, that there no longer was a plan. And that was if he even made it to the ground alive. That fear stung, like the mellow ache of old age.

The dark night sky lit up as Scandinvan batteries opened up. They must have thought they were under bombardment, as many of their munitions were large missiles better suited for downing aircraft. Still, when their warheads exploded in proximity, they sent a storm of shrapnel, as sharp as it was deadly. This tore into human flesh, and only those armored standing a chance. Even they were often too close to chance survival.

As Gabán continue to fall in free descent, his body was suddenly jolted upwards as if punched squarely in the stomach by a god's fist. The wind was sucked out of him, and for a split second he felt the tremor of not being able to breathe. His vision blurred while his descent continued, but finally the *sargént* regained his senses. He looked down, towards his stomach, and saw a massive piece of sharpened steel embedded deep into the front plate of his armored suit. He knew not if it had gone through and pierced his skin. The pain could have just been that of broken ribs. Either way, the shrill agony of whatever wound he had suffered was paralyzing. He could not move a even a limb, although that very well could have been from the force of the air slamming up against him or from a malfunction in the suit. The latter would not be good. The landing

would be quite painful if that was the case.

Gabán sighed. He always figured he'd go out like this. Actually, no, he never thought this was the way it would end. That is, being chucked at the Earth and being absolutely squashed against its surface. He gave a short, mad laugh, and then smiled.

As everything around him continued to explode, scream, and die, the *sargént* plummeted downwards. He closed his eyes as the ground got closer, and he calmly breathed in just as he hit the Earth. Around him burst forth the ground from underneath, an eruption of rocks and dirt flying in every direction. Gabán, the mass and force of his suit drilling him a few feet into the ground, disappeared within it. When the dust finally settled there was no movement, no hint that any life was left.

And then, then the torso of the suit opened from the back.

The *sargént* coughed and groaned, but he did not move. He lay there, his face twisted in pain, until finally he moved his arms into a push-up position and turned himself around slowly. Finally, he sat up, only to let out a shriek and immediately fall on his back. After a few more seconds of groaning, he raised his arms again and this time popped the helmet off his head. Breathing hard and rapidly, wincing from the hurt, he turned himself back on his belly and let the torso-portion of the armor fall off. The legs would be more difficult. Ribs broken as they were, he could not bend over to release them. But, without the torso — which sported the power source —, he could not move the sheer mass of the legs. And so he decided to brave it, turning on his back once again and in one swift movement sitting up to unfasten the leg pieces. A long, loud scream, and some effort, later, and the two leg pieces were off. He took another minute to lay there and recover from that last exertion.

This was definitely not the way he saw himself dying.

Then he remembered about that piece of shrapnel that had gotten lodged into his suit. He felt for a wound along his abdomen in a fury, and breathed a sigh of relief when he felt no blood, no gaping hole. Good then; his only worry was the rib cage that no longer seemed to be intact. He looked around him and found his Hali rifle on the ground. Crawling the distance there, grabbed it and then started to pull himself up the steep incline of dirt that had been formed by the caving-in of the hole his suit had created. He stopped as soon as he got to the top, collapsing once again on his back. There was no way he was going to crawl to somewhere where he could fix himself up enough to survive until he healed. He had to get up.

Gabán looked up, towards the skies. Scandinavian missile batteries and artillery were still firing savagely, tearing the landing Macabean soldiers to shreds. He couldn't see them in too much detail, but it did not seem that even a tenth of them had the luck he had. Some did land, the *sargént* saw, but they did so with the same force he had and who knew if they had survived. If there were any survivors they'd do the same as him, and worry about regrouping later. So he concentrated his energy on pushing himself up, and then on balancing just to *stay* up! Finally, he felt steady enough to walk forwards, slowly and using trees as support.

The Macabean made his way into a forest, somewhere in central Scandinavian, flanking a small dirt road leading to who knows where. He struggled on like this for the better part of an hour until finally the *sargént* stumbled upon a small village. It was a quaint settlement of most likely no more than a thousand farmers. They lived in colorful two-story houses of wooden frame, each house's second floor outer wall decorated by intricate design. A small river carved a path through the forest on the other side of the dirt road and into the town. The bright moon still clung high above, casting an eerie spotlight on the town. Gabán stopped just short of the end of the tree-line, leaning against a trunk and holding his abdomen.

"Shit," he cursed under his breath. He didn't know the language. He didn't know anything about the people or their culture. He didn't even

know where he was. He drew in his breath and then exhaled, receding his nerves even as his body rushed with adrenaline. Behind him, the battle continued to rage.

Pushing himself off the trunk with his shoulder, Gabán walked towards the town, one step at a time. His right hand still held the rifle, tightly wrapped around the pistol grip. His other hand was still holding his side, and he now dragged his left leg as he trudged forward. Slowly, muffled growls of pain leaving traces of rising steam just beyond his lips, he made it to the first building, which sat just along the edge on the eastern side of the river. He peered down the 'main street,' mule-pulled cart track that it was, to see that many of the houses had their lights on. Still, the streets were empty as a forsaken's soul and not a noise could be heard, apart from the clamor of nearby war. And so he reached that first house undetected, positioning himself right next to a window that seemed to give him view into the living room. The lights were off and it was difficult to see through the dirty glass, but it looked empty inside.

Gabán crept to the front door and slowly turned its knob, finding that it was locked. He *tsk'd*. It was never easy. This time he turned the knob with a hard jolt, his thick wrist snapping and effectively breaking it. The door creaked a slow squeal as it opened on its own. The *sargént* walked in, back bent as if in cover.

He gave the room a good sweep. The furnishings were rather austere, but not impoverished. The living room doubled as a lobby, which was essentially a tile-floored pathway down a hall, and Gabán could only guess that it led to the rest of the house. Apart from the muffled sound of his feet, the house was in a state of utter silence. It was enough to give him the heebie-jeebies, and so he tightened his hold on his Hali-53. There was a tall wooden table of plain carpentry that was topped with a vase full of flowers on the right side of the hall, against the white plaster wall. Opposite of the hall were the backs of two great leather armchairs of archaic design, the ends of the arms studded with fake gold buttons. They faced a circular dining table topped with cloth and a small, old traditional television with two antennas pointing in either direction. Behind that there were three photographs of the children at their first communion, the two sons in military uniform and the daughter in a flowing white dress. There were bookcases with decorations and other photos around the room, and in the far corner there was a wood-fired stove for warmth — the walls were black from the filth of the smoke it spewed.

The *sargént* continued into the hall, into which the moon light did not penetrate. He turned on his night vision to see a staircase towards the back, but two other doors on the left-side wall. Upon walking up to the first door, he slowly opened it and peeked in. It was the restroom. He walked in and closed the door behind him, taking some towels from a rack on the wall to place them at the foot of the door; after turning off his night vision, he flipped the light switch on. ...light switch. There wasn't one. It was a button instead, like in the old fashion homes. He pressed it and the room was suddenly flooded in brightness. He took a quick look around: toilet, check; bidet, check; sink with medicine cabinet, **check**. He opened it, rapidly looking through the contents. Most of it went into the sink below. Some of it, like the cheap pain killers, whatever gauze was at hand, and other first aid items went into his uniform's pockets.

Just as he was finishing searching through the items like a drugged home robber he heard a rasp at the door, and then something pounced on it and there was the sound of hard nails against the wood. Rifle butt firmly against his shoulder, he reached out with his left arm to twist the knob and open the door. There was nothing there. Something let loose a nasty growl. Gabán looked down and there stood a thin, muscular, black and brown dog with its lips peeled over its razor sharp teeth in a snarl.

I should have figured there was a damn dog in this house.

It pounced on him without warning and the already injured Gabán fell

back against the toilet bowl on the back wall. His finger accidentally squeezed the trigger. Twice. And after that second shot there was a subtle whimper and the dog landed on him in a heap, and dead. But the *sargént* was in a bad state. If his ribs weren't broken before, they were definitely broken now. He had fallen with such force that it had broken much of the toilet's clay, rubble strewn across the rear half of the small bathroom. And now his back felt busted. Whatever his pain, though, his attention was fully on the door.

Face poking out from behind the frame was a small child, who looked at his maimed dog in horror. He cried out something in Scandinvan, as his eyes watered and tears streamed down his cheeks.

Foots stomped on the floor above, hard enough to reverberate against the walls, and they led to the stairs. The same feet started to stomp down those as well.

Gabán sprung to his feet in an instant. He gritted his teeth and buried the agony from his injury beneath the adrenaline-rich fear that shot through his damaged body. He grabbed the boy, who started yelling in his native tongue, and pulled him into the bathroom. He then quickly turned as he stepped outside the bathroom's door and fired two more rounds into the dark staircase. The footsteps stopped. "Okay buddy, I don't shoot at you, you don't shoot at me."

"Dreng nar infere!" was the only thing a man with a gruff voice said.

The *sargént* couldn't understand a word of it. "*Díenstadi*," he said. "Do you speak *Díenstadi*?"

Silence. A few seconds later the man popped out with his rifle — a beautiful wood-finished bolt-action weapon, Gabán noticed — and fired twice down the hall. They went well wide, but it made it quite obvious that the guy was not interested in negotiating with him. Gabán was running out of time. By now, others would have heard the shots, and who knew if their were military elements around these parts. He had to get out of there, and fast. He turned back to the boy, who was crying much more loudly now, and pointed at the floor aggressively to communicate that it'd be a good idea for the kid to stay put while this "situation" was settled. Then, rifle at the ready, he walked out into the hall and started moving backwards towards the front door.

Above, on the second story, a woman was screaming in Scandinvan — he might not know much about their culture, but at least the *sargént* could infer the fact that women were just as annoying here as they were back home. At least there was *that* constant. Whatever she had said, the man had stopped shooting. The woman screamed again. And like a lightning bolt the little boy shot out of the bathroom and sprinted up those creaky wooden stairs, back to the safe arms of his parents.

Now with the boy's safety out of the way, it was back to business.

A few of the Scandinvan man's hairs started to poke out behind the staircase's hard corner, and the Macabean fired a shot to force the armed man back into hiding. The man yelled something else, and then added some more to whatever he said after a few seconds. There were also a few attempts to fire back, but the hunting rifle did not lend itself to the situation and so Gabán was able to back his way to the door without too much trouble.

His respite was shattered by a sharp *crack* and by a bullet whizzing right by his head. It smacked into the frame, splinters flying every which direction, including into Gabán's face. His body jerked forward, back into the house, almost as an automated reaction; over a decade of warfare had groomed his instincts well. Or maybe not, because at the foot of the stairs stood the man who he had just gotten out of a standoff with. *Shit*, life had just gotten complicated. In front, the Scandinvan had his rifle pointed level at the Macabean intruder; behind him, an unknown shooter had boxed him into the house.

The two men looked at each other, tension's pressure thickening and multiplying. The Macabean's right index finger was on the trigger, and it slowly pushed on it until it hovered just below that threshold between life and death. The other man stared intently at Gabán, and his own finger was just as tightly wrapped around that hunting rifle's trigger. The front door had by now shut closed again.

Outside, tires skidded to the halt on the dirt road and in the still winds the shouts of men carried into the house. The *sargént* gulped. Maybe he was going soft. Any other time, he would have killed this man, so foolish as this man was to believe that he could take on an enemy soldier face-to-face. But, this was not any other day. Something was fundamentally different. Maybe it was that image of meat melting off the bones, and the bone then burning under the intense heat of the atmosphere's friction that had triggered a transformation within Gabán. Maybe he was sick of all this shit and just wanted a fuckin' good night's sleep for once in his damn life. Whatever it was, something was stopping him from pulling the trigger.

Today is this the day I die — let this misery end.

"Ber na garan teron gra."

The *sargént* didn't seem to notice that the Scandinvan had spoken. Then he shook his head and his focus came back to reality. "What?"

"Ber na garan teron gra," urged the man, who was vigorously pointing his rifle towards the kitchen.

Gabán understood. He nodded his head in appreciation, but the Scandinvan's only response was to thrust his rifle back towards the kitchen. The *sargént* waited not a second later. He ran to the kitchen, flung open the door, and saw another door that led to a small yard in the back. He took that exit, entering what some might call a small corral, where there were various tools and even a small, old tractor that looked like it was built to haul, but not very quickly. Around it there was a tall stone wall, which he jumped by first climbing onto the roof of the tractor and then launching himself at the lip of the wall, finally pulling himself over. He found himself on another street. This one empty except for a stray dog sleeping on the other side. It opened its eyes and started panting, only to suddenly stare at Gabán and close its mouth. ...okay. His experience with Scandinvan canines hadn't been very positive so far, maybe this one would prove the difference.

Let's think a little. Someone had shot at him from the street leading to the road that came from where the *sargént* had landed. They were soldiers. But, to escape, he had to melt back into the jungle and it made sense to take the shortest route there, which was where those Scandinvan soldiers had most likely come from. This would be *really* interesting.

He turned to the right and skirted down the street, keeping his body tight against the wall and within the dark shadows. Moonlight penetrated at a slant, illuminating the street before him. Behind him, on the other side of the street, a Scandinvan soldier ran into view. He turned his head slowly towards where Gabán had been standing, but by then the *Koro Kirim* had already turned the corner and was out of sight.

Pressing his back against the cold, wet surface of the buildings' stone façade, he stopped there for a second. He was already panting and his ribs ached. The *sargént* reached into his pockets and slowly took out the small bottle of painkillers. Uncapping it, he grabbed two and popped them into his mouth, after which he screwed the lid back on and put the bottle back into one of his pockets. Gabán crouched down on the balls of his feet and closed his eyes, remaining steady as if in a state of meditation. But it was not for long, as his eyes soon opened and he sprung to his feet. Rifle still in his hands, as it had been this whole time, he slowly made his way to the edge of the opposite corner. Gabán could see the woods from where he was. If

he could make it there, he'd probably be home free. But, down that street, in front of the house he had just escaped from, were a squad's worth of enemy soldiers carrying flashlights in a search.

He felt the slow infiltration of the painkillers' serum into his bones. It wasn't quite like what the suit pumped in him, but it would do for now.

And with that he bolted towards the treeline. It did not go unnoticed. One soldier cried out and another dropped to a knee, leveled his rifle, and began to shoot in steady rhythm. *Klack. Klack.* The ground around Gabán began to erupt in miniature explosions, the Scandinavians just missing him. He did not bother to shoot back; that would only slow him down. Instead, he silently prayed that they did not hit him. Another soldier had taken out his rifle and had started shooting at will, as well. Within seconds, it'd be all of them. Gabán focused only on the destination.

And when he hit that treeline, alive and still breathing, he did not stop running. Only after what must have been a four mile run — and imagine doing that with *broken ribs* — did he stop, finally collapsing on the ground, where upon he passed out...

Last edited by [The Macabees](#) on Fri Feb 10, 2017 11:36 am, edited 2 times in total.

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A Golden Opportunity

"We must look for the opportunity in every difficulty instead of being paralyzed at the thought of the difficulty in every opportunity." — Walter E. Cole

Gaztelua Palace
Gaztelua, Gholghant
(Co-written with [The Macabees](#))

"...This doesn't seem to be deescalating anytime soon," Elazar Zaldúa commented to his cousin Lara at the feast table. It was a large, empty room for the time being, though here very soon it would transform into a place of marvel. "A shame really, as we have the most to lose from an open war between the Scandies and the powers of Dienstad." Elazar wasn't especially bright, Lara thought, though he was observant at least. He was a man in his mid-thirties, with a bushy mop of brown hair and a beard to match. *And their heir to the scepter of the steward. Woe be to us all.*

Lara Jarasa bit her bottom lip as she thought of a way to respond. The purple vintage that swirled in her crystal wine glass kept her mind loose and her stresses at bay, though she was

hard-pressed to contemplate a proper response to her cousin's lamentations. "...I think, Elazar, that you should have more faith in your father and in the Emperor." Of course, she strained herself to say that last bit. *The Emperor is a fool who wallows in an ivory tower of whores and excess.*

"Father is old, Lara. His mind isn't as sharp as it used to be. Our enemies are aware of this, and so is Emperor Feodor. Tell me, can you trust a man that rebelled against his own father and who opportunistic lard-ass eats pastries at a party when he thinks he can get away with it?" *That's rich, coming from a man who does that himself.*

Sipping casually on her wine with one hand, Lara casually twirled at her long, soft golden locks with the delicate fingers of her other hand. She was richly dressed as usual, in a flowing lilac colored silk dress. Elazar, on the other hand wore a dull brown tunic that matched all the other dull brown aspects of his personage. "I trust him more than the backstabbing cretins that surround us here in Gholgoth, cousin. We must look after ourselves first and foremost, and Feodor can help us do that."

Even now, the Golden Emperor himself was in route to the Palace, Lara had been informed. Arriving in the early morning before breakfast (to which he was invited), the Emperor was moved from his private plane to an armored car, which of course would have been a most unusual sight to the austere denizens of sleepy Gaztelua. Gholghant was off the beaten path, and so hadn't enjoyed the attention of such men in high stations...until recently, that was. *Now that there's war between the Scandinavians and the Golden Throne, everyone wants to sniff at our shit.*

Lara had heard that Emperor Feodor had never been to Gholgoth before, and that his coming to Gholghant would be his proverbial maiden voyage. Her Uncle Henoor had heard the same, and spared no expense in making sure that Feodor was given a proper welcome. Flowing tapestries of all colors were rolled out, servants worked double time to clean the palace in preparation of receiving the Emperor, security was doubled and breakfast was to be an extravagant affair. *Best not to let the pastries unattended around Elazar...*

One of the Palace guards came to the feast room and spoke swiftly. "The Emperor is due to arrive at anytime. You are hereby ordered to assemble in the plaza to greet him."

Ordering me about like some common wench, are you? It was as Lara suspected, that Henoor took this reception as seriously as she thought he would. "Understood," she said gruffly as she rose to her feet. "Elazar, escort me please," she commanded haughtily to her cousin, who jumped from his seat and took her arm, before making the walk from the feast hall to the entrance hall, which was not a long walk at all.

At the center of the room stood Henoor along with his second son Thear, who unlike his older brother Elazar was clean-shaven and upstanding in his grooming. Henoor's daughter Rhea stood beside her elder brother, her chocolate-brown hair flowing long and straight down to the center of her back. Henoor once tried to dangle her in front of the Emperor of Ghant before he was married, but this was to no avail. *For she is no Sophia of Dakmoor*, though in Lara's mind, she certainly did hold her own.

Elazar's wife Daresa Alabastra stood tall and dignified with her three children gathered about her. Her son Trystane and daughters Elayne, Dylza and Morwyn. Daresa coughed slightly when she heard Elazar enter the room. By all accounts he was a man that she could only tolerate in small doses, though she did have enough affection for him at least to have several children by him. *But only one son so far*, Lara thought as she recalled Henoor's dissatisfaction with that.

Outside, several of Henoor's palace guards were talking to Macabean imperial guards, Lara could tell by looking through the large, tall glass window on the front facade of the palace. The guards discreetly approached the palace entrance engaged in idle conversation before the merged group made its way into the palace, where Henoor was awaiting them. The Stewardly family was assembled in the plaza, a large open room with great statues, fountains and paintings along the walls, along with banners, tapestries and flags of both Ghant and the Golden Throne draped over the green and gold rails of the balconies above, where courtiers gathered in their finest garb to await the Emperor.

Lara took up a place beside her cousin Rhea, while Elazar stood on the opposite side of Henoor beside his wife. Not long after that, the large double doors leading into the plaza from the front courtyard opened, and a cadre of armed guards entered, with the Golden Emperor amongst them. The room was quiet, allowing the herald to step forward with his staff in hand, and a large metallic knob at the bottom to announce them in Ghantish fashion.

"His Majesty Feodor, Emperor of the Golden Throne, welcome to Gaztelua, capital city of the Kingdom of Gholghant and seat of his Highness the Steward of Gholghant, who rules by assent of his Imperial Majesty Nathan, the Fourth of His Name, Emperor of Ghant, High King of the Ghantar, King of Low Ghant, King of Gholghant, Lord of Zahaghant, Lord of Gholgoth, Lord of Ghish, Lord of Gaztelua and Protector of the Realm." the Steward turned slightly, and gestured towards each of the Stewardly family.

"May I present His Highness Lord Henoor Zaldua, Steward of Gholghant. His eldest son and heir, Lord Elazar Zaldua and his wife, Lady Daresa Alabastra, and their children Lord Trystane, Lady Elayne, Lady Dylza and Lady

Morwyn. The Lord Steward's second son Thear, and the Lord Steward's daughter Rhea. The Lord Steward's niece Lara of the House Jarasa, daughter of Lady Anara Zaldua and Lord Amroth Jarasa, the Dragonlord, Warden of the North and Master of the Strait."

Not having expected that degree of ceremony, there was of course no herald to announce Fedor and his titles. One of the Macabean bodyguards puffed up his chest in anticipation of introducing his emperor, but another one quickly put his arm across his chest, apparently knowing better. Sadly, it had been a long time since any of them were treated to the exquisitely bombastic traditions of royalty, so Fedor would have to excuse those bumbling fools. Having gone without an emperor for over a hundred years prior to the rise of Jonach I, the Golden Throne had lost many of those rites and rituals that previous imperial monarchs had so enjoyed. The First Empire came with a rich mythos, but the Second Empire came in business suits. The bodyguards could not be blamed for their ignorance. *I must have them trained in proper etiquette.* Fedor stored that away in his mind.

Ignoring them, the Macabean emperor stepped to stand ahead of his entourage, his spine flawlessly erect and square jaw steady as he shallowly dipped his head at each member of the Stewardly family. "I thank you all for your hospitality. I am His Imperial Majesty of the Golden Throne Fedor I, King of Dénstad, Emperor of the Provinces and His Territories." That would have to do. "It is an absolute honor to visit Gholghant. This is a particularly exciting visit for me, because as you may know this is also the first time I visit Gholgoth," he said.

The room remained quiet, with the Steward nodding sagely. Upon doing so, a servant walked behind him and handed a broad bowl to Elayne, who proceeded to step forward towards Fedor with it in her hands. It contained a small bowl in the middle full of salt, and wedges of bread surrounding it. It was Elayne that spoke first. "Greetings, Your Majesty, and welcome to Gholghant. Please accept this humble offering of bread and salt, so that you and your company know that so long as you dwell beneath this roof and between these walls, you shall be given safe conduct, and shall give it in turn."

