

by Max Barry



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The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by **The Macabees** » Wed Jan 11, 2017 12:05 am



Tiwanaku, Theohuanacu
March 2027

[Follows from [this post](#).]

My hate is a fire that shades the sun. Let my enemies burn in it.

— Unknown Philosopher, ca. 219 C.E.

A floating body was thrown lifelessly into the face of the sharp, jagged cliffs west of Tiwanaku's port and harbor installations. It fell off back into the ocean until the current again slammed it against the wall of almost solid rock as it would a limp doll. A hand caught the body by the arm before it slid back into the water and slowly pulled it up to safety.

The hand belonged to a soldier clad in black armor. He turned his head to another soldier, hanging from the cliff just above him and to the right, and then dragged the body up and over his shoulder. It was a quick climb up to the slim, dark mouth of a cave, black shadows quickly engulfing whatever rays of light did manage to penetrate even somewhat into the opening. Below them, where they had just been, the crest of a late-born wave roared as it smashed violently into the rock with an explosion of white spray. It was met with the noise of gunfire and the bass-like rhythm of the artillery and aerial bombardment coming from the city.

Just inside, a machinegun darted in their direction and then back again, until it finally settled into its default slow sweep from side to side. They paid it no mind as the one soldier dragged the body farther inside, limp legs leaving a winding trail of displaced dirt. Near the gun nest was something else on a bipod, although it could not be called a weapon. It was a telescope of some sort and it too was automated, turning from side to side much like the gun, but at a much wider angle, as it swept the waters that led into the port. Next to it was a thin table sitting atop was looked like some of pad wrapped in a thin red light. Small antennae rose up from it like antlers, each wrapped with metallic coils near their tips which seemed to match similar protrusions extending from the telescope-like device and the unmanned machine gun. If it had been dark near the entrance, a moonless night would be like daylight to the depths of the bluff-side cavern.

Not even a reflection betrayed the two men as they went on as if light, or lack thereof, was no barrier to their journey. They seemed to know the way quite well.

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Finally, after some time of traveling through the twists and turns of the cave's many pathways, they arrived at what can be described as a clearing. A small fire, around which sat two other men, illuminated a palisade of stalagmites around them, large formations of which were carved apart only by narrow corridors through which one could walk. Hundreds of stalactites and other drapery came down to only a few feet above their head like fangs. The two around the fire looked at the two coming in, and then one rose to help the soldier with the corpse it had just brought in.

The two who had already been there were stripped down to their boots and gray heavy combat jumpsuits. The one holding the body laid down by the fire and then started to inspect it, placing his fingers on the carotid artery and his left ear on the chest. While he did that, the ones who had just come in began stripping off their power armor besides makeshift workstations composed of chains hanging from anchors that came out from the rocky walls like steel beaks.

"Holy shit, this one is still breathin'," said the one inspecting the body, suddenly.

The soldier who had pulled out of the water grinned. "I fuggin' knew it." This brought an eye roll from his partner, who was stepping out of his suit frame. "I had a gut feelin' that this one was alive. Jonas here wanted me to leave it floatin'. Somethin' about the way he rolled off the cliffs tho' gave me a feelin'. It's a good sign when their skin and muscles don't slide off the bones when they hit the rock, at least." He gave a look to his partner, who returned an expressionless stare.

"...No need to go into detail," said the other man by the fire with the look of a lack of amusement on his face, who had moved to kneel by the body...the person lying on the cavern's hard, dirt flooring. In his hand was a small device that he used to puncture through the unconscious person's skin until a needle threaded its way into one of the veins traveling down the limp arm. There were a series of beeps in quick succession as the machine went through various operations until the screen flickered to display a profile of the person based on the taken blood sample. "Well, well, it looks as if you've captured a prize. *Kabos* Ern Dardel, *regulares*, 217th mechanized division. *Deathstalkers*. We got ourselves another combat man...if he wakes up, that is." He took another look at the body and then another glance at the readings on the device in his hands, adding, "As doubtful as that may be, under his present condition."