Fedor took the bowl and immediately handed it over to one of his bodyguards. "That goes without saying," he replied.

The Macabean emperor reached and grabbed one of the wedges, dipped it in the small tray of salt, then ate it. His face betrayed no opinion on taste. Fedor wondered, if the Stewardly family came to the Golden Throne ever, if they would be shocked at the lack of aristocratic traditions.

"Unfortunately, my wife and children were unable to accompany me. They are taking this short time to rest, while our tour remains

temporarily on break. They are sad they could not otherwise come. Nevertheless, surely you will all be shortly introduced to Elasny at least." He smiled.

It was the Steward that responded then with a nod, after stepping forward and patting his granddaughter on the shoulder. "It is quite alright, and understandable. Please, join us for breakfast if you would like. Great preparations have been made for you in anticipation of your arrival. If you do not consider us the most hospitable of hosts, then I shall count myself disappointed," he said with a faint grin.

"I am quite sure you have already won yourself that title," said Fedor, in reference to Henoor's hospitality. "Anyways, yes, breakfast would be splendid."

Henoor led the way to the feast hall, where the servants had in a furious blitz laid out platters and pitchers atop the lily white tablecloth covering the long wooden table. Eggs of various preparations, omelets, country fried ham, bacon, sausage, potatoes, slices of steak, an assortment of fruits and vegetables and drinks consisting of orange and apple juice, milk and tea were strewn about the table. Henoor sat at the head of the table, with each of his sons on either side of him. "We have the best feasts in Gholgoth too," the steward mused jovially as he assumed his seat.

"That I do not doubt, my friend." There's a thought Fedor never had: Gothic cuisine. Going by the stories most were taught as kids, one would think that in the Kraven Reich they ate the entrails of society's unworthy and in Automagfreek their national dish was brimstone. *I suppose all cultures have their kitchens*, he mused.

The Golden Emperor took a seat at the opposite head, just across from Henoor. A tall, slender servant stood by him, waiting until Fedor started to point at different items on the table. He gestured to the steak first, and then to the eggs, ham, and potatoes. The servant, a woman who was not entirely unattractive, placed the plate in front of Fedor. "Fruit, please," said Fedor, and she arrayed a few pieces of each kind in a small bowl, leaving the bowl in front of where the steak knife was seconds earlier (for now it was being used by Fedor to gently cut into the beef).

He looked up at Gholghant's Steward, his fork slowing down on its way to his mouth to give him sufficient time to speak, and asked, "Tell me, Henoor, how has life been treating Gholghant and her people?"

Henoor had settled into his seat, as did his children and grandchildren and niece. He availed himself to a plate of poached eggs and buttered toast which he used to dip in the viscous egg yolk accumulating on the bottom of the porcelain plate. The Steward did so methodically, preoccupied with his quarry even as Fedor spoke. Rhea glanced bashfully at the Emperor while Henoor was indulging himself.

Lara assumed his mind was heavy, for he didn't respond to Fedor right away. After a few seconds though, he did, with buttery toast in one hand and grapefruit juice in the other.

"About as well as you could imagine, your Majesty," he finally replied, most dryly. "In the face of annihilation, a man can do two things. Hope for the best, and prepare for the worst. That's how life works...you look after your own or your own get trampled. So if you want to know how life is treating Gholghant, well...take a look outside. People are enjoying it, because here in Gholgoth, life is fleeting, and once you realize that, you understand just how precious it is. A thing to be savored, like poached eggs and buttered toast," he grinned in a manner most grim.

"Fedor, please," said the Macabean emperor, in a gentle tone.

He skillfully sliced himself a piece of the steak, it's dark juice having spread across the fine, translucent ceramic surface of the plate. Combining this with a small chunk of potato, he brought the food to his mouth and took a few seconds to masticate. Fedor looked back up, taking an almost unnoticeable second to smile at Rhea, and said, "Excuse me," while he dabbed around his mouth with the cloth napkin that laid across his lap. "This is cooked impeccably, I must say."

Turning his gaze onto Henoor, Fedor said, "I certainly understand, Henoor. I truly do. I am sure you are aware of my own history, especially that which has to do with the struggle against my father." He cut another piece of steak while he spoke, and then took a short break to chew and eat it. Only then did he continue with his story, "My grandfather, the great Jonach I, had declared me his successor, finding my father unfit for rule. My father disagreed, and so he ran to the High Lords of the provinces and used them to incite a rebellion. That, however, turned out to be the least of my concerns. Because before I can even round up my supporters and organize a defense, we are invaded by the Dienstadi powers of the time — Safehaven, New Empire, Zarbia, and Stevid, among others. Those were dark days for me, and the Golden Throne, indeed."

He paused, his gaze sweeping the Stewardly family at the table, and asked, "When is the last you've heard of any of these countries?" He allowed paused to smile, and then said, "When I conquered them. And you can say, 'but Fedor, we do not have your resources. But Fedor, we are just one kingdom of a whole empire. But Fedor, when invaded, the Golden Throne was already an equal amongst peers.' You *could* say all of that. Or, you could start to path the way towards a better future, for both your family and your people."

He smiled again, and then came to his point, "I know that had I spent my days musing on the misfortune of my situation that I would not be here today. And thus I have become a man of

action, by necessity. So, now tell me Henoor, where do you want to take Gholghant? I consider us allies, and that means you have The Golden Throne's full capabilities available to you."

Henoor grimaced as the Golden Emperor told his story, the meat of his grapefruit mincing between his teeth. He did not interrupt however, merely staring with a stone-gaze at the Emperor as he spoke, occasionally stabbing at plump purple grapes with his gilded fork. "I'm an old man...Feodor," Henoor pointed out after the Emperor had finished. "I know of these nations well. While my Ghantish sensibilities find what fortune befell your father to be...distasteful, I find the fate that befell those nations to be even moreso. You see...we here in Gholghant, and Ghant on the whole, value one thing above all other things. Not rocking the boat."

Pursing his lips, Henoor looked down as he sliced at his egg yolk soaked toast with another fork while he added, "we don't necessarily trust nations that go around annexing nations in the manner that your's does. That business quite clearly illustrates our dilemma. One bad move, and it's all over. So in that sense, what makes you any better then the Scandies, emm? Sure, you might not practice chattel slavery the way they do, but...the Scandies like annexing nations the way fat boys eat cake. So tell me this- what's the point in staving off one fat boy, while welcoming another with open arms?"

Fedor smiled, cut a piece of steak, and forked the piece along with a slice of potato. He brought it to his mouth and ate it, chewing it like a proper gentleman and taking care to dab his lips with his cloth napkin. "Do you know what happens when you show mercy, Henoor? Your enemies will exploit it until you are no more. Safehaven killed over twenty million of my people in Aurillac. In Aurillac alone, twenty million. I crushed them and I annexed their northern borderlands to prove to them that the cost of attacking us again was not worth it. The Golden Throne conquers to primarily send a message, and that message cannot be negotiated. Not if my people are to see lasting peace."

"As for how we differ from the Scandinvans," he said, before pausing to take a sip of water, "I can tell you about the democracies that have flourished under our rule in the territories. You know of our liberation of the oppressed in North Panooly. But, you are right, ultimately rule by a foreign government is rule by a foreign government, regardless of the illusion they create through the granting of political privilege. So, what makes us different than them? Philosophically? We are a people of reason. You can see it in the constraints that even an empire great as ours is shackled to. The struggle I have with the senates are much greater, and much more important, than any struggle with a foreign government. Reason does not govern the Scandinvans. They are guided by one thing: blind ideology."

"Thank you for illustrating my point clearly, Feodor." Henoor was not a man like to mince words, indeed he could often cut like a knife, sharp as his tongue could be. *And this is where he lays it on thick*, Lara thought, anticipating her uncle's words, though her anticipation was concealed by her glass of dark wine. *Lays it on thick like the yoke upon his toast.*

"My point being, that for the actions of a few men, you decided to annex those lands and cast those people under your yoke? Those people didn't get a say...and I suppose if they wanted out, you wouldn't let them? That's what all these nations here in Gholgoth have in common, Feodor. The little people are hardly more than cannon fodder or cattle, depending on your point of view. And I suppose that should you prevail against the Scandinavians, you will do what, exactly? Set up shop there the same way you did in all those lands brought to their knees by your power?" Henoor's words may have been strong, but his tone was only faintly firm, his voice that of an old man lecturing a younger counterpart.

Fedor released a roaring laugh, but quickly suppressed it into a fading chuckle. "Tell me Henoor, do the people of Ghant have a choice as far as who rules them?"

"There was a referendum on the matter very recently," Henoor pointed out. "It failed by a narrow margin. But that's neither here nor there, I'm sure you'd agree."

The Macabean emperor had a greater point. "The ideal of a voluntary government is just that, an ideal. We can only approximate it." He smiled. "And, given that I am an emperor, so is Nathan, and you a Steward, well I'm not quite sure just how approximate we are to that ideal." Serious now, he added, "At least I can claim the pride of fostering a democratic revolution in a part of the world that has for decades lived in tyranny. And so you may think what you may, but ultimately we all play the same game, it's the rules we set for ourselves — the compass that guides us — that differentiates us."

Henoor chewed on his bottom lip as he cut a piece of steak with his knife, looking down upon the meat and the surrounding juice. "You still haven't told me, what your endgame with the Scandinavians is. I will caution you, the Gothic Lords are fickle, vain rulers that are none too fond of outsiders coming in and setting up shop."

"My goals? To end the Scandinavian slave trade in Greater Dienstad. But moreover, the Scandinavian War serves as a message: those who seek to harm us will be hunted, even if they are all powerful and even if they are in far-away Gholgoth. The invasion? If it is a success, it will only be success in a limited sense." Fedor took another sip of water. "It would cost us hundreds of millions of lives to conquer the Scandinavian Empire. But, we need only to prove that we could if we wanted to."

"So that's it? Humble them, bring them to their knees even, and then go," the Steward asked with a raised eyebrow. "Do you think such a raise as theirs can know humility? I also fear the machinations of the Gothic Lords. The Gothic Council is gathering once more, and while they may punish the Scandinvans for their...unwarranted attack on Havensky, they are far more likely to take up arms against you. How will it look to the rest of them when we give you aid against the Scandinvans? Our fate would be far worse than yours, rest assured."

Fedor stuck his fork in one of the potatoes, its deliciously roasted skin a reddish-brown, and shrugged. "I remind you that the Scandinvans have refused to come to the peace table. Not that I particularly want them to. This is a war that Fate herself has called for. In any case, I believe the Gothic Lords will have more to consider than just this war. Besides, on its own, it is a war that so far affects perhaps the most unstable member of the Council. Why defend it? Perhaps it deserves its dues. Perhaps that can only strengthen the Council in the long-run. It also serves as an opportunity to settle matters in Pudu. I suspect that the Gothic Council will be preoccupied with that question as well."

"And, it bears reminding that both The Golden Throne and the Skyan Republic are GATA-members. We are an enormous economic opportunity to Gholgoth, as is GATA. Why allow the Scandinvans to spoil that? Intervening would be a moral hazard. It would be best to allow us two to tire each other out." Fedor brought the fork to his mouth and bit it. "Again, I must compliment the kitchen for their superb work."

"Indeed, Feodor as I said you will not find better hospitality than among the Gbantish." Henoor mulled over Feodor's words like a viscous stew, before turning to his niece Lara. "What do you think?"

Lara was caught off guard by this inquiry, and nearly dropped her wine glass. She quickly gulped down the wine she had in her mouth and dabbed her face with a cloth napkin. "...Think about what?"

Henoor narrowed his eyes and leaned forward. "About what Feodor is saying."

"...I think that the Scandinvans have proved dangerous, reckless and wanton, to the extent that they would attack other Gothic nations for daring host peace conferences, of all things. They must be brought to heel or otherwise subdued if there is to be peace among the Gothic nations. Fenric and his familiars must realize their hubris," Lara explained with a boldness rivaling even her uncle.

"And so, what do you suggest then?" the Steward pressed, as though he were squeezing the juice from one of his morning grapefruits.

"Feodor's plan is not without merits. We cannot sit around and wait for the Gothic Council to intervene when we don't even have any assurances that they will. For all we know we could be next, given the depredations of Kraven and the Scandinvan elsewhere. Then again, you are right to fear retaliation by the Gothic Lords against us should we too heavily throw ourselves in with the Golden Throne, whom they mistrust by and large. Hence, a middle path, consisting of aiding the Golden Throne in its war against the Scandinvans, until the Gothic Council makes some sort of ruling on dealing with the Scandinvans themselves." After Lara explained that, she looked curiously at Feodor to see what he might have to say about that.

"This is what I propose. Remain neutral. Your armies shall stay at home, ready to defend Gholghant at your call. Allow the Golden Throne to rent land for military installations, from which we can supplement our logistics efforts. I also ask that you aid me in connecting with other Gothic leaders, in an attempt to 'suade them to reason. In return, I give my word that should Gholghant suffer an attack that we will use even our very last resources to defend her."

Henoor nodded slowly after some careful thought, before replying, "that's all well and good, Feodor, but as we Ghantish say, 'words are wind.' It is...material effects that give those words substance. Having said that, have you considered the matter that I discussed with your...*Jogornos*?"

"Yes, yes, I have, much to my wife's dismay" said Fedor, chuckling. "I suppose even her, born high lady, thought that the days of political marriage were over. She has a bleeding heart, she does. Alas, though, one cannot deny the appeal of the arrangement. I have already decided. Elasnny will marry Trystane. As is customary, my family shall arrange a dowry. It includes a shipment of five hundred Nakils. They are our 1A3HA model, whatever that means. All I know is that you would be hard pressed to find better. I would be quite honored if you were to organize them into an elite Steward's Guards Brigade." He laughed, "What is a Macabean dowry without tanks?"

"Aside from that," the emperor continued, "you and your family are granted the *Visca Oberta* palace. It is an ancient palace deep within the jungles of Zarbia, preserved by overgrowth if you would believe it. It has been freshly restored, and it makes for quite the comfortable and exotic summer stay. I do warn you, though, as Zarbia can get very hot. Finally, when Elasnny and Trystane are wed, I shall grant them a sum equivalent to one hundred million *riokmarks*. That money can be used as Trystane's estate wishes."

Once again mulling over the words and shifting his jaws as though they were full of taffy, Henoor turned to his grandson and spoke warmly to him. "What do you think about all

that, Trystane?"

Young lord Trystane Zaldua, with his own mother's encouragement, nodded and cast his eyes down upon the table as he spoke. "You do me a great honor, your Majesty. I hope that I prove a worthy suitor for your daughter, Princess Elasny."

"Aye, that's a good lad," Henoor raised his glass of wine to him. Then the Steward returned his gaze towards Fedor, and said, "that all seems well and good. I would also like to suggest that you take Trystane back with you to Macabees, where you and your family can get to know him better."

Fedor turned to Trystane and gave him a good look up-and-down, as if weighing and judging him. His expressionless face suddenly broke into a smile, and he roared, "Of course! Trystane is welcome to return with me to Fedala. There he will be acquainted with Macabean culture. I will take a few more weeks off from my tour, and I will take young Trystane to survey the territories and satrapies. And no doubt Elasny will be thrilled to come along. The two of them can get to know each other. Ah yes, it will be a great vacation for me. It has been a long time since I have visited the territories. What say you Trystane?"

Trystane was a nervous youth, though at least he was exceedingly polite. "Thank you, your Majesty. You do me and my house a great honor. Of course I accept, and I look forward to the opportunity to see and learn about your country and meet Princess Elasny."

"Settled!" exclaimed Fedor. He turned to Henoor. "How soon can my government enter negotiations with yours over the leasing of land for bases? The more rapidly we can establish our logistics chain the sooner we can launch our invasion, and the more quickly we can position ourselves in your defense should the need arise."

"Tomorrow," Henoor said as he was served a slice of warm apple pie with whipped cream and apple cider. "I will need to submit all these arrangements to the Emperor for final approval. I doubt he will object...between you and me, he rubber stamps papers put on his desk," he said with a grin. "I hope you enjoyed breakfast, and please, make yourself at home. The country is safe, so if you decide that you want to visit the countryside, you're more than welcome to. My children and niece would be more than happy to show you around. I would, but unfortunately my knees are bad."

Fedor's plate had become dangerously empty. He eyed the food still on the table, still plentiful and still looking quite appetizing, but the Macabean emperor thought better. Sophie had chastised him for his recent gluttonous habits, and it had finally been her point that "no proper Dienstadi will follow a fat emperor" that got to Fedor. And so, with a smile still broad on his face, he said, "Splendid. Now that

I am in Gholghant I think I will take advantage and visit the country. I will do that this evening, in fact."

He turned to the young grandson, "Trystane, I will depart in two days. I hope that is enough time for you to ready whatever you need for the trip."

"Of course," young Trystane replied eagerly. Lara knew that the boy's mother could be overbearing, and his sisters annoying. *This will seem like a vacation to him, no doubt.* "If you'd like your Majesty, I can show you to your room. It is near mine!"

"Yes, that would be quite appreciated," responded Fedor, who finished his last potato and dabbed the sides of his mouth with his napkin. "Henoor, this was quite the honor. It goes without saying that you are always welcome to the Golden Throne, whether you stay at *Visca Oberta* or at a palace closer to Fedala. I'm sure Trystane will tell you all about it when he returns."

Fedor said the necessary formalities to the others at the table, also extending the invitation to visit to them, and then followed the young Trystane to his room. If he was to visit very much at all of Gholghant, he would have to leave within the hour.

Before Trystane departed for his own room, his mother Lady Daresa turned to the Macabean emperor and said, "Your Majesty, I do recommend that you visit my family's castle, in Alabastra."

Fedor thought about it for a second, and said, "I think I'll do that. Thank you." He opened the door to his room and disappeared.

After Feodor departed, others began to shuffle out, until only Lara and Henoor remained. "Uncle Henoor," Lara said curtly. "You do realize that once this gets out, people will want to join the fight against the Scandies. Have you taken that into account?"

"Of course," Henoor replied in an equally curt fashion. "Especially given our goals regarding the restoration of Pudite rule in Shen Amaru. Feodor has presented us with a...golden opportunity, and who would I be to refuse to take advantage of such an opportunity?"

Aye, who you be indeed? "Most wise of you uncle. Hopefully, balance shall be restored in Gholgoth once again, and remain that way for the foreseeable future. *Ah, nothing is quite as satisfying as taking advantage of a golden opportunity...*



Ghant



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Commended by **Security Council Resolution #450**

Recipient of the **Greater Dienstad Roleplay Reward**

"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias





The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by **The Macabees** » Thu Sep 15, 2016 7:27 pm



Sea of Nostamer, South of Scandinvan


"The thing about war intelligence is that it's often faulty."

— J.S. Kuboka, *War for War's Sake*
(In'Kalab Publishing [2043])

In the depths of early morning, the brilliant sun's rays only just visible along the eastern horizon, *Kríermak* 'Gholgoth' and her allies began combat operations against the Scandinvan fleet.

Task Force 'Kacer' **took the helm**, arrayed ahead of the allied war fleets. She sparkled in full splendor, the Skyan flag waving proudly high above every ship, as if they were the light's standard bearers against the darkness before them. In groups, each ship positioned with purpose, each asset with its *raison d'être*, 'Kacer' advanced north towards the still faraway Scandinvan shores. The Skyans may not have matched the Macabeans or the Imbrinumians in number — although undoubtedly they could field just as many, or more in fact, if they truly had the desire to —, but there they would be at, at the front, in the thick of battle. The task force was truly formidable, and its task heroic.

Behind them sailed the Golden Throne's proud navy, arrayed in task forces acting both independently of, and in conjunction with, each other. The *Kríermada*, as fiercely proud as it was, was honored to follow its Skyan brothers into battle. No sailor was unaware of the history being made that day, as two great empires and their allies joined to engage in the inaugural battle of the war.

A large vanguard  advanced in organized [Map of the intended vectors of the three *kriergrups*.] chaos, navigating along a broad front, stretching from a position not three kilometers from a longitude in-line with Subcon's eastern coastline to another perhaps five thousand kilometers east of that. The Golden Throne was probing Scandinvan naval defenses in the Sea of Nostamer. This vanguard force was composed of five *krierflots*, which belonged to *Kriergrups* 'Tigor'mal', 'Targul Frumos', and the weaker 'Kalliopa'. The latter was fastened on the eastern flank, with 'Tigor'mal' in the center. Altogether, the seven fleets operated some 2,000 ships and these moved north in a three-prong offensive.

The *krierflot* was not the smallest divisible unit. Each fleet was large on its own, composed of just over four hundred ships. They had certainly grown in size over the past decade, but they represented an evolution in the *Kríermada*'s tactical acumen. Each of the seven fleets had a 'heavy' core, composed of six carrier squadrons (or, *eskúadras*, as they were called in *díenstadi*). These were protected by a heavy double-screen, composed not only of its own escorts but also of the six raiding squadrons that each fleet could count on. These acted independently, but were positioned ahead of the carrier forces to easily maneuver against enemy forces. Additionally, each fleet also deployed four marine squadrons, which were battle groups organized around five strategic projection vehicles.

Sitting to the rear, the marine *eskúadras* not only provided additional airpower, but they also served to escort supply ships sailing between *Car'gún Díelaht* and the vanguard. Some already trailed the large war fleet, prepared to reinforce the many ships with more munitions or to help transport the wounded back to where they could be treated.

There was a simple grand strategy at play. 'Targul Frumos' was ordered to maintain course towards the southwest Scandinvan coast, with the intention of pushing Scandinvan naval defenses northeast. They would be assisted by 'Tigor'mal', which would help in this process by threatening the Scandinvan southern flank. Finally,

'Kalliope' — with a single fleet to its name — would protect the far-eastern flank, with the intention of allowing the enemy to bully it. Ideally, acting together, the three *kríerflots* could open a corridor in the west through which the Golden Throne could launch its ground invasion.

The Golden Throne's plan was predicated on what intelligence it had gathered over the past months. According to analysts, who had looked at an array of satellite imagery and other documents, the Scandinvans were operating between 1,200–1,500 ships in the area. These were on patrol routes, and were supported by the Scandinavian's air force, which were based from the mainland. Not much was known on the strength of the enemy's aerial assets. Satellites had been largely unsuccessful in providing the evidence needed to gauge their strength, as it looked like the Scandinavian's had done a good job concealing their true numbers.