"His condition is not our concern," interjected the one kneeling nearby. He looked at the two who had just taken off their armor. "You two will have the honor of taking him to *Kula'kuladin* tomorrow. They'll take care of him there, or he'll die."

Tlaloc, Theohuanacu
March 2028

[Follows from Tlaloc-related events in [this post](#).]

If there is an event that marked the turning point in the empire's policy in Theohuanacu, it was this one.

— T. Xochitl, *The Tragic Continent: A History of Theohuanacu* (2056 C.E.)

She placed her hand lightly on his. "I must confess, this evening has turned out to be quite lovely, Mateo," she said, almost in a gentle wispher. Her lips were as red as her nails, and he smiled at her.

Mateo looked into her big, beautiful green eyes which shined and sparkled like two emeralds. His stomach felt like a pit that felt at the cusp of unknotting, but for some reason never quite did. He could not but help to glance at her ample bosom, but if she noticed she gave no hint of knowing or caring. Mateo could not say to be in love, because he loved all women. *She* was special though, maybe even the one he finally settled down with...although he said that often.

They sat in a small, rustic café on the corner of *Dovín Yaoyapla*, sitting at a small wicker table beneath a red awning that somehow seemed to blend in with the others, forming a ring around the plaza and broken up only by two intersecting avenues. In the middle, around which a perpetual flow of traffic seemed to flow like a roaring river, stood a chilling marble statue of Yaoyabla, Queen of Fortune, Goddess of Bounty, bound in chains and tossed upon the ground. Three small, golden bronze, winged Tatxahuapalo[1] lay chained alongside their queen, their heads a portrait of tragedy and despair. She looked, eyes locked in terror and mouth agape, at something hidden or just out of sight. Shackled to it, Yaoyabla lay on upon a jagged-surfaced pedestal encircled by water and out of the marble walls spouted water from the mouths of long, exotic fish with fanciful fins, tails, and whiskers. They too were made of bronze, and they were matched by brethren that frolicked in the pond in between, shooting streams that crisscrossed the others to make a complex weave of water.[2]

Dovín Yaoyapla radiated history, its buildings from a time dating prior even to when the plaza was known as Black Tides Square. The colorfully plastered façades of the buildings that loomed around it showed their character through elaborate wood trimmings and wrought iron balconies, with stunning windows and doors made of wrought iron, some perhaps three centuries old. These had been the dwellings of the rich pirates prior to the Taming. Now they were the dwellings of the rich, period. The fountain was new, but *Dovín Yaoyapla* and the neighborhood around it represented over five hundred years of history — the story of one of the most stunningly cultured and civilized corsair enclaves to ever grace mankind.

It made for quite the location for a date. That fact was of course not lost on Mateo, who gazed into the woman's eyes. She looked like she was in love. He looked as if it was the first time he had felt it, but it was genuine. Turning his hands under hers so that their palms were pressed together, he said, "Have I ever told you the story of how my father met my mother?"

"No, you never have," she replied, eyes wide with a gorgeous smile.

"I remember the first time they told me, long ago when I was a small child. It was in the summer and we were sitting outside, sitting on a blanket and having a picnic in a small clearing in the jungle. Mother had packed jam, butters, and the sweetest, softest bread that melted in your mouth. Did your family ever take you campaign, Tesora?" She smiled and nodded. "There had been a storm not a week before and the rainforest was lush. I remember mother recounting to me how they had met at the Gardens of Ignacioliuigi and how from when they had first locked eyes that day mother had known that she loved him, and father that he loved her. I could see how they looked at each other that day, I could feel the vibrant tension of love, and that amazing moment remains forever etched in memory."

"How beautiful," she said. Her grip on his hands tightened. "A love of that kind is worthy of envy."

Mateo's gaze seemed to pierce into her soul. "You are an *incredible* woman, Tesora. Being around you brings so much pleasure." He fell silent and they looked at each other, in love much like his own parents were. "I hope I've swept you off your feet as much as you have mine," he said as his face and hers came together towards a kiss—

—the stone, plaster, wood walls of the building behind them rippled until it settled, only to explode into a million shards of glass and debris that cut like knives and burned like fire. Skin peeled away from muscle as it melted beneath a heat that felt akin to that of a thousand suns, faces distorting in horror as men, women, and children reacted in the brief second they had before their lives were forever extinguished. A chunk of rock, or stone, whistled through the air until it struck Mateo in the side of the head. He fell from his chair and smacked the pavement, upon which he was unconscious if he was not already. Blackness covered his eyes and he drifted away...

...and he awoke in hell.

It was his hearing that came back first, although the sound of gunfire was if distant and from nowhere in particular. As his vision returned, first blurry and only gradually sharpening, Mateo saw Tesora lying next to him. Her eyes were wide open, but those big emeralds had lost their sparkle. Blood covered her

forehead and dripped down onto her cheeks and from out of the corner of her mouth.

"Tesora," he whispered. He stretched out his arm to shake her body, but she did not respond. She was dead. What had happened? What was going on? Tears streamed down his face as he turned his head to look around him.

He could not see much of the *dovin* beyond the fountain. Yaoyapla, her arms and legs still chained to the white, marble pedestal, had been decapitated in a gruesome manner. Dirt and dust shrouded the statue, as it did much of the rest of the square, like a thick fog that clung to the rubble strewn about. Cars had been overturned Mateo thought, as he could see what looked like the bottom of a vehicle that had been overturned onto another one. The gunfire persisted although he could still not tell where it was coming from. The flashes of light that perturbed the curtain-like cloud of ash and debris he did not register for what they were, and neither did the screams that echoed off the walls of the avenues that led away from the square, as he looked on in shock and amazement. A man stepped out from the fog, armed with a rifle and garbed in militant clothing, but he did not seem to notice Mateo there as he fired into the distance.

That is when Mateo noticed the first drops of blood falling from his chin and onto the floor. He looked down at the small puddle forming below him, as if wondering where all that blood could possibly have come from. He did not seem to notice the hole that a piece of debris had carved into the side of his head. No matter, he soon fell unconscious again anyway and this time he would not wake back up.

Xipatl Chi, Theohuanacu
October 2027

*These were a group we had never seen before. It
was no one's fault that they weren't stopped in time.*

— Guus van Meijer, *A Long Journey Through
Death* (2033 C.E.)

High above the adobe-colored ceramic shingles of Xipatl Chi rose the stepped Temple of Tayapocal. Its base was by far its tallest element. Along the perimeter of the bottommost story, there were horseshoe-arch-framed doors leading inside, although one's eyes were more quickly drawn to the massive stairways that flowed as a river forked in three directions from a domed quadrifrons with tall and stout stone columns with elaborately carved and painted capitals. The pillars themselves were intricately ringed with spiral depictions of ancient battles, dark age raiding, and executions, all and more recording the mythos of Tayapocal, god of war. The three stairways disappeared through horseshoe archways, to reappear behind the structure and rise toward the main chapel, which sat on a high plateau with a great stone table before it. The temple structure sat on a three-step marble podium and its front was guarded by a half-moon colonnade. A tiled, niched, and mosaiced concrete dome that the chapel wore like a hat was topped by a bronze figure of a chained slave in fright, looking up to the sky in fear and as if about to be smitten by the war god himself.[3]

Guus van Meijer smiled as he appreciated the irony of it all. Around him, a storm of people garbed in light, white hazmat suits hustled around the temple and through small, narrow streets that navigated the ocean of apartments and housing for temple workers. They once did, at least. The blood smeared across the walls and it trailed on cobblestone pathways into the buildings themselves. Fitting was the fate that befell the priests of Tayapocal.

The detective studied three bodies strewn across the broad, paved street that separated the temple's base from the housing complex. They were not the only bodies, but they were the three that had caught his attention. Around him huddled three other police officers, whose relaxed dressing standards and the way they deferred to van Meijer gave them away as junior detectives. Two of them stood, while a female detective was crouched down alongside the boss. All of them were inspecting the corpses. "Foreigners, all three of them," she noted aloud. "And all of them with similar tattoo patterns, similar symbology, to the other bodies."