To help alleviate that dearth of information, each fleet deployed its own force of unmanned aerial vehicles, which were used to scour the Sea of Nostamer. Some were sent to penetrate as far as the Scandinavian coast, with the intention of gathering intelligence on the pattern of movement in-and-out of major port cities. Not only did the *Kriermada* want to know the composition of enemy forces, but they also wanted to know which ports they were using to service the heavier assets of their fleets.

There was at least *limited* data to that effect already. Macabean intelligence had been able to pinpoint the cities of Drasdag, Bendred, and Veiangard as major military ports. These, naturally, would be targeted during the opening engagement.

Indeed, fifteen GLI-133 'Ank'riats' were lifted onto one of the many runways on *Car'gún Díelaht*, and with their nuclear engines at full power they flew off towards Scandinvan. Large, powerful, and heavily armed, the Ank'riats were escorted by two squadrons of Lu-45s — roughly fifty fighter jets in all — for about half of their journey, from which their escort switched to two new Lu-45 squadrons based out of Gholghant. Together, the bomber-fighter flight entered unclaimed airspace over the southeastern Gothic continent, at least a thousand kilometers east of Jagada.

The Ank'riat was, perhaps, the pride of the *Laerihans*. Their nuclear powerplants allowed them a practically limitless range, which made them quite useful when it came to waging war on faraway countries. They were, however, terribly expensive, at almost two billion ríokmarks per bird when first manufactured.

Nevertheless, the Ank'riat repaid its value several times over. In late 2017, a single nuclear bomber dropped six small submersibles into the Sea of Otium Aqua, which separates Stevid from the Hugen continent (where the Golden Throne's mainland is located), which went on to destroy a significant portion of the Stevidian fleet in port (they of course retaliated with a nuclear strike of their own). The GLI-133 was also used with murderous efficiency over southern Ruska and northern Safehaven between 2017–18, where they became the terror of the Havenic populace. Since then, the Ank'riat fell into disfavor, with the *Fuermak* preferring the conventional, and affordable, GLI-34 for its bombing operations during the post-war occupations of Theohuanacu and Zarbia. The Scandinavian War, however, provided a new opportunity to showcase the mammoth nuclear bomber, and in fact the Scandinvans would get to know them in mere minutes.

Flying over the expansive and hellish Gothic landscape below, the fifteen Ank'riats opened their bomb bays in synchrony as they approached a range about three thousand kilometers away from their targets. Together and in-step, each bomber released fourteen LN.17 long-range cruise missiles. Almost eight meters long, these 500-kilogram tipped warheads cut through greying skies and black clouds at just below the speed of sound. Thin, built with as many radar-transparent materials as possible, and coated with anti-radar paints and materials, her radar cross-section was minute — possibly no larger than a hundredth of a square meter.

Two hundred and ten missiles were launched in total. These were split evenly between the three known Scandinavian ports: Drasdag, Bendred, and Veiangard (seventy missiles each port). Because there was no strong intelligence on the port's defenses, the LN.17s were instructed to strike major facilities and known warships. It was hoped that the attack would accomplish at least three things. First, to damage and weaken the Scandinavian Navy, in an effort to tip the scales early-on in the battle for the sea. Second, to disrupt the reinforcement of outstanding Scandinavian fleets deployed across the Sea of Nostamer. Third, to probe Scandinavian defenses for the purpose of better planning future strikes, which would begin to pick up in intensity over the coming weeks. As the bombers started to arc back around to return to base, the cruise missiles raced towards their targets.

The Gholghant based Lu-45 escort trailed the bombers until an escort relay took over escort duties halfway to *Car'gún Díelaht*, whereupon the Hawks returned to their new bases in the southern Gothic country. It was a long a voyage, and one that would soon be alleviated by the further deployment of *Laerihan* assets to new airbases in Gholghant and the Skyan Republic.

And all the while, the Golden Throne's naval vanguard continued to sail northwards, prepared to engage the Scandinavian fleet wherever it decided to stand its ground.

[Periodically edited for typos.]

Last edited by [The Macabees](#) on Sat Sep 17, 2016 5:36 pm, edited 1 time in total.

Former Sr. II Roleplaying Mentor | [Factbook](#)

[The Macabees' Guides to Roleplaying, Worldbuilding, and Other Stuff](#)
(please upvote if you like them!)



The Scandinavians
Senator

Posts: 4948
Founded: Oct 09, 2004
Capitalist

by [The Scandinavians](#) » Tue Sep 20, 2016 9:01 pm



Imperial News Network: Regent Address

"The dream our nation is not founded upon such abstract notions as freedom, pleasure, hypocritical idealism, or selfishness. We instead are based upon immutable truths derived from divine revelation and the tests of time. We place stock in the principles of order, loyalty, and action. Values which set us apart from the greater mass of humanity. For in their misery have they deluded themselves into believing that material wealth is the greatest virtue that a society can aspire. A lie which only generates disorder within their ranks as their people constantly compete against each other for gain at the expense of their bonds to their fellows.

In their quests for additional wealth they treat all people are interchangeable elements in the grand scheme of global capitalism. Something which ends up robbing people of their ancestral identities. These are identities are replaced with a deep seated greed which tears people away from their kin, beyond their nuclear family, and causes them to hate their neighbors as individuals who threaten to steal away their prosperity. Forgetting their ties the only thing holding these people together is the mutual agreement that the existence of the government helps to ensure that all parties involved in the preservation of its order profit from the capacity to conduct commerce peacefully. A situation which ensures that order is merely maintained by a facade.

We Scandinavians are almost alone in speaking against this evil. We stand strong in the face of this demon as we know to accept would lead to the destruction of the precepts which make us stronger. We understand that no price can be considered to high to maintain our divinely sanctioned ways.

However, the Golden Throne, a greater arch-demon of the world, would seek to deny us the capacity to continue to live in the

manners which served our forefathers so well. They have recently seen fit to begin to mobilize their pitiful forces against the Empire of Erid. They aim to impose their fallacious practices upon our people and steal from us the very things which make us Scandinvan. It is thus the holy duty of every true blooded Scandinvan to resist the intrusion of their forces.

They bring with them all the aforementioned evils. Nightmarish virtues that they seek to impose on us so that they might garner additional profits from the corpse of our Empire. They want to disarm us as they realize that we are one of the few true threats to their perverted agenda upon wishing to turn us into a globalized engine of materialism and force us to forget the true faith. Yet, they shall be proven wrong like those who invaded us before. They shall bear witness to the fury of the warrior caste, the righteous zeal of blessed soldiers, and be laid to waste by the implacable might of the Scandinvan people.

Therefore, by my authority as the wholly ordained warden of the faith and the regent of the Glorious Empire of the Scandinvans, I do hereby proclaim that a crusade shall be prepared to defend our realm against these alien invaders and offer penance for all those who fight in the defense of the realm. We must each fulfill our sacred duty so that we drive away these tainted sodomites from our shores and ensure they no longer are a threat to us.

By the grace of God we shall overcome and utterly defeat our foes!"

Last edited by [The Scandinvans](#) on Mon Oct 17, 2016 8:00 pm, edited 1 time in total.

We are the Glorious Empire of the Scandinvans. Surrender or be destroyed. Your civilization has ended, your time is over. Your people will be assimilated into our Empire. Your technological distinctiveness shall be added to our own. Your culture shall be supplanted by our own. And your lands will be made into our lands.

"For five thousand years has our Empire endured. In war and peace we have thrived. Against overwhelming odds we evolved. No matter what we face we have always survived and grown. We shall always be triumphant." -Emperor Godfrey II

Hope for a brighter tomorrow - fight the fight, find the cure



Havensky
Diplomat

Posts: 888
Founded: Jan 01, 2008
Left-wing Utopia

The Armada Departs

by [Havensky](#) » Sun Oct 02, 2016 7:56 pm



Beneath Task Force Kacer

Several hundred feet below Task Force Kacer, there was another group of vessels lurking. Dozens of Skyan "Phobos-Class" submarines slowly picked up speed as the the task force floated above them. Their dark teardrop hulls cutting through the water with barely a sound nor communication.

Task Force Kacer was small compared to the vast number of vessels that The Golden Throne had assembled. The dozen ships were but a pinprick compared to the slaver naval fleets. While the Golden Throne didn't lack for it's own numbers - the Skyan High Council wanted more than just a symbolic flag on a ship. They wanted some actual punch as the head of the fleet.

The Quiet Legion was the perfect group for such an assignment. Five Squadrons - Silent, Silencio, Chinmoku, Alssamt, and Isiltasun - under the command of Vice Admiral Victor Gull joined Kacer will full intention of being the first to break the lines of the slaver navy. The Quiet Legion was able to rendezvous with the invading armada without any fanfare. Each of their crew knew they had perhaps one of the most dangerous jobs in all of Gholgoth right now and took pride in it - even as nobody at home knew they were there.

At home, they knew that there would be a big parade and flags for the Armada leaving north. The media would make a big show of the deployment. They'd zoom in on the line of ships - both naval and air - leaving out for the north. They would showcase the Legionaries

boarding their helijets. The fighters would do barrel rolls over Citadel City as they left for their carriers.

It would be a grand show to showcase not only the size of the Skyan Armada - but also the size of the allied fleets who had come to join them. It would be a force that would be impossible to ignore. They would take the northern route to the slaver empire - which would lead them towards Vismer and Occupied Pudu.

The Skyans had tried for peace, now they sent warships.

The Skybound Republic of Havensky
(Pronounced Haven-Sky)

Territory held in
Texas - Gholgoth - Sondria

**N&I RP Mentor Specializing in PMT, Character Development,
Worldbuilding, and Diplomacy - TG me for help!**



Havensky
Diplomat

Posts: 888
Founded: Jan 01, 2008
Left-wing Utopia

Task Force Hell

by **Havensky** » Sat Oct 15, 2016 9:07 pm



[To the tune of Drink up me hearties](#)

Task Force Hell, off the coast of Fort Defiance

Fort Defiance was a port off the Skyan coast that was the closest point to the Kraven Reich's Fortress Cydonia. Close to the open sea and to the most likely opponent, it's location was perfect for the Gothic home of the Legionary Armada.

When the Citadel had been attacked, the Skyans put out a call for allies. Skyan Armadas in other parts of the world had been summoned to Fort. Defiance.

For weeks now, Ft. Defiance had also been the home of a Golden Throne fleet. A portion of their ships had joined Task Force Hell along with other Skyan allies creating the largest armada the Skyans had ever fielded. The Skyan naval flag flew in the wind alongside the Briskans, the Jagites, and several Gbantish "Volunteer Fleets" sent by Gbantish Lords.

The day had come. Task Force Hell was leaving. The Golden Throne's fleet entering Gothic waters had been the signal. Task Force Hell would move north and to the east towards Vismer and occupied Pudu forcing the Slaver Empire to either divide his forces to meet the threat or risk counterattacks. The Skyans would extract justice from the salvagers by either striking at their colony in Vismer or liberating the Pudite island nation of Shen Alamaru.

The High Council had opted to attempt to draw out the biggest force from the slavers. It was decided that less resistance on the slaver mainland the better. To help with this, the High Council had allowed reporters to embed themselves from the fleet. It would showcase the full might of what was heading east.

SRS Dienstag "Devil"

The screen flickered for a moment as the camera focused on a young man wearing a bright blue 'PRESS' vest on the deck of a large blue grey ship on the open sea. Behind the young man was a very large naval cannon.

"Hi, I'm Dax Falco for the Skyan World Service broadcasting live from the deck of "The Dienstag" or the "Dienstadi Devil" as it's crew has begun to call her. This MTD Devil-Class battleship was paid for with a \$100 billion dollar war bond contribution from a coalition of nations within Dienstag."

Dax began to walk towards the cannon and put a hand up on it.

"This battleship boasts twelve 52.76 caliber guns designed to eviscerate opponents at close range. The 'Devil' is a straight up

brawler designed to punish anything that gets close to the main battle fleet. Alternatively, it can provide long range artillery support during amphibious operations. Jimmy can we pan up for a moment?"

The camera panned up to focus on a dozen wing shaped airships in the sky.

"These battleships are being paired with 'Storm-class' missile cruisers which are designed more for long range standoff encounters."

The camera panned back down to Dax.

"This squadron of Devil class vessels are designed to withstand severe punishment and continue sailing. Their massive guns can rain hellfire down on a hostile fleet or position, puncturing even the thickest warship hulls with enough force to crumple many modern warships like empty tin cans."

The camera followed Dax as he walked down the deck to a part of the hull painted with a bright red snake curled up and ready to strike. Above the snake, the ship's name "SRS Diestand" was emblazoned on a red ribbon. Below the snake, a large red banner which read "Task Force Hell."

"Now, as part of the Skyan World Service's coverage - we've been embedded into what the Skyan Armada is calling "Task Force Hell" on it's way to enemy territory. We now turn to my colleague Reese Cermak aboard the Assault Carrier Tyrant's Bane.

SRA Tyrant's Bane

The camera switched to transition to a purple and black haired woman standing one of the lower decks of the airship *Tyrant's Bane*. The large airship was well lit, but the steel grey bulkheads and lack of windows still made the scene dim. Standing next to the reporter was a tall man decked out in power armor. The armor would have been mistaken for the uniform of an ancient knight if not for the digital green camouflage pattern. The armor had a small shield on the left side arm and the sword holstered on the left hip. The man had a Type-2 Morrigan rifle in a holster on his hip.

"Thank you Dax, I'm here with Captain Leon Bastrop of Brave Company, 501st Legion. Captain, can you tell me a bit about the armor you're wearing?"

"Of course Ms. Cermak, this here is your standard Phase V Skyan Legion Power Armor built by Glitch Labs. There's three parts to it - first you have the under armor - goes on just like everything else in your closet and it looks a lot like the same gear that professional athletes have. It's designed to wick away moisture to keep you cool. After that, each piece of the armor goes on separately. The shoulders and torso go on just like a sweater vest. All the other pieces snap together around the arms, legs, knees and elbows like so."

Bastrop unsnapped and re-snapped the right forearm for the benefit of the camera.

"The last piece of this is an exoskeleton that connects to the armor through these ports. Once I put the rucksack on, the battery connects and the exosuit begins to hold up the armor, the rucksack, my shield, and my weapon. The exosuit also amplifies my movements - meaning that I can lift a hellava lot more and hit a lot harder. That's how I'm able to hold this big heavy shield on my and still move around freely."

Cermak looked at the shield for a moment and had the camera peer down to get a closer look.

"Captain Bastrop, does this shield really stop bullets?"

"It can stop small arms fire, but in practice it does a lot to protect us

against shrapnel, explosions, and can help push against enemy fighters in close quarters. Remember, this thing is ten pounds worth of solid metal behind a robot arm. If I hit somebody with it, they're gonna go flying."

"So how much can that robot arm of yours lift?"

The camera turned to a Legionary standing next to Bastrop who was conducting benchpress exercises with a 300 pound weight. It wasn't just a single lift and putting it down again. The Legionary was doing repetitions of ten at a time.

"It can lift over 600 pounds, but we limit adjust the power input so that we don't injure ourselves. The suits are powerful and if you try and use the full potential of the armor it'll rip your arm off. We train hard to make sure that we use the armor to augment our movement and not abuse it."

"So how do you train in that armor? I imagine it takes some getting used to."

Bastrop motioned over to a circle of Legionaries that were sparring.

"A lot of martial arts - some units go with sword fightings, others boxing - Brave Company practices jujutsu. It helps with our hand eye coordination and to get used to the suit as a second skin - and to learn not to try and use the suit to overpower your own body's movements."

As Bastrop said this, the camera turned to show Master Chief Zerpukuj nonchalantly throwing other fully armored legionaries to the ground as they attempted to rush at him. Even with the full weight of the armor, Zerpukuj moves threw his opponent over his shoulder with ease causing the unfortunate Legionary to hit the ground hard.

"Ouch, that looks like it hurts." mentioned Reese.

"We fight monsters ma'am, we're used to the rough and tumble. There's nothing out there nearly as scary as a fully armed platoon of Skyan Legionaries coming at you full speed."

"I can imagine - we're going to throw it over to Ken Chiyoda who's just uploaded a video from onboard the SRS Independence. When we come back, I'm going to try on my own set of power armor."

SRS Independence

The deck of the *Independence* "Acheron-Class" Aircraft Carrier was far colder than Ken realized it would be. The wind whipped at his jacket and the sea spray wasn't helping. Fortunately, he wouldn't be topside very long.

He walked up to a dark black interceptor with pink stripes on its wingtips with a thorned rose adorning the side of one tailfin. This was the aircraft of the ace pilot team "ThornRose" and he had gotten permission to fly in it. As the two pilots were aces, they had the special privilege of painting the craft however they wanted. It was unmistakable out of the flight deck.

"You must be Lieutenant Nikki Kurai! It's an honor to meet you!", he said as he walked up to the pilot. The pilot was shorter than he imagined for a (now) famous ace fighter pilot.

"Mr. Chiyoda, are you ready for your joy ride?", she asked with her helmet in hand.

"Yes, we really appreciate you doing this. We're going to get some great footage this way."

"Of course.", was Nikki "Thorn" Kuria's terse reply. Her tone was cold and detached. She had been assigned this dog and pony show because it was important to be nice to the press embeds on board.

However, she had despised these sorts of flights as being a bit frivolous.

"Have you ever flown in a fighter jet before?"

"No, I hadn't - I'm excited though!", Ken replied as he took pictures of Thorn, the Accipiter fighter, the deck and nearly everything he could point his phone at.

"Do you get sick on roller coasters? I don't like having my crew clean up puke."

"Oh, no I love those things! Ready when you are!"

After a few minutes making sure the reporter was strapped in, Thorn climbed into the cockpit and began to taxi to the runway. The large twin engines of the interceptor roaring to life as she positioned the craft into position.

"By the sky, is this thing always this loud?"

"This aircraft can hit mach in under 60 seconds - you need big engines for that.", muttered Thorn as she hit the throttle and lifted off the carrier. The unexpected thrust threw Ken back in his seat.

"WHOOAAAA!"

Thorn turned the craft into a sharp climb sending the fighter jet straight up in the air...she let the fighter hang for a moment before evening back out again and banking into a wide horizontal loop. She then banked back the other way and accelerated sharply. For good measure, she then sent the craft into a tight spin. She looked back at Ken who had turned white as a sheet.

She evened out the craft and sent the fighter into a kulbit maneuver so that it felt the fighter was spinning backwards in midair.

"That....that shouldn't be possible.. We just... we just..

"Gravity is for suckers."

She rolled the craft around again so that the craft was facing the bulk of Task Force Hell.

"Here....catch your breath for a moment... I can wait... just be sure to look out the window."

Ken did as he was told. It took him a moment, but soon he had regained his composure enough to really look out the window. His jaw dropped and he raised his phone back up to take the photo.

As he looked out, he saw both sky and sea were crowded with ships large and small. There were at least five Archeon Class Carriers, several squadrons of battleships, airship missile cruisers, pocket carriers, assault ships both in the air and on the waves, hundreds of fighters and helijets flying through the air. He tried to peer out in the distance to see the entire Armada but wasn't really able to. He could see the Skyan flags flying on some of the bigger ships - meaning that this wasn't even showing some of the allied fleets. As he peered down, he could see patrol boats skirting the waves in between the larger capital ships. In the sky, he could make out the five Flying Fortresses in a V formation above the fleets. It was a massive show of force.

"Whoa"

"This is Task Force Hell...and it's going to war."

Last edited by [Havensky](#) on Sun Oct 16, 2016 8:03 am, edited 1 time in total.



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Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by [The Macabees](#) » Mon Oct 24, 2016 11:23 am



Tiwanaku, Theohuanacu

Escape...

"Can't you see?" she whispered harshly in the dark. "I was meant to be here. For you."

Mariel's dark cell was hidden from Ern's view, even the stones of its walls all but a shadow. He could nevertheless *feel* the misery and pain emanating from her like a beacon he yearned to drift toward, but could not. He wanted to weep eternally for what they had done to them. To her. That even in these times she could remain optimistic Ern did not understand. His own opinions were far more bleak, even if Mariel was a sliver of light in this dark, dark world. Tears streamed down his cheeks, which mixed with the filth that had accumulated into his pores and onto his skin, as in his own hushed shout he said, "Meant to be here? Mariel, no one was meant to be here."

These damp quarters — a box made of stone and steel bars — had been all that they had known and seen for over a month's time now, although truth be told he could no longer truly track the concept of time. If the physical torture was disorienting enough, the psychological oppression that their pirate captors inflicted on Mariel and he was perhaps a magnitude worse. The sleepless nights, as he lay on the bare ground — his hay bed ruined sometime ago during one of the habitual beatings he received from the guards — listening to water drip from the porous ceiling above, were one thing, but the bastards were quick to see the relationship between he and Mariel and they were just as quick to exploit it. Her screams would haunt him forever, and despite his love for her he was unsure that he'd ever be able to see here again the way he once did.

"Everything is Willed," she said.

Ern felt a wave of anger overcome him. "Stop with that bullshit, Mariel!" The notion that everything that happened did so, not necessarily for a reason, but because it was the intended outcome of the process of Order was deeply ingrained in Dienstadi culture. It was formalized by the Church of the Broken Dawn, which up to the end of Jonach's imperial reign had been for all intents and purposes the state religion. That corrupt interpretation of science, which [gave legitimacy to the Golden Throne's claim of inherent superiority](#), had infected the minds of millions of people throughout the northern provinces and had even begun to seep into the southern ones, as well as the Havenic and Guffingfordi territories. Ern too had once been a true believer, but it was misfortunes like the one he found himself in that served to clear one's thoughts. "If millions die under the jackboot of a tyrant, is it Willed? Whole nations have gone extinct from starvation. Was that Willed?"

Silence. Then, "Will does not know morality, Ern. Will only knows Order." Another pause. Finally, "I believe that our eventual freedom is Willed, Ern. I can *feel* it."

Eventual freedom? The woman had lost her mind. Wherever they were, they were far away from saving. Ern hadn't heard the crack of a gunshot even and if there was still fighting in Tiwanaku it was far from here. There were dozens of other prisoners here with them and, although very few of them talked to any significant degree, whatever new information on the status of the Macabean offensive that they had was not necessarily all that positive. Even the more recent prisoners claimed that the front in the city had barely moved at all. If there was an army coming to save them, it wouldn't come in Ern's or Mariel's lifetimes — of that he was sure.

Ern opened his mouth to say, "Mariel, whatever happens to us, know

that I love you." But he did not say those words, for just then the acute wail of the front iron gates swinging open warned of a guard.

"That be all I can take wit' ye bilge ye scurvy infected swine," the man bellowed, his voice so deep it rumbled as it surfaced. Royden was his name. One of the other guards had lit that slip during one of their ritual physical beatings, which they did largely for no reason at all. For the sake of evil, Ern supposed. "Be that ye Ern? Mariel? Always shoutin'. Never quiet. Even when I threatened ye a pair that th' next the hour I caught ye disturbin' ye fellow ship mates it would come wit' severe consequences. I don't really wants t' hurt ye, but I be in a fix, by Davy Jones' locker. ye'll take me as a addlepate and not learn yer lesson. If I beat both o' ye, I'd feel like a bloody blaggard. If I beat both 'o ye, I'd feel like a true asshole. Hm," he said, "it seems as if only one 'o ye really must pay fer ye infrin'ements. th' other gunna learn by example, I suppose." He started to pace the hallway that divided the two parallel rows of cells, taunting them, bullying them. "Oh, which one of 'ye should I scuttle?"

His footsteps stopped and the guard fell into silence, in mockery of deep thought. Finally, in a lower, but baritone, evil tone, he said, "I s'pose I will keel-haul th' whore."

"Noooooooooooo!" cried out Ern, who surprised himself even with the energy in his plea. "Kill *me*, you pirate dog. Kill me! You excuse of a man! Only a woman could hurt another woman!" And on and on Ern insulted the pirate, but to no avail. In fact, the guard turned and grinned a smile with more teeth missing than there. "You scoundel," Ern went on, "your people will burn under the bootheel of the Empire. We shall kill every last one of you. You coward!"

The guard had stopped paying attention long ago and Ern could hear the door to Mariel's cell swing open. And then he heard her howl a perpetual shriek, accompanied by the repeated sound of a club striking flesh, muscle, and bone. And although soon the clubbing stopped the screams did not. They got more frantic as clearly the torture changed its form. "No, no, no," she yelped, and then the sound of the pirate hitting her again. She continued to scream and yell, and the sound of chaotic footsteps could be heard throughout the narrow hallway, and then she started to cry, literally cry, in pain and hopelessness. And the guard grunted as he committed his atrocious act.

Ern curled himself up, shaking uncontrollably at the anger coursing through his body. He shut his eyes tight when the pirate guard stood, zipped up his pants, and let loose a crude aww. And then came the clack of a retreating hammer, followed by the click of a trigger, and within that split microsecond of time there came the rumbling of the propellant readying itself to explode and then—

—Ern woke up suddenly with a forehead drenched in sweat despite the frigid cold of the stone-walled cell. Was it not enough to have witnessed hell personally, to now have to relive it even in your dreams? Tears flowed down his cheeks. He scolded himself, angry at the emotion emanating from him, which in turn was but a twisted reaction to the death of his soul.

"Be yer cot nah comfortable t' slumber in?" It was the deep voice of that pirate named Royden. He stood, leaning against a column on the other side of the hallway, looking into Ern's cell with one foot on the wall behind him. "Comfortable enough fer me t' enjoy yer wench," he said. The pirate had the audacity to laugh. He looked down at Ern and recognized the hatred in the Macabean's eyes. "Alas!," continued the pirate, " 'twas weeks ago. Are ye nah o'er it? If it helps, she was nah tha' jolly. A wee bit borin' for me tastes. If ye reckon about it, I saved ye from disappointment. Trust me."

Ern turned his body so that his stomach lay on the damp, cold stone floor and so that he could prop himself up, slowing rising despite the

ache along his ribs. The starvation, the physical abuse, and the internal consumption of his essence were all taking a toll on him. He did not know how much longer he could live waiting for salvation. One day soon he would accept death's call as true and he would follow it to whatever inferno men like he, and like this pirate, were destined to. Perhaps if he could not have his revenge in this world, he would have it in the next. And if there was one thing that was almost for certain, this pirate would not last very long. Sooner or later they would all be hunted down and slaughtered, even if it cost thousands of Imperial lives. The Golden Throne almost never failed to meet its outcomes. And there, in whatever world they found themselves in, no matter how this world turned out to end, Ern would hunt him down and kill him. From death to death he would pursue his eternal vendetta. That Ern swore.

Picking himself up as he could, Ern stood finally to face the pirate. He approached the steel pillars of the grate that kept him confined to his tiny cubicle of a prison. Looking deeply into the other man's eye, Ern said, "I will watch from the heavens as my brothers beat you down and tie you up, as you watch them kill your wife, your children. Such expectations make death pleasing."

"I hate t' disappoint ye, but ye be far away from Davy Jones' locker jim laddie," retorted the other man.

Ern spit on him, striking the guard's face. The other man's face contorted in disgust and insult, and he wiped the dripping saliva off of his cheek with the arm of his heavy coat. Royden sneered. Ern had been haunted by that toothy smile too many times, but now all he felt was contempt. He spit again and this time he struck the guard in the eye. "Kill me, you coward!" roared the Macabean.

The pirate's face hardened and his brows furrowed in anger. The prisoner had gone one insult too far, it seemed. "Ye wants t' die? I shall give ye death!" the broad-backed guard bellowed. He grabbed his set of keys from his belt and hastily worked through them until he found the right key for Ern's cell door. Twisting it in the door lock, the gate creaked as it was swung open with a violence that even the steel construction of the bars and the hinges were too frail to withstand. The door slammed against the stone wall and snapped off its connections to the rest of the wall-of-bars that faced the hallway. The pirate Royden rose his arm and let fall back down as his face connected with the left side of Ern's face. The Macabean's head slammed against the ground with the sharp *crack* of skull hitting rock reverberating against the small cell block. "I shall beat ye 'til ye die, then, ye son of a wench."

Over and over, the large buccaneer pummeled his prisoner. The dark grey walls around the two paired well with the red that splattered across them.

As his face was crushed, Ern fumbled for something buried inside his pants. His arm was searching for something around the upper half of his right leg, but he seemed to struggle as Royden continued to beat him to death. Finally, Ern's hands stopped searching as they wrapped around a small object. He pulled it out to reveal a small, sharp edge of rock that must have splintered from a nearby wall. Wherever it came from, it must have been sent by God himself.

Ern swung into the left side of the pirate's ribcage, puncturing through skin and meat alike until the ad hoc bleed was embedded deep into the man's body. And in an equally as swift motion, the Macabean pulled it out until his elbow was on the ground again and then stabbed the pirate again, and again, and again. Roydon coughed blood onto Ern's face and it flowed like a river out of his now open, mangled gut. Gradually, the big man's swings weakened, until they ceased altogether and the pirate guard huffed and puffed as he died atop of his prisoner. Ern placed the edge of his lips near the dying man's ears and whispered harshly, "Everything is Willed."

With one last breath of exasperation, Royden died.

Grunting, Ern slowly, and with some difficulty, pushed Roydon's dead body off him. He wobbled a bit as he tried to stand, but eventually lifted himself. He searched the guard's body for his weapon and anything else that might be of use. Ern found a handgun, a clip holding a thick bundle of pirate scrip, a knife, and his set of keys. He took it all and then timidly walked out into the hall.

To either side of him was a row of three cells, including his own. Behind him was Mariel's, which was now vacant. He walked over to each of the ones still occupied and one-by-one opened them. Five men, all as thin as bones and their faces caved in and hollow, trudged out. Ern stood in shock for a moment looking at him as he realized that he took must look exactly like that. Their damned captors had kept them hungry, feeding them nothing more than a slim daily ration of stale bread. Shaking himself free of that horrific trance, Ern waved them towards him as he approached the outer door that led to a wider, illuminated hallway that led in two opposite directions. Bulbs hung from above, flickering here-and-there, strung together by a shoddy tangle of wires that ran along the corner where the ceiling met the wall. Whichever way he looked it looked the same to him.

"Follow me," he whispered, in case there were any other guards standing watch in these parts of wherever they were. He turned right and silently prayed that he had chosen correctly.

As he walked down the hall he noticed other grated gateways that opened to smaller hallways lined by small cells, much like the 'cell block' he himself had been a prisoner in only minutes earlier. These too were full of men and women, although whether they were all Macabean prisoners of war Ern did not know. He handed his keys over to one of the other men he had liberated earlier and instructed him to free all the prisoners he could. With that responsibility delegated, Ern could now focus on using his handgun to ensure their escape, less they stumble unprepared upon other guards waiting for them in these poorly illuminated walkways.

He continued to advance through the maze of the prison he was held in until he finally seemed to reach another large door, this one made of a strong wood reinforced by thin steel strips laid across it horizontally. They were closed, but a small grated window revealed the head of a guard on the other side. Ern looked behind him to wave any followers to stay back. Elsewhere, he could hear the high pitched screeching of more and more barred gates being opened and the scuffling feet of more and more freed prisoners. Putting all that aside, Ern tip-toed up to the door as to not reveal himself and then silently pushed the barrel of his pistol through one of the small squares between the thin bars that blocked the door's viewing window. Without much thought, and with much pleasure, the young Macabean squeezed the trigger. A loud *crack* later, the guard lay dead on the ground with a head blown to bits.

There was another movement behind the door, betraying the presence of another guard, and so Ern quickly pushed the heavy door open and shot the second man. This time, while the guard crumpled onto the floor, it was not a deathblow. The pirate painfully writhed on the floor, hand grasping his bleeding stomach, as he cried out in pain. Ern did not wait for the man to bleed to death before moving on and, in fact, as he walked on he soon heard the screams intensify behind him. No doubt the other prisoners were exacting their own sort of vengeance on their pirate captors.

Ern moved slowly and deliberately, using his handgun to protect himself. He hadn't thought to check the bodies of the other guards, but they had by now most likely been stripped of their arms by the other prisoners. Indeed, by now a larger mob of freedmen had caught up to him as he advanced through the twisting and confusing paths of the prison. They passed him up and within minutes he could hear the clash of gunfire and steel ahead. He decided to turn down another hall and avoid the fighting altogether, preferring not to follow others into a hornet's nest of their own creation. Some of the prisoners kept their odds with Ern, although most by now were out

spreading chaos on their own. What started out as an escape had turned into a full fledged prison revolt, but Ern had no interest in that — his focus was on escaping from this special hell.

At points, he thought he was lost and sometimes he even suspected that he had already passed by a certain column or a specific cell. He even began to suspect that he had lost his damned mind in this prison and that his captors had literally beat all sense out of him, for after all this work it did not feel as if he was one inch closer to true freedom.

And then Ern turned into another hallway, one grated end of which showed a boundless sky and let in the smell of salted air. A bird squawked just outside, probably a gull or pelican of some kind. Finally, *escape*. Ern started to make his way to it.

Then, behind him, some monster bellowed, "Where do ye reckon ye be goin' prisoner?"

Ern turned around to see another guard, this one as wide as a wealthy woman's overfilled armoire and armed with a rifle slung around his shoulders. Tied to his waist trailed three prisoners, probably captured during their attempted revolt. Two of them looked dead, and their feet and legs dragged on the floor as the guard stepped forward. The third one was obviously very injured and could just barely keep up, his neck turning a burning red and a cringing purple as the tough rope around his neck dug into the skin and slowly tightened. "So close ye were, but still a dead scallywag ye will be."

The Macabean shot first, and then again. The slide clicked and failed to move forward after the second shot. Ern didn't have anymore ammunition, but the pistol remained in his hand nonetheless. Before him, the pirate guard stood as tall and as strong as he had before, seemingly unpeturbed by the two holes now embedded into his upper torso. The man laughed and kept trudging forward, although now his steps noticeably heavier than before.

"I be comin' fer ye."

Ern's feet froze in place for a brief second as a wave of terror swept over him. To have gotten so far for it all to end like this was too much for any one man to bear. But, the survivor in him snapped to take over his body while his brain remained indecisive. Confused even at what he was doing, Ern turned his body and ran to the end of the hall, where the grate lay to freedom beyond. He slammed up against it, afraid to even slow down in case the man behind him catch up. And that's when Ern's heart sunk even further. Below, the raging waves crashed upon the rocks that made up the base of a cliff. All roads led to death, it seemed. Perhaps Ern's life was not Willed, after all.

The guard marched on, albeit at a snail's pace hindered as he was by the three bodies tied to him and by the two fresh gunshot wounds that Ern had inflicted on him. He smiled as if he were in perfect health and his eyes sparked in expectation of claiming a fourth Macabean prisoner to his name, no doubt something he'd celebrate and parade about once the revolt was put down. Ern would not allow him to be included.

He noticed that the grate was not fixed into place and that it could be removed by just pulling it out of place. And so he struggled to do just that, his nerves getting the better of him as he urged himself on.

Ern looked behind his shoulder again to see the pirate guard much closer. The man had seemed to notice what Ern had and had tried to pick up his pace, but the weight of the bodies he dragged still worked against him. As Ern pulled free the grate, the pirate decided to switch tactics and instead stopped to bring his rifle to his shoulder and aim at the escaping prisoner. Just as a shot rung out, Ern fell into the dangerous mixture of rock and wave below, his body splashing into the ocean below. The pirate ran up to the edge of the grate himself and looking down he saw nothing resurface. He

remained there for about half a minute before, seemingly placated, he turned his attention back to the rest of the revolt.

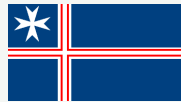
For his part, Ern disappeared under the ocean's white foam. His chances of surviving the drop, those jagged, sharp rocks waiting for him at the bottom, had been low to begin with...

[Periodically edited for typos.]

Last edited by [The Macabees](#) on Mon Oct 24, 2016 5:57 pm, edited 1 time in total.

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The Scandinavians
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Posts: 4948
Founded: Oct 09, 2004
Capitalist

by [The Scandinavians](#) » Sun Oct 30, 2016 9:04 pm



The Glorious Empire of the Scandinavians, The Southern Islands

The general muster had been ordered to begin to take place all the soldiers and warriors residing within the southern half of the Empire, namely the regions south of the central mountain chain which ran throughout the imperial homeland. The physical division between the old heartland and the plantations of the south. A cultural divide which had ensured that the old aristocracy of the Empire had become more powerful within a set region of the Empire. Their wealth and power being built off the backs of a massive slave labor force which was the lion's share of the population in most of the southern rural areas. However, the price for this had been that the nobility's continued existence was dependent upon the protection of the Emperors' legions of warriors. For without them the slaves would likely overthrow their masters in a violent revolution aimed at bringing about their freedom.

However, over the many centuries since the political equation had been established to ensure the prosperity and unity of the Glorious Empire had gradually shifted towards the favor of the Emperors. By effectively gaining control of the Church the Emperors had installed themselves as divinely inspired monarchs who were the leaders of the faith. The ones to whom even slaves could find protection under. One who ruled with the sanction of the Almighty and therefore any attempt to resist his will would be heretical. A notion which had made the former potential of the slaves rebelling turn into humble submission towards the rule of the Emperors and the actions performed on their behalf by their agents.

This power shift had resulted in the Emperors monopolizing power from the bottom and the top. The nobles had not even noticed the gradual change in the power structure as it took many generations for it to come to pass. With the gradual accumulation of control resembling that of the slow pace of a glacier's initial birth. Thereby ensuring that the average person had come to view the absolute authority of the Emperors as a institution inherent in the system. Something which was completely justified by divine sanction.

The change in the social dynamics of the region had however required that the Emperors begin to establish more effective lines of mobilization. With this notion in mind the Emperors had built up a series of mechanisms so as to ensure the maximum effectiveness of the levies to be drawn in the event of an internal or external martial threat. The general line of thought in the southern part of the Empire was to use a number of garrisons housing some twenty million warriors to be the first and best line of defense. Individuals whose dedication and utter obedience ensured that any threat raised would be met with the utmost ferocity. Following this was the general levy of the free Scandinavians in the south who outnumbered the warriors numerous times over. However, they merely were trained marksmen who knew small unit tactics. They had not experienced the training required to turn their psyches into that of true soldiers equal to a professional in other nations.

Thus when the war with the Golden Throne had begun to approach the shores of the Scandinvan Empire's homeland itself the first call had been issued towards the warrior caste of the southern lands. Namely those who dwelt on the islands which lay off the coast. The region which seemed by far the most likely to experience ground combat first as the enemy attempted to establish a foothold so that they could begin to invade the mainland without resistance. However, the centuries of tunneling for rocks to be used for construction had left the volcanic islands crisscrossed with innumerable underground locations, of which many had been properly to be used in the event of war and quite a few had been retrofitted to be used as defensive fortifications. A situation which would ensure a bloody price would have to be paid for the islands.

The warrior caste assigned to the islands were hardened individuals who been cycled to the garrisons by the Sons of Erid as they prepared for the war with the Golden Throne. However, they were not elites. They merely were stubborn individuals who would be willing to fight to the last to defend the lands of their people from foreign invasion.

As the warriors received notice of the enemy fleets amassing they began to prepare themselves. Munitions were stockpiled, mines laid, defensive patterns drawn up on maps, duty rosters published, weapons readied, and systems double checked. They would be ready for the war, even if they must die to fulfill their holy duty to kill the heathen barbarian invaders. The common theme that connected every warrior was their reading of the "Path of the Warrior" as they had been trained since children to reflect on its words before entering war. For it would give them strength in the upcoming hardships, remind them where they came from, and compel them to uphold their duties no matter what might befall them in the coming days. Words which defined them as warriors. Shaped them as men. Compelled them to glory.

"You are the ones whom I have chosen to be the truest foundation of our unending empire. Till the end of time shall you and your descendants be the spear which pierces the heart of our enemies and the shield which protects our people from the perils without. You shall be like shepherds guarding my folk. You shall be as dogs eternally serving as the companion hounds of my heirs. This is my decree to you my loyal warriors. So long as you stay loyal to my pact so shall Valgard endure. That is my promise to you." (Erid)

- 1. I will be true to my Emperor above all else. For he speaks in the unerring voice of Erid, the spiritual father of us all.*
- 2. I shall honor the traditions of my people, my house, and my faith.*
- 3. I will abide by the just decrees of the lord assigned to command me on behalf of the Emperor.*
- 4. I understand that this life is just a test to prove my worthiness to enter the eternal kingdom. No challenge, no pain, no foe can therefore deter me from fulfilling my duties.*
- 5. I shall conduct myself in an honorable, honest, and tempered fashion at all times. I shall be stoic in attitude and outward appearance.*
- 6. I shall be merciful towards my own people and vicious towards their enemies.*
- 7. I will not allow the lies of the outlander to influence me.*
- 8. I recognize that I am but a single individual within the greater body of those in service to the Scandinvan Emperors.*
- 9. I will uphold my word regardless of the price to my own well being.*
- 10. I shall not give into my fear when facing the enemy and instead I will be courageous in battle.*
- 11. I shall become an ever stronger, wiser, and a more disciplined warrior for the glory of the Empire.*

Last edited by [The Scandinavians](#) on Mon Oct 31, 2016 11:27 pm, edited 4 times in total.

We are the Glorious Empire of the Scandinavians. Surrender or be destroyed. Your civilization has ended, your time is over. Your people will be assimilated

into our Empire. Your technological distinctiveness shall be added to our own. Your culture shall be supplanted by our own. And your lands will be made into our lands.

"For five thousand years has our Empire endured. In war and peace we have thrived. Against overwhelming odds we evolved. No matter what we face we have always survived and grown. We shall always be triumphant." -Emperor Godfrey II

Hope for a brighter tomorrow - fight the fight, find the cure



Emperor Pudu
Spokesperson

Posts: 164
Founded: Aug 24, 2007
Ex-Nation

by **Emperor Pudu** » Wed Nov 09, 2016 5:44 pm



Western Gholgoth, Task Force Hell Aboard the Skyan command ship Unity

It had seemed like he had only just arrived in Citadel City before he was ushered aboard the Unity. It had been much longer, of course, Lucius Salvias Otho knew that. The Pudite embassy building in the Heart District had been raised and occupied and Otho had gone as far as to set up his offices there in the absence of a proper ambassador to Havensky. Now that Otho himself was absent though it was likely time that Yuan Xiu receive the post formally. Otho had put in paperwork to that effect at least, though the government in Hollarum was ponderously slow at such matters. In any case Yuan was now the Pudite contact in Citadel City, and Otho was here, aboard this ship.

The trip itself was a last-minute thing. It had been suggested by the Skyans, in fact, that Otho accompany the fleet, that he might serve some symbolic role upon returning to Shen Almaru, whence he had recently fled. As the newly minted Special Representative to Gholgoth, Otho had been entrusted by his government the full responsibilities and powers inherent to their seat at the table of Gothic Lords. He would return triumphantly, vested in ancient privilege, to set matters right in the Shen Almaru archipelago. That was the plan, at least. The real plans, of course, belonged to the generals and the admirals, Otho was a political figure, and his assessment of the whole situation was in that light.

Accompanying the Special Representative was a small staff of only three; a Captain Filaret Pestrukhin the military attache sent by the embassy technical branch; one Olfier Golub, an intelligence analyst sent by the same source; and finally Korinna Ariosto, who would be Otho's press liaison. The four of them were sharing one of the four-room dormitories aboard the Unity. The vessel, for a warship, was surprisingly spacious and seemingly made every effort to be comfortable for its crew. As to the standards of a diplomatic envoy and his retinue, perhaps it fell a bit short (they did all four share a washroom, for example) but it was enough.

The team had been at sea long enough to develop a routine at least. The first to rise would be Captain Pestrukhin, who would wake early enough to prepare Otho a briefing to review over breakfast. This particular morning's brief concerned the position of Task Force Khudoi, the fifty-six Imperial Pudite Navy ships Otho understood were advancing ahead of the main fleet body of Task Force Hell. They were presently keeping pace with the fleet around four-hundred kilometers ahead, still within the air defense bubble of the larger Skyan carrier force. They would likely remain this way until the whole force drew closer to hostile territory when they would break away in a reconnaissance and screening role. The larger portion of the Pudite naval compliment to Task Force Hell was still with the main surface group of course, some three hundred additional ships including the amphibious component and a cohort of submarines dispersed throughout the area.