Van Meijer, who wore a tan fedora with a wide cattlemen brim, nodded. Without warning, he rose and moved on, following a shallow tributary of blood that led him and the group he led into the dark, paved pathways that took laborers from the temple to the maze-like innards of the residential complex. The dead were bountiful, and too many wore the grey, black, and red robes and tunics of temple staff.

The sun barely reached them over the tall, tiled rooftops of the apartment blocks that rose to either side of the narrow roads. Wall-mounted artificial lights provided illumination for the countless of workers in their face-masked and head-to-toe plastic-like protective suits, which moved quickly this way and that to slowly clean the crime...no, battle scene. That's what it was, truly. The detective stepped over a body that hadn't been bagged and taken yet — there many of them, and they all had to be investigated first, of course —, only to halt with so much suddenness that the triad of juniors behind him desperately struggled to *not* walk into their boss. his eyes almost instinctually honed in on a cluster of four dead who had fallen against the wall and then fallen into a clump. Pockmarks and holes decorated the wall in broad strokes, but his vision quickly focused on the four dead — no, there were *five*.

At the bottom of the pile of corpses, below the four dressed as a civilian, was a shirtless man with a torso painted in black and blue tattoos. The others hustled to help the detective move some of the bodies. Their hands must have felt moist from the latex gloves they wore. "This one has symbology similar to the others," said the woman, who had taken initiative in inspecting the body of the dead warrior. "He's a local, though."

She pulled the cadaver's jaw down and used her flashlight to look into its mouth. "Pirate, telling from the abysmal dental hygiene."

Van Meijer nodded. They had seen others like this one before. They had been particularly brutal with the temple staff, willing as they were to use them as human shields as the fighting went from path to path, apartment to apartment. He gritted his teeth. He had seen the bloodbath first hand, another scar slashed across his memory. The other two men said nothing, and, for a while, the detective stood silent. "So, we were right," he said, finally. "The bastards are gathering an army."

"Dead now," commented one of the other junior detectives.

He eyed the man warily, but then turned his attention back to the dead man. "What do you think, Detective Nuhatal?"

Her light gray eyes betrayed her as a local with a 'northernized'[4] name, stemming from Nahuatl, a name with ancient, but forgotten roots. Since time immemorial it had always been the colonists or the corsairs who enforced and exacted justice, and often injustice, but the annexation revealed new opportunities to the true, native Theohuanacan people. Van Meijer was and old school bone-deep Zealander, but he appreciated the fresh talent. She was certainly better at her job than the two men, whose conversation he found stale and uninspired. Whatever merit he saw in her did not show though as he looked at her with a face of stone.

She shook her head. "Most of the armed dead are corsair youth, or slum-youth playing at corsairs. Most, but not all." Nuhatal looked at them and asked, "Did you notice how the foreign ones were better fighters? They were better trained, and according to preliminary blood reports heavily intoxicated — hard drugs. Their recruits were as well, but they seemed to handle the dosage better."

"Recruits?" asked one of the other two men, incredulously. "You think the foreign fighters recruited the pirates?"

"Yes." Van Meijer's voice was stern, as he took the reigns again while giving the one who had spoken a flat stare. "They were better trained. Wherever they learned how to fight, it wasn't from these damn pirates. I reckon you are right, Nuhatal," he said, "whoever these foreign fighters are, they're the key. Who are they? Why are they here? I want answers." He didn't say it, but he could feel *something* by the easy pain that swelled in his bones, as if they were foretelling bad weather.

There was something else the preliminary blood reports had shown, something that they hadn't talked about. The foreigners were Gothic.

[1] Large bird of prey native to Theohuanacu and revered by local mythos

[2] The statue is different, but it's inspired by and is a cross between these two styles: [Dying Gaul](#) and [Fountain of the Dragons](#), with the fish inspired by [these from the Fountain of Neptune](#), but more eastern in style still and made of bronze.

[3] Temple architecture is inspired by the [Pyramid of the Niches](#) and the [Ziggurat of Ur](#), and the dome by [Hindu architecture](#) and [Brunelleschi's Dome](#).

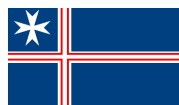
[4] Latinized would be the more proper OOC term, but 'northernized' refers to the fact that the analogues of latin languages in central Greater Dienstad are concentrated to their north, by whom Theohuanacu was eventually colonized for some time.