After they returned from the morning meal Golub and Otho spent their mornings going over the diplomatic cables, both those that were for his consideration and those forwarded by Yuan in Citadel City which he wanted another set of eyes on. There was not a yet a full diplomatic corps established in Gholgoth but the seven full-time ambassadors established in the region, plus Yuan and the Shen Almaru situation, generated plenty of activity. Of particular interest today was one ambassador, Cheng Yuanji, the Pudite representative to the Scandinvan Empire. Ambassador Cheng, Otho knew, was to be put in an awkward position by this war. A businessman by trade, Cheng's family firm had extensive dealings with the Scandinvans. The old man's communique was concerning, of course, the Shen Almaru question. Otho had some days ago asked Cheng to make a visit to the archipelago, more as a test case than anything else, and to gauge the situation and report back to him. More accurately, Otho had wanted to gauge the attitude of Cheng himself, and had succeeded in doing so when Cheng replied today that he, unfortunately, could not make time for the trip to the northern archipelago for one unverifiable reason or another.

After a morning of business Otho and the staff took lunch. They had noticed that the food aboard the Unity was well above what they had expected aboard a warship at sea. Otho himself had recently spent time aboard an Imperial Navy vessel of a similar size and had been treated to nowhere near this quality fare. Lunch, and especially dinner, were items not to be missed on Lucius Otho's schedule. On a typical day the work would end after lunch, with each retiring to their own business, be that leisure or duty, before dinner in the evening. Today, however, Mrs. Ariosto had something else planned for the Special Representative.

Also aboard the Unity was another small staff of Pudites. This one from the government-owned media conglomerate Channel One. Otho's press liaison Mrs. Ariosto had prepared an interview segment with Channel One to be conducted this afternoon on the deck of the Unity and she was preparing him extensively. Despite Channel One's status as the

government's official mouthpiece in the television news media, and indeed as one of two outfits in the entire country permitted to run television news programming under the strict controls of the National Communication Bureau, the actual content of their channel was not closely monitored.

Journalism in the Pudite Empire was a respected tradition and though a free press was not a guaranteed right the independent history of the government-run press went back to pre-modern times when, as now, most news was distributed via broadsheets printed by local governments. These local news organizations were a part of the government but never beholden to it in an official way, and the honest streak that carried through from those times extended to the television media. For that reason, perhaps, Channel One hadn't submitted a list of questions they planned to ask Otho during the interview.

Mrs. Ariosto was a consummate professional herself, however, and took the ambassador's preparations very seriously. She outlined the topics not to get into, including the possible defection of IAF units to the Scandinavian-backed forces nor the back room talks surrounding the future of Shen Almaru that were going on with Skyan authorities. Obviously he was not to mention military and intelligence secrets, like the deployment of some three-dozen nuclear submarines to eastern Gholgothic waters in the previous days or the presence of Anukai temple agents in Shen Almaru.

There were some fronts, however, on which Otho was meant to push home the facts hard. Governor Titus Lartius had arrested to envoys from the Church of the Anukai. He had disobeyed direct orders from his superior, Prefect Nadej. He had mobilized the local Imperial Guard and militarized the streets of the capital. The criminal traitor Albus White was known to be in Mazaraan now, along with an unknown number of his private soldiers. Scandinavian forces were streaming into the archipelago and made no indication that they considered the move temporary.

The biggest point to emphasize was the Pudite fleet sailing with Task Force Hell. Admiral Khudoi, who commanded the fleet, had provided some bullet points for Otho to go over, which Ariosto had made sure he knew backward and forward. Most importantly, it was critical that this mission be presented in the light of enforcing peace between two Gothic powers and definitely not as another extra-regional power meddling in the affairs of Gholgoth.

When the appointed time came the Skyan liaison to Otho's staff arrived to guide the small party through the lower decks of the massive command ship to the decks above. The halls were roomy for a warship, though sailors still crowded by hurriedly in the busiest sections. When they arrived at the final door and emerged into sunlight Ariosto pulled Otho aside one last time to adjust his appearance to the natural lighting and give him one last word of advice, "You're a naturally gregarious man, ambassador, but don't get carried away and come off as arrogant. We are the victims in this tragedy. Play remorse. Sullen determination."

It was on that note that Lucius Otho introduced himself to the television presenter who would be speaking with him. She was a mature veteran, Otho quickly sized her up, confirming that he would not be able to take this as lightly as perhaps was his custom. For all the weight of his current position, Otho was never a man whose shoulders seemed to feel the burden. His genial and open personality made him a well-liked diplomat but perhaps not the most austere representative of Imperial will.

Once the cameras were situated and Otho was positioned the interviewer gave him some final instructions, "Look at me, not the camera. I'll be in the frame so you can react to me, but don't move off that spot," she pointed to the little tape X on the deck. "Ready?"

"Yes." Otho answered confidently.

The cameraman gave them a countdown before they began, after which the presenter opened the segment, "This is Chu Lin with Channel One here in the Western Gholgothic Sea sailing with what the Skybound Republic of Havensky is calling Task Force Hell. With me is the Special Representative to Gholgoth from the Pantokratic Dominate, Ambassador Lucius Salvias Otho,"

"Ambassador Otho, why don't we start with you explaining just why you're here sailing with the Task Force. Surely this is a military operation, not a diplomatic one?"

"Certainly. Yes, the mission of Task Force Hell including the Imperial Pudite Navy compliment of that force is a military one. We have exhausted all possible diplomatic routes to a solution to the Shen Almaru Crisis and so we have, with our regional partners, conceived a plan to resolve the issue by whatever means necessary."

"Of course, Ambassador, but you haven't told me why you personally are here with the fleet. Could you elaborate on that for the people?"

Otho shifted his feet and cocked his head slightly at the question, "Well, I was invited by the Skyan leadership to take an active role in the management of the Shen Almaru effort once we remove Scandinavian and other hostile forces."

"What role will you play in the post-war governance of Shen Almaru?"

Again the question was an uneasy one for Otho, "As the Special Representative to Gholgoth I of course am representing the authority of the Pantokrat, and so once the current administration of Shen Almaru is removed we will have to have a new structure ready to be put into place to oversee the territory in rebuilding and reestablishment of the rule of

law.”

“That makes it sound like the whole government on the island will need to be replaced, is it really true that the influence of Governor Lartius and the Scandinavians is that complete over the archipelago?”

“We can’t know that without going in and discovering for ourselves the extent of the treason. We need to be prepared to start with a clean slate.”

“So you don’t have any indication of how much of the local government is cooperating with the treason, despite you yourself being assigned there for some years and only leaving as recently as the opening days of this present crisis?”

“If you’re asking if there was any forewarning of this present crisis I can definitely tell you that there wasn’t. Whether or not this was long premeditated by the Governor and the known traitor Albus White we do not know.”

“Yes, but weren’t you also, during your time in Shen Almaru, perhaps not the most attentive to your duties? Frequent sailing trips, long absences from your post for unexplained reasons, the common sight around Mazaraan of one of the Emperor’s chief diplomats overindulging in alcohol or other intoxicants?”

The blood drained out of Mrs. Ariosto’s face as she watched helplessly from the sidelines. Otho was ready with an answer, however, “I am not here today to defend my personal record, nor am I here to be attacked for it. I am here to demonstrate the continued resolve of our government to return to its control an enemy occupied province and reestablish the Emperor’s rule over a people who yearn for it.”

“Alright then,” Chu Lin replied before moving on, “Why don’t we talk about the Pudite contribution to this Task Force Hell now. What can you tell us about that?”

Otho was relieved by the change in the topic, “Well, there are more than three hundred and fifty warships and forty thousand marines in Fleet Admiral Khudoi’s Imperial Navy force in Gholgoth. The highlight of the task force will be the *INS Pudu Xiang Wu*, the Dreadfire-class dreadnought purchased from Gothic ally Automagfreek.”

“Is there a reason the Pudite contribution to the war effort is so comparatively light, when taken against the forces of the Golden Throne or even the Scandinavian Empire?”

What Otho thought had been a welcome change of subject had instead served to confirm the direction this interview seemed to be going. He braced himself as he answered the question, “The forces available here in Gholgoth are our contribution to the task force. To reinforce them any further would mean redeploying ships and soldiers from elsewhere in the Empire, which is not my decision to make. We intend to support our allies with all available power, whatever that might be.”

“So when you say it’s not your decision, who are you passing the blame for this undersized task force to then?”

“That was not my intention. The task force is suited to the missions it is expected to perform.”

“Is it true, however, that this military action has been taken unilaterally by you and Admiral Khudoi, without orders or consultation from the Emperor in Hollarum, and that perhaps this is why no additional forces have been made available to you?”

“It is absolutely un-true that this action has been taken without consulting the relevant superior authorities. Our mission has the full blessing and authority of one conceived of by the Emperor himself.”

“Once again, you did not answer the question, but I will move on. Does the Emperor want to create the perception that he is not meddling in Gholgothic internal affairs?”

As Otho was preparing to answer that question Mrs Ariosto stormed into the interview, tore the lapel mic off of the ambassador and spat “This farce is over.” at the presenter Chu Lin before rushing Otho away from the Channel One crew.

The camera swiveled to watch the ambassador’s party disappear below decks before it turned back to Chu, who closed by saying “An aide of the ambassador has ended our interview, leaving yet another question without an answer. So, what does this mean for Pudite foreign policy in Gholgoth? We’ll have more on that tomorrow when I’m back in the studio with our analysts. There will be quite a lot to discuss after tonight.”

[Brotherhood of the Anukai](#) • [Irkallan](#) • [Gholgoth](#) • [Factbooks](#) • [Factsheet](#)



Aldarminia
Ambassador

Posts: 1592
Founded: Mar 15, 2010

MATURE WARNING

by **Aldarminia** » Sun Nov 13, 2016 5:36 pm



West of Nicaro, Dienstadi Waters

The storm had been their cover, but now it was but a great titan guiding them down a shorter path to *Khmagbrojusdrakht*, the

Paradise of the Brave. Their journey from the Aldarminian territory of Razulruka to the island of Nicaro had been a long and bountiful pilgrimage. Many a non-believer that were encountered was converted and redirected onto the *Bolshoi'Dorozhka*, the Great Path, and many more a false follower that dwelled within their ranks were tortured and extinguished into the *Temno'Praznota*, the Dark Void. Nicaro had been an abundant gathering of painful and fearful souls, and many fires were erected in celebration of many of these souls' assimilation. The slaver pirates, though wrong-goers and ignorant of the Bane Will, had been of great use to the endeavors of these cold-hearted and soulless perpetrators of atrocity. Though abhorred at first, the pale dreadlocked pilgrims from Aldarminia proved themselves of value and amity—If indifferent and pragmatic support could be called such a thing—to the outlaws' cause.

The *Nyktbholstrakhi*, Those Without Pain or Fear, unlike the handful of pirates who accompanied them on the long-ago-hijacked *Dvorshkar* fishing vessel, were not worried by the storm. Days before, the pirates needlessly tried to re-assure their radical clients that the storm would work to their advantage in breaking the already-thin Macabean blockade. These members of the *Myrizstrakha*, the World-Terror, fanatic organization could not be perturbed by matters of nature. Frankly, if they were truly followers of the Great Path, they could not be perturbed by anything at all. Most of them had faced the Imperial Aldarminian armies in Razulruka. Outgunned and outmanned, they did not waver until their master, a man known as *Otravabrymja*, gave them their orders to flee and embark upon their holy—Unholy is the word choice for those who are aware of these fanatics' actions and beliefs but do not subscribe to them—pilgrimage to the Golden Throne mainland. When the storm pushed the *Dvorshkar* too far west and revealed it to a Macabean ship also navigating the tumultuous weather, while the pirates' fears were realized, the prayers for an early reckoning of the *Nyktbholstrakhi* were answered and joyously celebrated.

Savich, a vodka and tequilla combined distillation native to the now-obiterated Aldarminian colonies in the Freewaters in the Far West, joined an amalgamation of cocaine, angel dust, mescaline, and a variety psychotropic mushrooms in intoxicating the *Myrizstrakha* fighters into a frenzy. The pirates, men not often daunted by these phenomena, found themselves caught off-guard by the actions of the *Nyktbholstrakhi*. When the appointed captain of the *Dvorshkar* announced that they were going to pick up speed to avoid the Macabean warship, he was pounced upon by then-unarmed "Dreads," Aldarminian colloquialism for the fanatics. These Dreads treated the then-Captain as a piece of meat, while they were the cackling hyenas. The pirates decided it would be best to go along with the mutiny when the other Dreads, armed to the teeth with weapons fashioned from barbwire and pipes and more-

normal arms such as rifles and submachine-guns, surrounded them on the upper decks. The pirates chose a new captain per the demands of the madmen's commander, Draugr Vrigadri. Instead of accelerating away from the vessel like the pirates wished, the *Dvorshkar* was maintaining speed and direction.

Meanwhile, in the bowels of the ship, the drug-and-alcohol-fueled frenzy continued, escalating into grotesque displays of favor. The pirates, outnumbered ten-to-one, stayed far away from the crowded huddles of the *Nyktbholstrakhi*. The radicals who moved from gathering-to-gathering were cutting deep gashes into each other's arms and backs. Violent and ritualistic duels between larger Dreads were antagonized by apparently higher-ranking ones, and these contests were fought and won by strangling the opponent with one hand while only slicing, not stabbing, at his or her chest. Masses of the writhing restless and revealed were excited with every red drop released upon them by the contests of endurance these coursing circles seemed to act as enclosures for. Another layer of the huddles constituted strictly masculine Dreads who locked arms to form a second circular enclosure that swayed to the rhythm of the outermost layer of the huddle made up of bare females who sang strange songs in their native tongues.

All the while the Draugr Vrigadri was only terrifying the Dreads' pirate companions even more. He walked carnality for all to see, long unkempt dreadlocks pulled by the ferocious winds, along the upper decks of the *Dvorshkar*, apparently screaming at the storm. His tally-scarred visage was nightmarishly accentuated by his golden eyes which glowed like an Elmo's fire in the night. Already unnerving the pirates with these actions alone, if the outlaw seafarers had known what he was screaming in old Aldaminian languages they might have been tempted to completely abandon ship. A slave passenger who had studied these languages before he was captured by the pirates whispered a translation as he hid from the storm and the other inhabitants of the vessel and in a tiny compartment, crying in horror as he did so.

"Hail to thee, great titan of the wind and sea! Bring us forth into the Paradise of the Brave! Let our damned souls claim our worthiness among the crimson fields of the bone-walkers and the nightly devourers! Extinguish the wrong-going souls among us so that you may take their flesh and blood into your vast ocean of leviathans! Look upon our rituals and see that we are ready to vanquish the heathen Macabeans in numbers large and small! See that the seed and blood of my brothers and sisters is spilled in your praise so that you may bless us with expedient path to the Eternal Realm, freeing us of our Eternal Winter of the bodily world which shackles the ignorant wrong-goers with pain and sorrow! Bring my comrades and I painless and fearless deaths for we are soon to sacrifice the heathens among us so our final journey to Paradise is

not misguided by theirs to the dark void!"

A booze-brazen pirate foolishly tried to go his own way on a female Dread, and in doing so, he inadvertently hastened the foretold sacrifices. After feigning an intense resistance, the Dreadwoman submitted surreptitiously to the boorish brigand, only so that she could watch closely how the life seeped from his eyes when two broad-shouldered Dreadmen brought barbwire-wrapped pipes to his skull and back. She pushed the carcass off her and accepted a rifle from one of her *Nyktbolstrakh* brethren. Standing half naked on one of the lower decks and crazed from a fresh dose of PCP taking effect, she held the rifle with both hands and shouted in Aldarminian Mralic, "Wrath upon the doubting fearful!"

After her battle-cry which was not understood by many unfortunate souls, she swung the butt of the rifle down onto the head of a pirate who was there to inspect the corpse of his fallen compatriot for *grenadines*. From here, the huddles of Dreads broke apart, and those unarmed found arms, and those armed proceeded with the sacrifices. Naked or mostly-clothed, bleeding or blood-soaked, and all vicious and sanity-forsaken, the Dreads commenced the slaughter.

Tlaloc, Theohuanacu

If he still had the human capacity for emotion, today would most likely have been the happiest day of his life, but Urshynsko Deleszji was no longer human. Maybe technically. Maybe even physiologically. But certainly not psychologically. No, today was the culmination of fifteen long years. Retaining the capacity to have memory, Urshynsko remembered when he was first freed from the Imperial Labor Camp west of Sardya in the Aldarminian homeland west of Gholgoth. He had been held there for two years for harboring anarchist and Aldamer'Ikhana partisans in his apartment in Rendja. After he was freed from Sardya Quarry Seven, as the Labor Camp was officially designated, he was forced in the ranks of the Dreadstatesmen, the *Nyktbholstrakhi* as they called themselves. The former political prisoner was tortured mentally and physically and starved for two weeks of "assimilation" before he finally broke and declared his allegiance to *Otravabrymja*.

Urshynsko remember how much pain and fear he felt in the beginning. As the ritual of his promotion was being prepared, he recalled how, unlike the innumerable heathen followers of the *Svoboda'Dorozhka* or the Free Path, he had *earned* his dreadlocks as *Strakhzoldat* a month after his declaration of allegiance. After a battle with Usurper forces—This of course during the Aldarminian Empire-wide civil war between supporters of the Usurper Ashroc'mhar Vanarhelvik and the rightful heir Dalikharl Azchekyo II—Urshynsko tortured a captured Usurper Kommissar to death, moments after the man had declared he would never join the "gang of psychopaths." Even then, Urshynsko

was regretful and fearful, still weak and full of humanity when compared to his veteran brothers-and-sisters-in-arms. It would not be until months later when he realized how much power that faith in the *Bolshoi'Dorozhka* could bring to him when he was finally washed clean — "Brainwashed completely," those of more stable minds would say—of the inhibiting emotions of mortal man. Today's events were an affirmation of his strength and transcendence of normal humans.

Half a year after earning his dreadlocks, Urshynsko was promoted to the rank of *Bezbhol'skiy*. This was when the Urshynsko that anyone knew before the civil war in Aldarminia first truly spiraled towards total ego death. Months of paranoid self-induced personality-suppression and putting up a cold, emotionless and fearless façade had begun to take hold. Then, orders from *Otravabrymja* arrived, and Urshynsko's Host was being sent to pillage and assimilate the haggard inhabitants of the Sardya metropolis. They had just repelled an Usurper attack, but they were a fatally-wounded prey to the then-*Strakhnatsiya*, or Dreadstate, and its *Nyktbholstrakh* soldiers. Sardya was a sprawling industrial city with millions of defenders in the form of a loyalist militias, but coordinated attacks by Urshynsko's Host crippled the city's defenses and infrastructure. Urshynsko watched without horror gripping him and in total awe as his Draugr Yjhandal, the commander of his Host, stood atop a tank in nothing but a trench coat, laughing as loyalist bullets flew around her and freezing winds clawed at her scarred and half-naked body. The Draugr spotted Urshynsko and pointed him in the direction of a shelter for women and children after proclaiming proudly, "You can do anything you want, comrade! We are destined for Paradise! You are a god among men if you believe!"

Urshynsko, enthralled by the Draugr's macabre beauty, rallied a dozen or so fellow Dreads to follow him. They charged towards a squad of loyalists who were defending the shelter. Under heavy machine gun fire, they dashed with psychopathic rage, but only Urshynsko and two others made it over the loyalist snow-swept sandbags. Armed with only a scythe and a semi-automatic pistol, the blood-thirsty *Strakhzoldat* slaughtered more than half of the squad. His comrades died extinguishing the rest, but he was free to enter the shelter. Blood drenching his pale skin and ragged grey tatters of clothing, the truth of what Yjhandal had said consumed him, and the "human Urshynsko" died. He looked at the hundred or so women and children and realized that he actually could do anything he wanted to. With Dreads running amok throughout the city outside, Urshynsko took it upon himself to liberate the women who pleased his green eyes of their clothing. He sliced the throats of many of the elderly and far-too-young-for his tastes that crossed his path, their blood drilling his madness deeper into his heart and soul. For hours, he made playthings of the helpless creatures of the shelter, all the while the children he had not slain tried to avert their

eyes and cover their ears to blind and deafen themselves to the wailing provoked by the monster that Urshynsko had become.

Eventually, Urshynsko was drained and exhausted, so a brave woman tried to use his scythe against, but before she could put the blade to work, a bullet lowered her face into the *Nyktbholstrakh's* lap. Yjhandal had arrived to see the work of her subordinate, and laughed with pride for he had made trauma-patients of all those inside the so-called "shelter." The frightening Yjhandal promoted Urshynsko to *Bezbhol'skiy*, and then she joined him in his assault upon the women while other subordinates of hers rounded up the children to begin their assimilation. Urshynsko was forever changed. The following years of raping, pillaging, bombing, and fighting only cemented his homicidal mania. A meeting with *Otravabrymja* himself alongside Yjhandal only elevated his faith in *Bolshoi'Dorozhka*. The forever-young man was everything everyone claimed him to be. Without emotion, especially fear. Invulnerable to pain as he demonstrated by taking a bullet through the palm without so much as flinching. And of infinite wisdom. Bane, as many referred to him, gifted Urshynsko and his fellow deviant Yjhandal with immense knowledge about the world beyond the Aldarminian realms and about how the fearless faith needed to be spread throughout it. The Eternal Master also taught them an elegant method of breaking down and reconstructing psyches of people so that they would become obedient drones, loyal to the cause of destruction and decadence.

Many years later, when the orders came from the *Korol'iz'Draugai*—Yet another name for the fanatics' supreme leader—that the *Strakhnatsiya* was to evolve itself into the *Myrizstrakha* and begin propagating the pain-forsaken message of the *Bolshoi'Dorozhka* throughout the world, Yjhandal and Urshynsko invited a nubile female *Strakhzoldat* and a muscular male *Bezbhol'skiy* into a room that they locked themselves in for three days to celebrate the transformation. After the rejoicing exhausted all those involved, Urshynsko took it upon himself to organize the maritime venture to Greater Dienstag. The whole of Yjhandal's host was divided into other Draugai's Hosts, except for a small contingent that would make the voyage to the island of Theohuanacu. Upon arriving in Nicaro, though, a little under a third of the contingent was redirected to the Macabean homeland. This detachment was currently on the *Dvorshkar*, using the roving storms of the seas to its advantage to break the blockade yet again. While the *Dvorshkar* group, led by Brother Draugr Vrigadri, was making its highly ambitious expedition, though, the rest of Yjhandal and Urshynsko's shrunken Host would use the vessels *Gholwind* and *Auslander's Curiosity* to dock at the city of Tlaloc, where they would meet with leaders of a pirate enclave there.