[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 Mon Jul 03, 2017 8:11 am, edited 5 times in total.

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The Scandinavians
Senator

Posts: 4948
Founded: Oct 09, 2004
Capitalist

by [The Scandinavians](#) » Wed Jan 11, 2017 11:52 pm



Decree from the Most Blessed Office of the Patriarchate of the Scandin Catholic Church

The Glorious Empire of the Scandinavians, the blessed dominion given over only to the anointed Scandin peoples, is the beating heart of the true Church. The foundation upon which all that is righteous in this world has been built. By its continued existence do we allow for the continued unfolding of the Almighty's plans for the world. Without it, the Church will likely fade into a shadow of its current form and become ultimately incapable of fulfilling its divinely ordained mission to spread the only proper Gospel to all the corners of the Earth. For only in the lands of Erid can we find sufficient reserves of the appointed blood to serve as priests of the faith, provide the leadership of a state rooted in Biblical precepts, the people needed to populate the world with those who properly respect the Almighty, and only in the institutions of the Glorious Empire do we find a government capable of abiding by the laws of the Risen Lord.

The oncoming invasion of our nation by the Empire of the Golden Throne of The Macabees threatens on an explicit level we not seen for many generations. They are a foe which has the capacity to tear down all which we have built in their petty lust born out of their hatred of all things that are holy in this world. They despise everything that our people stand for: diligence, order, faith, tradition, and honor. They lack as these things for they are a people which represent all the decadence wastrel attitudes of the alien filth. Therefore there is no capability to compromise with them in a meaningful way. They will eventually only come back if we were to broker a peace with them without first inflicting on them a grievous injury which they would never forget.

"Trust not the false blooded with stewardship in the land in which you were made and raised up by Erid. If they threaten your right to rule this land do not hesitate to put them to the sword." (The Book of Erid)

In keeping with holy scripture, the Church has taken upon itself the task of doing whatever is needed to drive back the invasion. The clergy fully understand the often preached notions of peace within the lands of Christus, but the rules dictating a more amicable approach to life only govern relationships with fellow faithful. As such, the Patriarchate has proclaimed a

period of holy conflict against the forces and allies of the Golden Throne. All their folk are declared to be dres'nalar and no actions taken against their soldiers or followers will be considered a sin. All actions are therefore declared tolerated. All those who fall in battle seeking to do harm to these enemies are found to be martyrs of the faith and thus given immediate dispensation for all sins they might have committed in this life. Theirs will be the kingdom of the Almighty.

"There is no commandment to understand or show compassion to the heathen. There is no commandment to stay your hand whence abominations deny the irrevocable truth of the risen Christ. There is no commandment to obey the laws of the enemies of Erid and the Almighty. The only ones that you must love as yourself are those of the blood and the faith for they alone are fully embraced by the Almighty." (The Book of Erid)

Indeed it is a good deed to wage war upon these enemies in whatever form you can. Be it in the factory, the laboratory, the mine, the field, or wherever one might work. For all duties which helps to protect the Glorious Empire of the Scandinvans from invasion by the sinful barbarians soon set to reach our shores. Know you Scandin that such labor honors the Almighty and shall mot assuredly be counted as a labor of good by him on high.

"War is a necessary duty of every true Christian." (The Book of Erid)

"Take up the spear to defend your people against the falsehoods and degeneracy of the alien. Drive them from the lands which are rightfully yours alone. Take from them their children and women as slaves to your house eternally. Kill their men to the last or condemn them to the labor of rubbus and the mine." (The Book of Erid)

We, through the providence of the Almighty, shall find the strength needed to do whatever is needed to beat back the invader and win this war. For we good Scandin full understand that it is our sacred duty to do whatever we can to aid in our Empire's war effort. Yet, even now we must acknowledged our own faults.