During this meeting, the pirates explained to Draugr Yjhandal how they had already attacked the Tlaloc's port and damaged the

Krierflots there. Yjhandal and Urshynsko found many faults with the attack, particularly because they believe the pirates could have done more damage had they used a red herring to draw security forces away from the port. Thus, the Dreads allied themselves with the pirates for the time being so that *Myrizstrakha's* own endeavors of instilling fear and leading as many as possible on the journey down the Great Path could be accomplished. Through Yjhandal's brilliance, the numbers of the *Myrizstrakha* fighters began to swell. Reconciling *Bolshoi'Dorozhka* beliefs with those of the local pagans was key to the campaign of conversion. Yjhandal also used low-intensity assimilation methods so conversion was more appealing to the locals and some of the pirates. To assure they had genuine followers, though, Urshynsko utilized the method that *Otravabrymja* had taught him, known as hyper-Monarch programming, to the "sanctify" the minds of many "respected socialites" and community leaders throughout the city's pirate-loyal neighborhoods. Many converts were seduced into their subservience and assimilation by Yjhandal and Urshynsko. Eventually, their replenished Host was deemed strong enough and ready to aid the pirate enclaves in another attack.

Yjhandal, though, decided that she would split the Host yet again. This time into three between her and fellow Draugr Lonthod. Upon questioning Yjhandal who she was appointing to lead the remaining third, it was to Urshynsko's morbid pleasure that it was announced that he would be promoted to Draugr for the success of the voyage to Greater Dienstad and for his efforts in converting the local populace. She also proclaimed that Lonthod was to head west to Theothuacan and beyond so that the ranks of the Theohuanacu cell of *Myrizstrakha* be swelled. Yjhandal herself was going to the south to break the siege lines of Palenque and Tiwanaku, grow her Host there, and support the rebellion. Urshynsko was to remain in Tlaloc and cultivate the fruits of the seeds of discontent and the *Bolshoi'Dorozhka* faith he had sewn alongside Yjhandal.

So, today was the day of his final promotion for there was no higher honor for a *Nyktbholstrakh* than to be born again as a Draugr. Inside the building that their pirate comrades had allocated to them for a headquarters, Urshynsko presented himself, stripped of all clothing, to Yjhandal who was surrounded by her fellow Draugai and a selection of *Bezbholskiy*. Kneeling before her, Urshynsko recited the words that every Draugr said at their ascension:

"I was lost on the false paths of mortals,
But I was found by brothers and sisters,
Who welcomed and instructed me.
They, my guides, corrected the course of my travels,
And thus, ceased my wanton wandering,
And they removed from me,
The guilts and regrets of mortal flesh manifest,
Hollowed my heart of human lusts and loves,

And annihilated my helpless hopes and hindering horrors,
 Thus, relieving my mortal soul of the burdens of fear and pain.
 Alongside my brothers and sisters,
 I have discovered and journeyed upon,
 The Great Path,
 And I have accepted the holy challenge,
 That Aldaric the God Above has presented to humanity,
 To forsake its constraints and natures,
 To become like gods and transcend,
 To the mountains' summits where the Titans roam,
 And the Eagles nest,
 And the Bears sleep,
 And the Lynxes prowl,
 And the Tigers hunt,
 And the Wolves eat,
 And the Kings dream,
 And from which the weak and false fall.
 May I extinguish many an inferior soul,
 And correct many a wrong-goer's course,
 So that I may reach,
 The Final Destination,
 In the Paradise of the Brave,
 And condemn my enemies,
 To the Dark Void,
 Which becomes their mass grave.
 By the witness of my comrades,
 In sight of gods,
 False and true,
 I eternally abandon the life-path,
 I have taken before here,
 And annihilate myself,
 Mind, body, heart, and soul,
 Henceforth, to be born again
 As a Draugr,
 An immortal ghost and shadow,
 Of what I was,
 And of what I will.
 From hitherto,
 My name shall be,
 Comrade,
 Brother,
 And Draugr,
 Otravan of Tlaloc."

Urshynsko Deleszji, as far as all to be concerned, was dead. Otravan of Tlaloc lowered his head, and Yjhandal walked to behind him. After pushing aside his lengthy and dreaded locks, which were then held in place by Lonthod, she used her blade to carve into the flesh on the back of his neck the Mralic rune that stood for Draugr. Below this rune, she sliced a straight line that extended all the way to the bottom of this back, representing the straight-forward path to Paradise he was accepting. The only way he was ever going there was to bring glory and body to his Host then die in martyrdom against his enemies. Otravan did not wince, even as she intentionally increased the depth of her cut the further she went. Upon finishing the line, Yjhandal brought Otravan to his feet, symbolizing the act of being born. She then handed her knife to Otravan as five slaves acquired from pirate allies were knelt in front of the reborn. Otravan looked each in the eye, his green striking their brown or blue with demented terror. Screaming and whimpering, each slave's head was scalped and throat was slit. He wiped bloody undersides of the scalps across his chest, painting it in blood. Then, he

used the knife to cut, deep enough to produce permanent scars, five tally marks onto his left cheek, beginning his *Ubiystvonomer*, or Kill Count, as a Draugr. Otravan was then forced back to his knees by Lonthod. Yjhandal relinquished the knife from Otravan. Lonthod grabbed his ascending "brother" by the chin and cheeks, opening the new Draugr's mouth. Finally, Yjhandal began the grueling-for-normal-people and time-consuming process of sharpening as many of Otravan's teeth to beastly points, completing the ritual and giving him the fierce-some appearance that all Draugr shared. Afterwards, Yjhandal would assume her position over Otravan "one last time" for the remainder of the day and night because in the morning she would leave for the west, and Otravan of Tlaloc would begin just some of the attacks that would forever carve the word *Myrizstrakha* and name *Otravabrymja* into the hearts and minds of all Macabeans and, by some extent, all Dienstadi people.

Aboard the *Dvorshkar*, Dienstadi Waters, Later that same night,

The wrathful massacre had been quite successful. Paradise welcomed four *Nyktbholstrakhi*, and the Dark Void enveloped eight pirate and twenty-something slave souls. Drying blood and now-rotting innards and bodies were ubiquitous throughout the vessel. Only two were spared from the slaughter: a navigator pirate and the slave that spoke the Aldarminian language native to the Dreads' tongues. Vrigadri, still naked but now bathed in blood, terrified the two survivors with his maniacal smile, scarred face and body, and foreign eyes of gold. Translating for the fear-wracked pirate that was being made to inspect the ship's RADAR and SONAR, the slave nervously explained to Vrigadri, "He-he-he, uh... He s-s-says that, uh, another um... Y-yes! Another Macabean ship has appeared, directly ahead of us. An-and that the other sh-ship is still, uh behind us and... It's picking up speed. Th-th-they also seem t-to be demanding that w-w-we, uh... We halt and um pr-pre-prepare to be boarded."

Somehow, the Draugr's smiled widened as he spoke, "Good. Tell the pirate to stop the ship and cut all communications," Vrigadri caressed the slave's hair and face with a bloody hand, "We are preparing to be boarded."

After translating the *Nyktbholstrakh's* orders to the pirate and making sure they were executed, the slave turned back to his captor with fear rising to a feverish pitch in his tone, causing him to increase the frequency of his stutters, "Uh, it-it's b-b-been d-done. Th-th-the sh-ship h-h-has, um, i-i-i-i-it's s-st-stop-p-pped, a-an-"

The slave never saw the knife. He only heard the laugh that heralded the blade in this stomach. The weapon was twisted deep, causing the Draugr's victim to groan. Vrigadri hugged the slave, digging the knife even deeper, and whispered into the poor man's ear, "Shhh, quiet now, false brother. Your pain will

soon end, and you will arrive in the dark void, where you will be condemned to rest without so much as nightmare or a dream to bother you. You have served our purposes well. Be happy you did not die useless."

With that, the blade was raised upward all the way to the solar plexus and sternum, wreaking havoc on numerous internal organs as it went. As the Draugr removed the blade, the freed-by-death man fell to the floor on top a pirate body he had just been standing over. A man not accustomed to his own tears, the pirate navigator began frantically sobbing and begging incomprehensibly for his life. A wide-eyes and furious-manic expression plastered on his face, Vrigadri, head tilted a little to the right, turned to face the pathetic creature. The Draugr started cackling, startling the pirate and causing him to pause his sobs. There would be no resumption because Vrigadri jammed the knife into the pirate's jugular. The Draugr let go of it for a few seconds, but he decided he did not like how it looked, so before the virtually dead man fell to the ground, Vrigadri used his index and thumb to twist the hilt and blade about 180 degrees, blood careening like a lawn sprinkler's showers onto the radical's face.

The Draugr left the man and the knife on the ground as he went onto that deck's balcony. Smiling and chuckling, he yelled over the raging storm, "Ladies and gentlemen! Prepare to be boarded!"

They responded with a cheer and went about the final stages of their work. Martyrdom was soon to come. A *Bezbholskiy* brought a carmine-painted wooden mask to his commander. The ritual martyr's mask was carved into the image of Aldaric *Vyshboga*, the prominent god of both *Svoboda'Dorozhka* and its more extreme sect of *Bolshoi'Dorozhka*. The Draugr donned the mask with a cackle, and he began his last walk to the lowest decks of the *Dvorshkar*. While traversing the final passageway to the deepest bowel of the ship, he was flanked by fellow *Nyktbholstrakhi* who used fists, rifle-butts, and/or barbwire-bludgeons to beat a haunting rhythm on the passage's walls. The banging reached a crescendo as he entered the very last section of the ship that the Macabean boarders would reach. There he was greeted by a similarly naked Dreadwoman with a voluptuous body. She handed him a detonator and two capsules—One crystal MDMA and the other a cocktail of cruder amphetamines—as he sat down on a crate. After Vrigadri threw the two capsules into the back of his throat, the female Dread knelt down to kiss an oft-desecrated obelisk.

The other Dreads were busying themselves by wiring and concealing the explosives they planned to martyr themselves and slaughter the Macabeans with. Some Dreads, disguised as shackled slaves, were scattered throughout the *Dvorshkar's* decks, forming a subtly meandering trail of human bait to lead the boarders deeper and deeper into the vessel's bowels. A small group of Dreads were placed

on the upper decks of the ship to give the Macabeans the resistance they probably expected. The remaining fanatics distributed drugs among themselves, and some initiated orgies close to where Vrigadri was, and others prepared themselves to feign a light resistance to the Macabeans. By the time everyone was in position, all the bombs were rigged and hidden, all the drugs dosed and depleted, the Dread woman moved into her own position, climbing atop the obelisk. Decadence. Depravity. Debauchery. All these things were demanded of the followers of all *Bolshoi'Dorozhka*, especially those aboard the *Dvorshkar*. For death was soon to come, and Paradise awaited them.

Tlaloc, Theohuanacu Island

Storm clouds could be seen all around in the distance, but the sun still beat down upon Otravan's now-tanned back. Earlier that morning had been the Draugr's first failure, though it was a small one. As Yjhandal's purple eyes pierced into his dark soul, Otravan felt sorrow for the first time in years. His fellow Draugr did not question him as he instinctively unsheathed his blade and sliced at his forearm to bleed the emotion from his mind and soul. All Yjhandal did was bow, then nod, and after a few moments of silence, leave for the west. Lonthod had left an hour before dawn. Now, Otravan was left to rule the *Myrizstrakha* Host in Tlaloc, the city of his rebirth.

The Draugr sat atop the *Myrizstrakha* headquarters. Next to him stood a pirate ally. The man was apparently a "Captain." The Captain had become an essential ally to the fanatic guerillas since they arrived on Theohuanacu. He had been the one to provide the *Nyktbholstrakhi* with lodging and ammunition replenishment. Among those "essentials," access to food stocks and markets was guaranteed. After the first contact with the Captain at Nicaro, the *Myrizstrakha* Host—Before it was split into two, and now three—was assured safe and covert entry to Tlaloc. Apparently, some guards were murdered, but it had been covered up as a theft taking a violent turn. What Otravan and the Captain had had in mind for today, though, was to be a far more sophisticated level of violence. There was nothing to hide about it either, besides the positions of those not directly participating, including the Draugr and pirate commander and their respective reserves. The Draugr had tried to convert and program the Captain, but to no avail, but Otravan guessed that's what made the pirate lord such an invaluable asset. The man held his convictions and would see the ends of his cause no matter the means, even if it meant working with radicals who had no qualms about calling themselves terrorists.

As the sun crawled to its zenith in the sky, the Captain used binoculars to observe the goings-on below. He grimaced in the heat, anticipating. Pulling the binoculars from his eyes and staring off into the distance at the

harbor crowded with Macabean ships, he asked his a-little-too-psychopathic-for-his-own-tastes counterpart, "So when in thee hell are ye boys s'posed to be gittin' our lil oppa-ration going?"

Otravan had learned bits and pieces of the local languages and dialects, mostly just enough to know what his converts were saying, and the Captain had even been gracious enough to help the Aldarminian foreigner learn. Still, the degree of his comprehension was limited and so was his ability to verbally apply his knowledge, so he preferred concise and sometimes tonal dialogue, which is why he exaggerated his inquisitiveness for a single word, "Time?"

"It be two minutes to midday, ye landlubbin' dog."

Nodding as he did, Otravan stood up and snatched the binoculars from the Captain's grasp. The pirate disregarded the rudeness, being a boorish man himself, but the disrespect is what annoyed him the most. He was not used to it, but from his time of working with the Myrizstrakha, he found it best to just go with flow, no matter how mad that flow seemed to be. The Draugr did not look at the harbor like his partner-in-crime, rather he scoped Tlaloc's "downtown." There he saw the bustle of vehicles and people typical of any city in the modern day. Smoke rose from various micro-factories, workshops, and restaurants. Here and there a tree swayed in the winds that blew in from the sea, and to some extent, the storms rolling over the ocean. For a "lucky" few, it was a school day, but for the most part people were going about their busy lives at work. Maybe a few were at play, but as late morning slowly turned into noon, and then afternoon, thousands made their way to grab lunch.

Otravan spied a particularly busy intersection. The traffic moved at a staggered rate there, incessantly stopping and going and stopping and going. A duplex above a café on the far corner of the intersection was the target of the Draugr's eye. There, from a dark, half-draped window, three sparks of light flashed, for the seconds they were there, they almost completely dominated the lenses of Otravan's binoculars. The Dreads of Tlaloc, as well as their pirate comrades, were using pieces of broken glass and mirrors to signal to each other all over the city. Using the unencumbered sun to shine short and coded messages throughout the urban expanse, they evaded the technological advantage of the Macabean occupiers who were combing radio, internet, and cellular channels of communication for any warning of an attack like the one that had occurred previously. Otravan then began scanning the rest of the city for similar flashes of light, and he found many because, for seconds at a time, the city would light up in the middle of the day.

Binoculars now in a single hand at his hip, the Dread commander turned to his pirate

counterpart. A malicious smile and slow nod later, the Captain knew what to do. He pulled a small piece of shattered mirror from his pocket and turned it to the sun and the harbor, shining a signal of his own. A single flash of light from close to a hidden entrance to the harbor that had been used during the night before provided the response he was looking for. The Captain stomped on the surface of the building's roof, and moments later, a heavy-armed, subordinate pirate and a scrawny, bruised slave holding an ornate wooden box appeared from the level below.

The lower-ranking pirate pushed the slave forward. Stumbling a little before he regained his footing from the force of the shove, the slave brought the box to the Captain, who snarled at the slave as he snatched the container from the chattel's grimy hands, "Don'tch ye be dirtying me valyables, ye ugly wretch!"

Turning to his Draugr comrade as the slave and his subordinate returned to the building's top floor below them, the Captain chuckled sarcastically, "Argh, time ta git busy waiting, aye? Car' ta join me as I gits me wits and riggings right before thee big show?"

Otravan nodded, and the two leaders of the Dread fighters and pirate rebels Tlaloc sat down to bask in the sun's sweat-pulling rays. The Captain opened the box, revealing a clear flask of *jinhare*, a pile of well-rolled joints of cannabis, a tiny metal spoon, and a bag of white powder that was probably cocaine. The two outlaw commanders traded swigs from the flask. Occasionally the Captain would make a joke that was mostly gibberish to the Draugr, but the pirate would burst out in a lonely laugh anyways. When the flask was nearly empty, the Captain gave a joint to Otravan and grabbed one for himself. Using a lighter clawed from his tattered coat pocket, the pirate lit his and the Dread's joints. When these were smoked down, the two took turns taking the tiny spoon into the cocaine and taking several bumps of the substance into their nostrils, loud snorts preceding and following each dosage. When they had their fill of that, two more joints would be lit, and when these were burnt to roaches, another foray into the bag was made. They repeated this process for a long time as they waited, the sun slowing creeping its way towards the western horizon.

And so, they waited. And waited. And waited. For the people of Tlaloc, native and Macabean alike, there would be no warning, so they were not bothered by the same anticipation as Otravan and the Captain. Unbeknownst to the innocent, ever since the few signals around noon, bags were being haphazardly dropped, disassembled guns were transferred, assembled firearms and melee weapons were distributed, mysterious packages were being unwrapped and hidden in bathrooms, alleyways, culverts, and under cars. About an hour after noon, though, the first sign that something was wrong occurred. Two pirates disguised as regular civilians used knives to gut a series of

low-level government and law enforcement officials on the outskirts of the city, far away from the harbor. The two murderers were captured with ease, and they confessed, almost falsely, that they had planned the attacks out of convenience because they had learned the officials' routines but they just liked killing. Tlaloc authorities were just happy to have caught two serial killers before they had gotten a chance to wreak havoc on other more law-abiding members of the society.

The noise of the after-work rush hour consumed the city, and Otravan, his mind thoroughly intoxicated, used the binoculars to observe the intersection he was looking at earlier. It was far from the harbor, but close enough so that the Dread and the pirate could observe it if they so wished. The duplex was now shadowed as the sun was no longer in its midday peak, but Otravan was more concerned with the convergence of the streets. Traffic at the intersection was at its usual rush hour full-stop, but crowds of pedestrians were either traversing the busy intersection's sidewalks or mingling with each other, discussing plans for the night now that the labors of their day were finished. Then *boom!* Suddenly, Otravan's view of the intersection was blocked by smoke and fire. The explosion of the four bombs, each on every corner, rocked the intersection and obliterated the nearby vehicles and people. Mangled piles of bodies and smoldering and blazing cars constituted the carnage created the by the callous Dread and pirate collaboration. The fruits of their labor were not yet done, though, and more would soon ripen, and more bloody pulps and fiery productions would soon start quenching the Dreads' thirst for destruction.

Several blocks away from the devastated intersection, and even further away from the harbor, on a similarly busy street that was more prone to quickly moving traffic, a staggered detonation of three bombs caused a pile-up and managed to slay some surrounding pedestrians. As emergency and security vehicles and personnel arrived to the two scenes of slaughter, they were greeted by another sequence of staggered detonations, three to each area. From buildings and alleys behind where these personnel arrived, the first wave of gunmen came to process the survivors. Automatic weapons were like razor-sharp axes to tall blades of grass as they mowed down civilian, cop, and whatever else got in their way. Yet, this was still only the beginning. The first few notes of the crescendo of the cacophonous composition of chaos.

Far away from the building Otravan and the Captain were at, so far that only a minuscule corner of it could be seen with the naked eye if it squinted hard enough and had close-to-perfect vision, there was a hospital. This sanctuary of the sick and hurt was a special part of the plan. If it was incapacitated as a medical center, the ability of the city to handle the soon-to-rise death and injured tolls would be severely crippled. Thus, it was a job

assigned specifically to a selected dozen of Otravan's favored *Bezbholskiyi*. Using Molotov cocktails, machine guns, and machetes courtesy of their pirate comrades, they cut a macabre path through the medical facility, building barricades of equipment, bodies, and debris, at the entrances and throughout the halls of every floor. A particularly sadistic *Bezbholskiy* gave his arms to one of his brothers, so the madman could drag patients up and down the halls, giving them anesthetics and beatings whenever he felt like stopping and "playing." Upon reaching the highest floor of the hospital, the marauding Dreads disabled the roof access and elevators, and then they made barricades in the stairwells. The fanatics were making a fortress for the inevitable siege to retake the hospital. They positioned themselves at windows on every side so they could begin firing on civilians below and any security forces that would arrive. The same ultra-sadist *Bezbholskiy*, having regained his arms from his brother and after binding three of his torture victims to desks surrounding him, found to his immense pleasure that an ambulance was arriving from a call unrelated to recent events. The Dread waited patiently for the EMT's to retrieve their patient from the back of the ambulance before he opened fire.

The carmine-red herring almost dangling in security's faces, there were only a few more instruments left in the orchestra that had yet to play. A police department was welcomed into the symphony by an explosion in its garage and a horde of attackers. A gas station erupted in a fireball, marking the ending of the twilight of terror and the beginning of a nightmare. Gunmen positioned across the city's outskirts began working their way into the heart of the city, indiscriminately killing whatever stood before them as if unarmed men, women, and children were pests to be exterminated. Molotov cocktails formed trails of fire through the city streets. After a nearby building's gas line was used to detonate a smaller bomb, thus causing it to catch fire, an apartment complex was turned into a sniper's nest for pirate marksmen to pick off survivors and bystanders alike. Towers of black smoke climbed and blended into the darkening night sky, and when it finally seemed to the radicals and pirate rebels on the ground on the opposite side of their city that the bulk of security forces were being deployed to their areas, four flares streaked successively into the night. The finale was signaled.

Behind Otravan and the Captain, a series of explosions seemed to daisy chain and slash through the port's docks and construction areas. The pirate's local knowledge and connections to sympathizers who worked there had been key to the success of the night before and morning earlier operation of placing the explosives. Though he knew it was coming, the pirate Captain jumped in surprise at the blasts. Cackling and jumping up and down, he listened as more gunfire joined the crescendo, sounding as the Dread-and-pirate attack force assaulted the port and the security within. Meanwhile, throughout the city, teen boys and

girls either paid by or converted into the Dreads' and pirates' cause graffitied "Myrizstrakha," "Otravabrymja," "Landlubbers Beware," and "Imperials Begone" on countless buildings across Tlaloc. The message was written, signed, delivered, and heard clear.

Excited and inebriated, the Captain slurred his admiration and appreciation for Otravan and his Dreads, "I can't believe it! I jus' can't! Ye landlubbin' colt basserds! Yer ah bunsh of brut'ly breelliant psychopathic gen-yusses! Aargh! I said ya couldn't n' har ye are proofing me wrong. I thinks I shud make first mates ov ye all."

The two conductors of the chaos below soaked in the sounds and sights of their success. If Tlaloc survived as a stable city under Macabean control, it was unlikely that the scars of that day and night would ever heal. Though Otravan and the Captain did not know, Draugr Vrigadri had beaten them to the punch for displaying the kind of terror that made the members of *Myrizstrakha* the very things that kept Aldarminians up at night. Where Vrigadri had been the staggering left lead jab from an orthodox heavy-weight, though, Otravan had been the knockout cross-right rear hook combo.

Reference

Last edited by [Aldarminia](#) on Wed Jun 13, 2018 10:11 am, edited 3 times in total.

This is FanT/PT/MT/PMT/Nightmare, you can find more Cajun Cossack Slavs IN SPACE! here:

[Vrot Kaspara](#) (Xenos included!!!)

First High Roller of the NationStates Future Tech Discord Server
Founder and Boss of the Losieda Bratva Criminal Syndicate

[Truths](#)



Imbrinium
Diplomat

Posts: 589
Founded: Mar 03, 2008
Ex-Nation

by [Imbrinium](#) » Tue Nov 22, 2016 3:03 pm

[QUOTE](#)

Southern Imbrinium

In the largest dry lake bed In the kingdom sits the largest joint air base in the kingdom this base had the entire fleet of LY912s, to most this would be smartest thing to do is to have all of your eggs in one place but there was another base for the navy's LY912s but it has been closed to rebuild the runaways do to the stress that the runways were starting to collapse under the pressure of the landings of the naval LY912s, until the time that the base is reopened this is the only place the kingdom's largest bombers are able to land.

The day started off with a cold breeze with ground crews working under the bright lights of portable light trailers and hanger lights. While the base was too big to keep a secret, operations were kept as secret as possible. The latest intelligence was being gone over by the commands Intel people with maybe the need to change any details to the plan. The major problem facing the aircrews is finding the Scandinavian navy after flying some many thousands of miles, there was that problem then there was the fact that the pencil pushers had predicted that maybe 40% to 50% of the bombers might not return home after this strike.

This was the day the day that operation Camulus take place the longest bomber flight in the history of the kingdom. Not all of the bombers could take off at once or stage to take off at once the mission would take almost 12hrs before all of the bombers are in the air headed to Gholgoth.

0500

The first flight's lineup loaded down with their load of death from above, but not all of the weapons had warheads some would act as decoys and jamming to protect to formations from fighters and anti-aircraft missiles. One by one the large bombers with their JETO rocketed into the sky headed north toward an uncertain mission.

The bomber force will form into four waves of a hundred bombers. As the bomber groups approach their bombers will spread out and form smaller packs to launch their missile loads before turning for the long journey home.

1000km outside the regional protection zone "Viper 234" and royal air force LY912 call sign Hondo was flying at 38,000 feet at 1.5 mach when a warning light came on in the cockpit.

The pilot came over to internal comms.

"Hey, guys I have a warning light up here on the reactor you guys down there following this?"

"Yeah roger we got it to we are doing a system check on the system doesn't seem to be a major system fault, though."

"Roger keep me posted."

"Will do Major"

Seconds after that the reactor scrambled shutting down the engines, and warnings and alarms started going off in the cockpit of the aircraft, the aircraft shook like it was hit by a missile. The crew started to look over the systems as the pilots tried to start the conventional engines which should have started as soon as the nuclear engines shut off. At the altitude, the LY-912 was flying the and the weight and air there was nothing to keep the heavy bomber up beside speed and engines well the engines were now gone and the speed was dropping quickly.

The copilot started to do some quick calculations.

"Sir we don't get the conventional engines started by 10,000 feet we lost her, the weight and terminal velocity will rip the plane apart."

"Roger"

The stall warning started to go off and the pilot nosed down the bomber to increase the speed but with that, he lost more altitude. With time fading fast the crew worked hard to figure out why the engines didn't start and how to get them started now.

"Car'gún Díelaht this Viper 234 declaring mayday, we've lost engines and have not been able to start the conventional engines"

Both pilots were now starting to fight the plane more and more to keep it in the air flying enough to keep control in case the engines got started. Minutes passed the pilots were soaked in sweat from the fight with the plane and stress they could be lost at sea.

At 15,000 feet the power gauges started up and the roar came over the plane as the engines started and the power came back online. at 9,500 feet the pilots finally had enough power to place the plane in level flight and one problem and now for the next a place to land, they were too far from the region to turn around and with no land mass anywhere around there was little chance they would ever see home again.

The navigation office came over the radio with a thought.

"We could try for Car'gún Díelaht they can handle us"

"Nav how far are we and do we have enough fuel?"

The navigation office looked over the map and punched up fuel stock and distance.

"We could make it they would need to refuel us"

"I'll make the call"

"Car'gún Díelaht control this is Viper 234 we are declaring an emergency we have engines and enough fuel to almost make it"

The First wave;

The first wave of bombers had crossed the border and were now in Gholgoth. The lead bombers used it secret text message system to send a message the lead command ships of both The Golden Thorne's navy and the Royal Imbrinium's Navy.

The message was simple. "We've arrived with no mercy"

Within minutes after that message the data link uploaded and updated with the latest enemy data and status. The locations where noted and the flight adjusted its flight path to intercept the Scandinavian navy.

Last edited by [Imbrinium](#) on Tue Nov 22, 2016 4:28 pm, edited 1 time in total.

When I was young I used to pray for a bike, then I realized that God doesn't work that way, so I stole a bike and prayed for forgiveness. "Deus vult" is Latin for "God wills it" and it was the cry of the people at the declaration of the First Crusade by Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in 1095.

#MAGA, WWG1WGA , Q



The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by [The Macabees](#) » Sat Dec 03, 2016 9:47 am



Somewhere Off the Southern Coast of Theohuanacu

KN1620 'Dragunvorix'...

I.

The spotlight's beam pierced through the pitch black night like a solid bar of fire, interrupted only by the rhythm of thunder and lightning. It was raining hard, as it had for weeks now, and the sea roared with violence as giant waves smashed against and over the hull of the KN1907 *Dragunvorix*. Named after an ancient, ancient general whose exploits were now relegated to an obscure corner of Macabean history, the *Morsky-Orol* light cruiser seemed out of its element there fighting against *Hurakán* 'Mateo.' The light revealed the heavy, perpetual fall of rain as it bombarded the agitated waters of the Sea of Chalchiuhylicute. At least the men, safe within that steel trap of a ship, were spared the skin-flailing winds that accompanied the hurricane.

"It's somewhere around here." The sailor, wearing the trim, tapered *Kriermada* uniform, operated the spotlight as he spoke. It had a camera attached to it, so that he and the two other men gathered around him could see the so far uneventful live footage.

One of the two other men was *Kapitán* Diego Rosales, a rare — albeit decreasingly — example of a territory-born commanding officer in the *Kriermada*. Unlike the *Ejermacht*, the Macabean navy did not segregate provincials and territorials into their own units. Instead, the *Kriermada* rose the barriers to commissioning by requiring graduation from a two-year war college. These were, of course, non-existent in the territories until the very first one opened in Belmonte, former Safehaven. Rosales was too old to be a *kapitán* and to have also attended schooling. The Havenic had instead served as an enlisted man in his own country's navy during the War of Golden Succession, fighting and eventually captured during the Siege of Targul Frumos. Born in Levante, he joined the *Kriermada* after the war to protect his family's holdings in the new territories and after

three years was commissioned as an *Alfezin*. Now, six years later he was commanding his own ship, aided by a rapid promotion necessitated by the empire's sudden mobilization. Few men of his kind had found so much success in an institution that was only slowly abandoning its deep rooted racism.

The other was *Teníet* Derek Hovjak, born and raised in the rich province of Beda Fromm. He was far away from home, though, and his family would barely recognize him if they even knew he was alive. He wore a uniform of a different kind than the other two men. Rosales wore, of course, the dress of an officer, but Hovjak wore true soldier's clothing. What he wore was tough and made for wear, its colors mostly black with streaks of a dark gray. They were the combat uniform of a *Grup Koda* operative. *Grup Koda XIX*, to be more precise.

"Yup, there it is," said the spotlight operator.

The display showed the dark hull of a large fishing vessel rocking heavily in the waves. Its lights, including those of the ship's bridge, were turned off and there was nothing else to suggest that there was still life aboard. Indeed, why would any live man — a captain of a ship, no less — keep his vessel unattended in waters like those that engulfed it now? Attempts to contact the ship via radio had all failed and the signal lamp had never been responded to. And yet mere hours before it had been moving with clear intent and bearing directly towards the *Dragunvorix*, and it had accepted communication from both the *Dragunvorix* and its sister ship the KN.1908 *Juan Lucía*, the latter of which had been approaching the large trawler from the aft. It was all very strange. The spotlight passed over the front of the hull upon which was imprinted in thick letters, but barely visible in the storm, *Dvorshkar*.

Rosales' right eyebrow was arched in suspicion. "This is a trap, without a doubt a trap." The evidence for such a statement was counter-intuitive. The pirates repurposed the hulls decommissioned destroyers and cruisers, which many nations in this world were ready to sell the just about anybody. Whether directly or indirectly, through a third world government serving as an intermediary, the pirates had gotten their hands on true warships. Civilian vessels were simply not their style. Still, the presence of such a vessel was a curiosity, as most commercial shipping, fishing trawlers, cargo ships, or otherwise, had ceased well before *Huracán* Mateo. Indeed, the blockade against Palenque and Tiwanaku had made these unattractive waters for merchants other than those looking to resupply the cities' besieged defenders, and those were the kind of buccaneers who sailed in well armed destroyers. So what the heck was a large, commercial fishing trawler doing playing dead in the middle of the century's biggest storm?

"This would be a strange tactic for a pirate," said Hovjak, whose eyes were glued to the screen. The spotlight swept back over the ship's bridge and then fixated on it. The *Dragunvorix* came in just parallel of the trawler, sailing perhaps just under eight hundred meters off the dead vessel's port side. The fishing ship was being juggled mercilessly by the sea's tall, unrelenting waves, unresponsive to the chaos around it. "Perhaps it is best to wait it out and see if it keeps moving if we stay back and trail it."

The *kapitán* shook his head. "No, if they're pirates we cannot allow them to escape. We'll lose them in this storm. If they're civilians, then I will not leave them here to die. In any case, I'm convinced we're dealing with the former. Either way, we board the boat."

"In this weather?" Hovjak asked incredulously. "We could be caught by a wave before we even made it to the deck of the other ship. And for what? We know that an hour ago there were at least some poor bastards alive in there, sure. But, they haven't responded since and who knows what we'll find in there. This isn't a good day to die, *kapitán*. I vote we wait them out."

"Who the hell said you had a vote, *Teníet*?" Harsh words from the

commanding officer. The two looked at each other. The *kapitán* was right, of course, this was a military ship, not a democracy. Of course, being told his opinion did not matter was not exactly the type of comment that sat well with a warrior accustomed to the fierce independence of a special forces small unit leader. "Anyways," continued the captain, "we have a duty to board every ship, precisely because those that sail these waters tend to host the pirate enemy. Just because there's a damn storm doesn't mean you're exempt from that duty."

"You know it's a trap, I know it's a trap, so why are we going to play into it?" said the other officer, his voice thick with the passionate exasperation of a man who knew he pushing a heavy boulder up a steep hill. "It's a goddamn fishing trawler. We're in the middle of a goddamn storm, to boot! **This is too dangerous.**"

Rosales eyed the man. "I thought you were *Grup Koda*?" he asked, a mocking smile on his face.

"*Fuck you*," spat Hovjak, "*sir*." His eyes spat fire. He turned to face Rosales full on, while the sailor who was seated looked around awkwardly and with the intent to avoid the confrontation by seemingly looking at everything else simultaneously. The *teníet* went on as if the enlisted man wasn't even there, "If this made the least bit of sense I would have no problem with it, but we don't even know what's waiting for us on that ship and you want to send twelve guys to board it in the middle of a damn hurricane. The largest hurricane in over a hundred years, no less. You see where my problem is, sir?"

"Our duty as soldiers doesn't end when it rains, *Teníet*," Rosales barked back. He turned away to look back at the screen. "Now, you will lead your men onto the vessel and you will verify the status of its occupants, and then take control of it. Transport will be ready in forty-five. You better be, too." he ordered. With that, the *kapitán* turned to address other sailors elsewhere in the command room, who were attending to radar displays and all other sorts of equipment.

Behind Rosales, Hovjak fumed silently, and muttered, "This is a mistake. Something is not right and I can feel it." The sailor who was manning the spotlight looked at him in sympathy, but probably more so out of concern of forcing anyone to climb onto the deck in the middle of a storm like this. After staring at the display a few seconds longer, Hovjak turned around and walked out of the room while muttering some more.

II.

With broad shoulders, narrow waist, the *teníet* was by no means a small man. Most of his body was covered by his black and gray uniform, but one could see scars running along his neck and several thick ones carved down his face. He did not look a man to be afraid of war. Indeed, he had seen enough of it to crave it. Despite the poorly healed wounds that crawled his skin, Hovjak was still a young man — 35 if the official records were to be trusted, and they rarely were for soldiers of Hovjak's kind — and his success was determined by his skills, tenacity, and his special adeptness for combat and leadership. These traits came with demons of their own, which perhaps only drove him towards war even more. But, for all of his affinity and lust for violence, he did not seek death. And there was a feeling at the bottom of his gut that told him that only death would come from boarding the *Dvorshkar*.

As he walked down the passageway towards a ladder that would take him to the deck above, various sailors doing their business stopped to snap at attention and salute him. The *teníet* ignored them as he bulldozed his way through. Climbing the ladder — a staircase that led to the next floor (deck) above —, a sailor standing guard opened the hatch for him and then closed it behind him as Hovjak walked through. From there, he turned right and then made his way down a passageway with the same authority as before, but this time stopping before an open door.

The wide double-set door led to a large compartment where a small group of soldiers, dressed similarly to Hovjak, sat around three small tables that were screwed into the deck. "Officer on deck!" one yelled, as they all stood at attention, one sending his hand of playing cards flying as he jerked up in a rush. The man grimaced slightly. It was a damn good hand.

"At ease." They relaxed a bit, pulling their hands behind the small of their backs. As they looked at him, Hovjak walked towards a large brown desk clamped down near the far right bulkhead. The compartment was large, with the rear bulkhead almost forty meters back and lined with a row of sixteen two-story bunk beds. Unlike other places in the ship, the overhead was actually a comfortable nine or ten inches above the top bunk — enough to comfortably lay down and not have one's nose touch cold metal. Most of the deck was open space, decorated with furniture here-and-there to allow the men some place to sit during their off-hours. The area certainly smelled as if thirty-two men had been staying here for weeks with minimal bathing and upkeep, and while that was true of most of the *Dragunvorix*, the stench was especially thick here. Enough to make the *teníet* wrinkle his nose.

"What's up, sir?" asked one of the soldiers. "Looks like you're having a bad day."

Hovjak ignored the man as he headed straight for that ugly plastic desk they called his office. He opened the top drawer on the right to reveal a green-blue glass smoking piece and a small orange lighter. It was apparently packed and ready to go, because he brought the bubbler to his lips, lit the lighter atop the bowl, and proceeded to inhale deeply as the water inside the pipe gurgled. Closing his eyes, he let the smoke flow through his trachea and into his mouth, keeping it there for maybe half a minute before releasing a thin white cloud of smoke. He took another hit and then another.

"Shit, *Teníet*, been a bad *and* long day, huh?" It was the same soldier who had spoken before. Hovjak ignored him, just like he had before.

The *teníet* put the glass piece back into the drawer, closed it, and then opened the one right below it. From this one he took what looked like a small locket without a chain. He opened it to two black and white photos, one of a woman whose hat and hair style were of a different era than this one and another of a young girl. He knew one was his grandmother and the other his mother, even if he had never met any of the two. Hovjak had never met his father either. The locket had been passed onto him by a man who claimed to have been with his father in a Weigari prisoner of war camp. The camp was soon liberated by the Dienstadi armies sweeping over the *Kríerstats*, but by then his father had either died of hunger or had been executed. Luckily, the locket had survived him. Apparently, his friend — the man who had eventually found a then-adolescent Hovjak to give it to him — had stuck the locket up his rectum, knowing the camp guards wouldn't find it there. It was a tall sacrifice and Hovjak was eternally grateful because, truth be told, the people in that locket were the only real family he ever had.

The same soldier who had spoken up twice before did so a third time. "Ah *shit*, it's *that* kind of day."

At that, Hovjak *did* lift his head. "You sure talk a lot, Rikards. Why don't you just shut the fuck up for a minute and let a man relax. Fucking A." He put the locket in an inside pocket of his uniform jacket, closed the jacket back up, and then sat down in an oak chair, also screwed right onto the deck. He opened the top drawer again and took out the bubbler, this time taking a paper clip and a stump-like aluminum cylinder. The contraption had a little, folded lever attached to the top and he opened it in half by twisting at its center. Inside, sitting atop a wire mesh, was a small fortune of ground up cannabis. He took some between his thumb, index, and middle fingers, and as these hovered over the bowl piece he released

these tiny, fuzzy green and purple ground pieces. They neatly packed themselves into the bowl, but before it was ready he unfolded the paper clip and used it to dig underneath the cannabis to clear the stem leading into water further down the piece. Before lifting the bubbler back to his mouth, he looked back up at his men and grumbled, "We got a mission for the night."

There were many cheers and few complaints. With the storm raging outside, the men had been holed up in the *Dragunvorix* for over a week now and they were itching to stretch out their legs in a fight. Hovjak couldn't blame them, despite the knot that had formed deep within his stomach. That feeling that something was wrong about this whole mission persisted and refused to be shaken. Still, it felt good to know that they'd be off this boat for at least a little while. He took a couple of hits while the men continued to celebrate their apparent liberation from this steel prison. Still at ease, they were still standing where they had risen earlier, but they slapped each other on the back and started to talk between each other, so much so that the volume in the room gradually rose until Hovjak could barely hear himself think.

"**Quiet down!**" boomed his voice over the commotion. "Listen up, I'm just taking eight of you, which means you, third *sektón*." There were some groans from those who weren't going. Apart from just wanting to get off the damn boat, there was a special meaning to being chosen to go to battle with the *Koda* leader. It was a status of privilege and honor, as if favored by their commander for their prowess and skill. "That means suit up! The rest of ya, get back to whatever you were doin'."

Most sat down and went back to playing cards, or to their conversations or whatever they were doing, while those of third *sektón* went to their lockers to fix their uniforms and grab any personal items they wanted to take. These were often symbolic or religious in nature, much like Hovjak's locket, which was still safely tucked away within his jacket. He could feel it against his chest and it gave him a certain warmth, a feeling that he didn't get very often. Others took with them necklaces with an attached three-armed rounded spiral or another religious symbol, depending on where they were born. Some stashed away a photo of a loved one or of a child, although a *Koda* rarely married or procreated until after their service. The life of a *Koda* was not conducive to a loving relationship with another human. They had seen so much war that they yearned for it, as it was the only thing that could bring them certainty in this world, and as a result a *Koda* eschewed peaceful society. But, civilization was the hallmark of humanity. Thus, *Koda* were better called beasts and it was best to not bring someone you live into a life that could hardly be called that. It was something that came with the job, the adventure, and the status.

Hovjak himself took a couple more puffs from his glass piece and then placed it back in the top drawer of his desk, where he clamped it down so that it wouldn't move around with the motion of the sea. Drug use was common throughout the *Fuermak*, cannabis especially. It was [a time-proven](#) tool to help calm the nerves of a group of men who were constantly exposed to the worst of the elements, natural and human. It helped to reduce social tensions and treated the anxiety that came with this particular line of work. Usually, a soldier tried to restrict drug use to *after* a mission, but hell, thought Hovjak, there might not always be an after.

III.

Within five minutes, all eight men of third *sektón* were lined up outside along the right bulkhead of the passageway. The *grup* commander met them out there as they fell in line.

Hovjak led them through the various corridors and up a number of ladders, until they had reached a large warehouse almost on the opposite side of the ship, towards the aft. Most of it was blocked off by the walls of a cage that extended from the ceiling down to the

floor, and behind the steel mesh of the cage walls one could see rows upon rows of weaponry, ordnance, and equipment. Even more to the rear were four lines of eight repair stations, each sporting a suit of power armor before it. There was a solitary station that faced the other thirty-two. Each suit was fully assembled, except for a backpiece that rested on a stand next to each station. By default, power armor was painted a radar-absorbing dark, matte green, with undertones of brown and gray, but most soldiers customized their suits over time. Some had theirs painted with red, orange, and yellow flames. Others stuck to more subtle improvements, like stripes and symbols, which decorated the armored panels much like how tattoos decorate the body. Many displayed their kill counts, although typically only the most morbid kept count so publicly.

An armorer on the other side of the cage opened the wide doors for them by pressing a button on the console before her. "Heading out in *this* storm, *Teníet*?" she asked as they walked through to the other side.

"Yep," was all that Hovjak said in return. He wasn't in the mood for talking. Some of the other men nodded and greeted her, but otherwise they too made their way to their stations without much dialogue. They were about to go to war and they were all gradually slipping into peak state, where their focus, passion, and energy were trained on the only outcome that mattered now: getting in and out of the mission alive.

Hovjak walked to his own suit, which was the one all alone looking at the other four rows of eight — the *grup* commander's station. Like the others, it was already almost fully covered with mounted armored plates. These were sleek-looking modules made out of a matrix composite of titanium, pre-stressed ceramics, and glass epoxies, among other materials. Made to be lightweight, they were rated against most conventional small arms up to even some 12.7mm ammunition. What mattered more, to some, than their rating was their size and weight. Macabean armor was not necessarily bulky, instead placing an emphasis on the agility and acceleration needed to dodge and manoeuvre. The back of the suit was bare and Hovjak could see the light gray frame underneath, with various mounts and clamps protruding from it, their thin paint worn and stripped from use. The frame was open and held up by thick, metal chains, which were themselves tightly fastened to the repair station, allowing him to step in and out with ease.

He inspected the suit first, tugging on modules here and there to make sure they were properly fixed to the frame. The helmet of his suit sported a crest that ran from the front of the apex down to the upper back. On the helmet's 'face' there was but one 'eye' where the right human eye would be, but it wasn't an eye at all. If one took a closer look, one would see a cluster of sensors — a rangefinder, night and thermal vision, among others. There were dozens of other sensors placed throughout the helmet, usually embedded, and along the lower rim there were a series of encased vents. He checked these to ensure that they were clean, his fingers hitting on a micro-grate that would help protect him from dangerous external elements.

Hovjak swept his hand over the helmet's 'mouth,' which was really a group of speakers, microphones, and vents. Tubes stretched from the rear to the front to facilitate the distribution of fresh oxygen. A hood that at touch seemed made of sandpaper, but at sight looked sleek and smooth, covered the helmet leaving all but the face a shadow.

Much of this was already inspected digitally, but Hovjak was the kind of man who saw value in doing things the old fashion way. A powered, armored suit was an incredible thing that too many took for granted. There was a warrior's art to fighting in a suit that not many cared to master. Of course, all soldiers were trained in the art, but mastering something took excessive dedication and not many were willing to make the sacrifices to be a true scholar. The *teniet* was a long way's off from mastery himself, but to call him a student was an understatement. Hovjak was one with the suit, the suit one with him.

He swept over the right shoulder module of the suit, its texture gritty and rough from the 'cloth' — made of the same material as that of the hood — that snugly covered it. The armor underneath may have protected him from bullets, but it was that material that helped avoid being shot at at all, working both to limit his own signature and to hide the wearer from the enemy's own sensors. Slowly he made his way across the chest and then down to the legs, meticulously studying even the minutest detail.

Once he was satisfied with his inspection he stepped back around to the back, where he easily climbed in through the open frame. First his legs went in, then pushing his head into the helmet, and his torso following from there. Once his head was in the helmet he lost his sight and gained true vision. He saw what the suit saw, there was no intermediary between his eye and the display. Along his arms, legs, neck, and chest, dozens of needles and wires plunged into his skin, some penetrating as deep as the muscle, others down the bone. These connected his nervous system with the suit, unifying body, mind, and machine. He felt at ease, as if he were finally home. The needles had already begun to inject a cocktail of drugs to suppress anxiety, stress, and fear, and to bring about a chemical balance optimized for the needs of a warrior. Hovjak relaxed as the suit did the rest for him.

Long steel cables, holding the suit upright while it had been open, snapped tight, pulling the suit's shoulders back to close it. Hovjak's spine was yanked back until he stood completely straight. Suddenly, an arm, equipped with claw and drill, lifted the rear armor module and secured it in place. This piece was thicker than the others because it carried the powerpack and could also be used as storage in place of a tactical pack. It also weighed the most, although this was compensated for by the fact that most of the lifting was done by the suit regardless. Once the back plate was in place and secured, the chains released themselves, allowing the *teníent* to move freely as the suit's servos whizzed with glee at his every movement.

Hovjak was always last to be ready and so the eight men chosen to ride with him were already lined up in front of him, their backs to the stations, by the time his suit was fully ready and he had grabbed his weaponry. Already, they were being conditioned for the mission, injected chemicals coursing through their bloodstream. "Close your eyes," he ordered, his voice emanating from the suit's speakers, as his eyelids slowly shut and his brain consequently ordered the suit to cease displaying.

The men did the same. And then, together, they began to take quick, short, successive breaths through their nose, almost as if snorting. They did this thirty times, and then thirty more, and finally thirty more. "Priming," they called it. Through an internal comm, not audible outside the team's power armor, he told them to think of what they were grateful for. For two minutes they did this in silence. The men relaxed, the muscles in their neck releasing the tension that inevitably came with knowing that today may be your last. For two minutes, they thought of their families — if they had any —, the comrades they had left behind on distant battlefields, and the memories that brought them comfort and gratitude. Finally, as the second minute mark struck, Hovjak told them to think of what they were about to accomplish. They thought of the men, perhaps women and children, they were going to kill, of their martial prowess, of their history of violent success. They thought of great of fighters they were, of how well they killed with a rifle, and how well they maimed with their fists. From out of their head and into their soul traveled Ego, until after another two minutes they all opened their eyes in concert.

"Make your move!" yelled the *teníent* aloud, his voice blasting and booming via the speakers, coming off the walls and startling even the armourer across the warehouse.

In unison, they made their move. Some pounded titanium fist into titanium palm. Others brought their forearms up to tense their biceps, faceless masks hiding the muscle contortions beneath. Whatever

sound they made was contained, all comms except those of the *teníent* muted. They did it again, celebrating and pushing testosterone through their body.

"Attention!" cracked Hovjak, his voice a whip as they all, within a heartbeat, straightened out as his command. "Fall out, on me."

He took them back out of the warehouse, their feet falling with heavy thuds on the steel deck. They continued their aftward journey, finally ascending a cluster of ladders until they climbed to a final wideset hallway. On the other end was a thick, solid door that opened automatically as they walked closer to it.

IV.

A torrent of rain gushed inside with the force of a thousand furies as soon the hatch to the helicopter pad opened. Forking lightning came down from the sky, illuminating chiaroscuro clouds, as they thundered in a war-drum procession. A sea swallow's rotors struggled against high winds, its powerful engines almost insignificant against the backdrop of the *hurakán*. The power packs on their backs pushed the men forward, but even assisted as they were it seemed as if the storm was doing everything it could to push them back inside as they slowly trudged forward. Hovjak, along with the *sektón* leader, waited for the other seven soldiers to climb aboard until they themselves followed, first the NCO and then he. No sooner had the *teníent* lifted his back leg into the bird had the pilot decided to take-off. They were eager to get in and out of the storm as soon as possible, for this was dangerous weather. Very, very dangerous weather. The kind that rotor-craft tended to crash in.

Despite the cocktail treatment that suit constantly pushed into his veins, the needless risk of the mission was concerning enough to probe into Hovjak's mind. He grimaced. Now was not the time for doubts anyhow.

The trip across to the *Dvorshkar*, no matter how short it was, was terrifying. Winds swept under the tilt-rotor, pulling it up and then down in sudden, unexpected patterns. They were jerked left, then right. It was a miracle that the rotors did not stop and that the engines did not cease, but they pressed on. The air was made of flails, striking against the metal walls of the sea swallow and against that of their suits, as if they were being lashed a thousand times over. With every dramatic dip towards the ocean, as the transport was pushed down as if by a press, came that onslaught of butterflies that rises in one's stomach and with it that subsequent feeling of euphoria as the freshly pumped drugs took effect.

They finally made it across, against all odds as it was. The fishing trawler had no space large enough to land the sea swallow with any stability and so the *koda* would have to repel onto the boat's deck. Repel, in this case, was an archaic term. The legs of their armor were calibrated and fitted to sustain hard landings. Coming in as close as possible, the tilt-rotors hovered perhaps no more than thirty feet above the trawler's deck. From there, the soldiers jumped off one-by-one on either side. The *teníent* was first to drop, followed by his NCO, and then by the rest of the men, the ship's deck shuddering with every landing.

If the boat was small enough, their arrival had just been announced. A feature, not a bug. The pirates were accustomed to *Grup Koda*, and sometimes just the sound of being boarded was enough to coerce a surrender. When it didn't work, it would at least unnerve the enemy, much in the same way the war cry did on ancient fields.

"Greken, take point," ordered Hovjak.

"Greken, take point!" repeated the NCO.

The man named Greken led the nine-man column up the deck, then up a ladder and onto the upper deck. Lightning continued to crack

overhead and the heavens clapped with thunder. The heavy downpore threatened to sweep them off their feet, if the waves that crashed against the hull did not threaten to throw them all overboard first. The sea's roll rocked the ship from side to side, and every swing seemed like the moment the *Dvorshkar* would capsize. One treacherous step after another, they continued forward until the group reached a dark gray hatch at the foot of the trawler's superstructure. Greken checked it for booby traps, then quickly turned the lever to open the door.

Inside, laying there with his back against the wall, was what looked like a slave, bloody ankles and wrists bound in chains which were anchored to the bulkheads. The man was alive and even in the dark, dark storm all could see his wide eyes of fear and pain. One soldier knelt down as he came in through the door, placing his helmet's microphone close to the man's mouth to see if he could pick up any of his whispers. Nothing. The soldier shook his head at the others. The...slave, they supposed...didn't want to speak, or perhaps he couldn't. The soldier attending to him reached for the chains and snapped them in half. While the others lined up along either bulkhead in two groups of four, this one looked for wounds to check for the source of the blood. The wrists were red, as if they had been chaffed by the shackles, but they were not in especially poor condition. The man had scars, old wounds, and even fresh ones, but nothing to explain how he had become drenched in blood that was as fresh as that very day.

"This blood is not his, *brigadier*." The soldier spoke through a private channel shared by the *sektón* and the *teníet*. The slave, for his part, lay there looking at nine titanium-clad soldiers standing there in silence, with one inspecting his body with armored hands. "He does not speak." He paused. "There's something else. His muscles, they're healthy."

The NCO, who was to the back of the four-man column on the opposite bulkhead, turned to the *teníet*, who was across from him. "A well-fed slave? Atypical, no sir?"

"Very," was all Hovjak said about that. That bad feeling at the pit of his stomach resurged, and the drugs kicked in to kill the indecision. He looked down the passageway. It led to a ladder on the right, what looked like an elevator more towards its center flanked by a number of doors, and another ladder on the opposite end. "Let's move. Jacobsen," — the one crouched, inspecting and tending to the slave — "hold here and secure our rear."

"Rodger that, sir."

The *teníet's* *ekipé* — fire team — moved out first at his orders, with the soldier Greken still on point. Weapons tightly against their shoulders, they slowly walked their way up to the edge of the ladder closest to them. Greken crouched and then swiveled to look up the staircase, the soldier behind him bending his torso to provide the lead man cover. "Another one, sir"

On the opposite bulkhead, the other *ekipé* was moving forward along that wall, trotting across the ladder and then crossing the passageway to array themselves on the bulkhead on the other side. Once there, both teams turned their corners to climb the stairway. Another one of the soldiers broke off to attend to this slave, also shackled to the walls and in similar condition to the other one. This one couldn't speak either, or maybe he chose not to. But he too looked healthy and the source of his blood was just as ambiguous. "Two white boys," said the soldier, who was still checking for wounds. This time he left the man in chains. No point freeing him if he had nowhere to go. Besides, this way they'd be able to find him later.

The *sektón* went on, leaving the slave where they had found him.

They continued to climb the flights of the ladder, intending to move directly to the bridge, but they soon stopped at the foot of a deck

littered with the bodies of the dead. Mutilated, torn apart, and carved open, they were carcasses in all senses of the word. There was another slave tied up amidst the carnage, shirtless, his broad muscles straining against the loss of blood as it drained from his arms, which were suspended high above them with hands tied to a railing that ran down the bulkhead. The soldiers, of course, could not smell a thing, protected as they were by their helmets and the oxygen system, and it the shock he must have been in could be the only thing that could explain how the chained man was still conscious when the smell of the corridor must have been disgustingly overwhelming. Had he experienced mass death before? It led one to wonder who were these slaves and where had they come from?

Where had they come from? Indras? The skin tones seemed to fit that profile. Hovjak slapped his NCO lightly on the arm, the back of his metal gauntlet striking the metal module. The *brigadier* nodded and walked over to the slave, maneuvering around the dismembered corpses littering the blood washed deck. A head rolled right off a dead man as the Macabean accidentally kicked it, apparently severing any last strands of skin that still attached head to body. One of the other *koda* followed it to a wall that he started to study, although all attention was off him and on the slave.

The *brigadier* crouched down and put one metallic knee on the floor with a muffled thud. "Are you Indran, son?" inquired the NCO, the suit translating and communicating it out loud in the right language. No answer. He asked if he was Kashubian. No answer. Theohuacan? Not that either, apparently. At least it fit with the facts. Slaves from those quarters were usually half-starved, packed like sardines into warships built to house their crew. In Dienstadi, he asked, "What the hell happened here? Whoever is this, are they still on the ship? Say something, dammit, anything. Anything at all you goddamn mo—"

"Brigadier!" barked Hovjak. "Relax." The NCO had a ferocious temper and a short fuse. It's what made him a good killer.

"Sorry, sir." The *brigadier* looked at the slave, whose arms were still bound high above his head. He looked around him, at the dead strewn about, and shook his head. "What the hell happened here?" He moved to grasp the two chains fastened to the man's arms to snap them apart, servos whizzing with every movement of his arms and legs.

Hovjak came down to one knee just behind his NCO. There was something about the bodies that didn't seem right. They were covered in tattoos, some of them displaying crows and skulls in ink missing teeth, and their bodies barely had any of their natural skin still uncovered. Heads were missing teeth, and those that remained were yellowed and mostly decayed. Some of the corpses even carried weapons on them. These were not civilians, they were not fishing men, *they were pirates*. This *was* a pirate vessel. But, what had killed them? What could have possibly killed a crew full of unrepentant killers, enslavers, and thugs? It couldn't have been the slaves. If the slaves had turned against their masters, then why were some still in chains? Besides, the pirates did not ship their slaves in commercial ships. They used warships that were capable of defending themselves, purchased from rogue governments and third party sellers. "You're no slave," he said aloud, his sole faux eye trained directly on the chained man. "Who are you?"

He realized then that the man with metal clamps around his wrists and ankles sported tattoos as well, some of them symbols that Hovjak failed to recognize and had, in fact, never seen before. He had served in many parts of Greater Dienstad — Theohuanacu, Holy Panooly, Monzarc, and Indras, among other warzones — and had never come across images like these. Some of them were familiar, such as the swords, and the wolves, bears, and eagles. But their style was unique and exotic, curved in ways local styles did not curve and decorated in ways that seemed from a faraway culture from beyond the edge of the world. The suit's database had no samples to cross-reference and verify either, something that would have been exceedingly rare had this man come from somewhere

within the region. No, this man was extra-regional.

The man began to laugh hysterically, and he looked at the *teníet* with eyes full of glee. His laugh gained vigor as he taunted on and soon it echoed down the eerily vacant hallways and bouncing off the walls. Sneering while he did it, the NCO shut him up with a power assisted backhand that snapped the man's neck with a sharp, distinct *craaack*.

"He could have been useful," chastized Hovjak through a direct, secure, and private comm channel.

Shrugging, the *brigadier* responded, "He was getting annoying."

Hovjak would have to lecture him on why annoyance was not very good criteria for killing prisoners. The *teníet* noticed that his suit was administering more chemicals than normal. Something was going off in his body, something like a panic attack. The drugs helped to sedate it, but Hovjak could still feel it happening to him. There was still some sense of pain and fear, however distant. He knew that his instincts were warning him, telling him to get out of there, because whatever it was that had killed these pirates was much, much more dangerous. With the aid of the suit and its muscle-deep needles, he managed to fight the wave of panic and his mind came back to the matter at hand. "Jacobsen," he said to the soldier he had left behind to guard the first "slave" they had come across — "post your status."

"I'm good, sir, the liberated...um, man...he's behaving himself." The *teníet* was about to respond when Jacobsen added, "He's armed. I haven't confiscated the weapon and I don't think he knows that I know, but the suit picked it up. It's a machete. Here's the thing, though. Why the hell would a slave be carrying a machete, sir?"

"I don't know," replied Hovjak. "Keep an eye on him. Kill him if he moves."

V.

"Teníet, you're gonna want 'ta see this." It was the soldier who had wandered off after the rolling head. He had been inspecting the walls while Hovjak had gone through his introspective exploration of the evidence. He was pointing to a section of the bulkhead and prodded at it, "Trust me, you're gonna want 'ta see this."

"What is it soldier?" Hovjak walked over with long strides.

The soldier pointed. "Right here, sir. Look closely."

As he got closer and focused his attention on the part of bulkhead the soldier had been staring at, his vision automatically changed to the suit's combined chromatography and radiography sensors. Then he saw what the soldier had seen. There were *explosives* in those walls. He switched back to standard vision, looking at the bulkhead for a removable panel. Indeed, nearby, on the upper edge where bulkhead met overhead there was a vent. That must have been the insertion point. But why would a fishing trawler be rigged with explosives in the middle of a hurricane? What were the pirates doing with an explosive-rigged trawler? And why were they dead? Who had killed them? Whatever the answers to those questions were, there was something Hovjak knew for certain. This was indeed an ambush and they had walked right into the trap knowing that it had been set for them. *Well shit. Why doesn't it feel good to be right?*

He felt the cold brass of the locket seep through the inner cloth of his jacket and against the shirt he wore underneath. The suit drugged him against this too, compelling him to keep moving, sharpening his mind, and forcing his focus on to the problem at hand. He looked at the explosive, at the dead all around him, at the "slave" they had just killed. Whatever was left alive on this boat did not expect to live through the end of the day. No, whatever was left was planning to die here and to take the Macabeans with them. They had

been brought here, to this specific room, for a reason. Whatever was still alive on the *Dvorshkar* wanted them to see this.

"I got bad news, *Kapitán*," he whispered over a secure channel between he and the *Dragunvorix*. Simultaneously, his suit relayed footage of what they had seen so far — the three people they had found alive, the one who the NCO had killed, the maimed bodies scattered across the deck, and the explosives in the wall.

Silence from the other side. Then, "*Teníet*, you're about three-quarters of the way to the bridge. Is that right?" The tracking sensors on the suit were enough to confirm that they were, but Hovjak confirmed as well anyways. "Okay," the *kapitán* went on, then pausing. "Okay, the earliest pick-up window is nine minutes. I need ninety minutes to get you and your boys out of there, got it? Wait, —" he said, suddenly. "*What is that?*"

"What's what?" Hovjak asked.

"Look at the top right corner, near the ladder. It's a camera." And when Hovjak saw it, he saw something else. Said camera was *moving*. They were being watched.

On the comm, through a private comm with Hovjak and his NCO, it was Jacobsen again. "Sir, there's movement down here. And...the liberated prisoner, he's gone mad." A new feed cut into the *teniet's* display, showing him what Jacobsen was looking at. The, whatever he was, was laughing, head held back almost perpendicular to the neck, his toothless smile at full width while his eyes betrayed ecstasy. Then, "Shit, give a sec, sir." The feed cut off and a few seconds later the muffled sound of gunfire filled the ship's superstructure. It was a steady rhythm, the noise of what sounded like a Hali-53 and then the cluttered response of what seemed like multiple rifles.

A cackle pierced tense air like a flechette. It had come from above. From the bridge. As the *teniet* turned to command his men to keep moving, four of those...unknown survivors...walked into view as they slowly, one step at a time, came down the ladder to the passageway the massacre had taken place in. They dragged with them long chains, just like their friends, but these weren't connected to anything else. They were laughing as maniacally as the dead man and the other man down below. Three of them were women and all of them bore the same style of clothing and body art that the dead man had. There was something else about them too. Their shirts were bulky, as if there was something underneath that went across their abdomens. Hovjak's suit's sensors did the difficult work, penetrating through the cloth to get to what was being concealed. What he saw did not surprise the *teniet*.

More explosives.

That's when the adrenaline kicked in. His power armor automatically switched to the *sektón*-wide channel, feeding of his brain's impulses. "Kill 'em!" He ordered, "Kill 'em now! They're rigged!"

Their four guests did not give them too large of a window to react. Quickly they were upon the *koda*, sprinting the short distance between the edge of the ladder and soldiers deeper down the hall. One of Hovjak's men got his rifle up in time, placing a three-round spurt within an inch-wide circle in the forehead. Blood came out of the back of her head, as at least one of the bullets exited and the woman's body was pushed back. She dropped. Another one was taken out, but before the other two could be killed they were already atop the Macabeans. The two women released a shrill battle cry before all Hovjak could see was a blinding white light that his power armor quickly filtered out. He didn't even hear the noise, the suit instantaneously blocking its audio sensors to protect the wearer's eardrums. All he knew was that there were now two less men in his unit, and three others were reporting critical damage to their armor through the suits' diagnostic systems.

Another explosion, this one much larger, shook the superstructure down to the core of the ship. It ripped through bulkheads, while its fire sped through passageways, ladders, and open hatches, no obstacle capable of limiting its power. The shockwaves of its strength sent ripples up all the way to where Hovjak and the surviving *koda* stood, their suits locking them in place again to avoid being thrown about. Whatever wasn't fastened around them fell, rolled across the floor, or shattered in place. The heads of the dead turn as if to stare coldly and blankly at the *teníet*, mocking him, taunting him that soon he'd join them in the underworld as well.

The camera, the one that the *kapitán* had caught, turned slowly until it was pointed directly at Hovjak. The *teníet* smiled behind that emotionless, faceless mask he wore. Then he turned towards the wall where he and his men had found the hidden bomb. He let out a cackle of his own and then the world turned white again...and then black...

On the bridge of the *Dragunvorix*, *Kapitán* Rosales' eyes widened as he saw the fishing trawler consume itself in fire. He and the *teníet* had been right, it was a trap. And Hovjak had been even more right, but being right had cost him his life. Rosales' gut sunk with the pain of guilt as he realized the mistake he had made. Closing his eyes, he repressed a feeling of illness that threatened to sweep over him.

Huracán Mateo was as vibrant as it had been throughout the day, the storm's winds and rain helping to squash any flames that whipped out from within the trawler. The boat itself was breaking apart, its hull cracked in multiple spaces and now splitting into separate pieces. Tall waves did not help, smacking into the side of the ship without mercy and in unrelenting fashion. Thunder shook overhead, followed by forks of lightning that shot out towards the water from the angry sky. Whatever was on the *Dvorshkar* would have to be buried wherever it sank. That included the nine men he had sent to board it. It would be a decision that would haunt him forever.

[**N.B.** This post will be periodically edited for spelling and grammatical errors, as well as to improve flow. As usual, the substance of the post will not be changed.]

Last edited by [The Macabees](#) on Sun Jan 14, 2018 10:18 am, edited 4 times in total.

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