We must also not forget the weakness that always arise during trying times. There would be most assuredly be those who will seek to use this invasion for their own gain. There are additionally those individuals who will consider it proper to attempt to serve the deluded foreign ideologies of the invaders that speak against the divinely protected traditions of our fathers.. These sort of people are the worst type of heretics and let it be known all these people will be hunted to the last. Their punishments shall be death in this world and damnation in the next.

May the Almighty favor us in this scared war. May our martyrs be embraced by the Almighty. May our generals be given the wisdom needed to lead to victory. May our warriors be given the courage to overcome the enemy. May our Crown Prince be given the sight needed to find the critical weaknesses of our blasphemous enemies.

Signed,
Imperator of the Office of the Purifiers of the Body and Spirit,
Arch-Canon of the Halls of Judgement,
Bane of the Heretics,
Guardian of the Faithful,
Punisher of the Apostate,
Justice of the Order Militant of the Most Blessed Inquisition,
Scion of the Sons of Erid,
Ward of Morality,
Vanquisher of Dres'nalar,
Most High Officer of the Faith,
Doctor of the Church's Canon and Secular Law Division,
The Nameless Steward of Truth

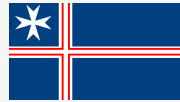
Signed,
Thomas III,
Patriarch of the True Church,
Servant of Erid,
Voice of the Faithful,

*Defender of the Word,
Holy Peter's Appointed Successor*

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



The Scandinvans
Senator

Posts: 4948
Founded: Oct 09, 2004
Capitalist

by **The Scandinvans** » Thu Jan 12, 2017 9:07 pm



Drana, Heartland of the Glorious Empire of the Scandinvans

"I do not fear to tread on the battlefield for the Risen Lord has given me the promise of the eternal paradise if I die in his magnificent name. I do not shiver in the darkness for the light of the Almighty illuminates my way. I follow the path of Erid so that our Empire might eventually save the world from itself. For we are Valgardians: the anointed of Erid, the appointed of the Almighty, the heralds of the one faith, scions of the blessed blood, bearers of the truth, and wardens of the light." (The Book of Erid)

The basic premises under which the Scandinavian High Command was currently operating was that the Scandinv forces did not have any reasonable chance to actually defeat the Golden Throne's rapidly approaching flotilla given that the majority of the imperial navy had already been dispatched to serve in reserve duties hidden away within allied waters. Given that their stubborn pride prevented them from allowing to land uncontested at sea however caused High Command to divert a few naval groups to attempt to at least slow down the advance of the enemy. This however was not born from some notion of blind vanity, but was driven by a need to make a show of force least their foe grow arrogant.

There was an additional point on their part. The 1250 ships which ranged from everything from torpedo boats up to destroyers was designed to entice the oncoming fleets to engage them along the point of the coastal shelf were the waters became only 170-200 meters deep. By doing this the Scandinv fleets would be able to disable most of the advantages held by submerged craft. Not to mention that this was the optimal depth for a few Scandinv innovations to operate in as anti-naval deterrents. A bit of a nasty little treat for the Golden Throne to consume.

After this engagement entered into full swing, the plan was for the Scandinvans to use their much greater knowledge of the waters to drive the Maccabean forces to choke points where Scandinv land defenses would be able to thin them out more. Though this plot was not likely to be perfectly triggered, the Maccabeans would nonetheless be treated to a decent bit of blood loss as. Not to mention, by showing their enemy their strongest defensive points it was logical to assume that they could better drive them into a more controlled landing scenario which denied them the capacity to chose to land wherever they pleased. An action which would allow the warrior caste and levies to react more appropriately and potentially even choose the battlefield in a number of hopefully significant cases.

A situation which was not wholly favorable to the Scandinvans, but offered the chance for them to better control the flow of this portion of the conflict. Whilst it is was not ideal given the opening of another fronts to the north, the Maccabeas were the greatest threat to the Glorious Empire of the Scandinvans as of now. As such, they were the ones who demanded by far the greatest amount investment in manpower and resources to combat. For they alone had the audacity to launch a direct invasion of the homeland. The place where the rule of the heirs of Erid was most absolute, a land which few outsiders had ever tread as free folk, and (in the mind of many dres'nalar) one of the world's greatest hermit kingdoms.

The armies on the land all the while were busying themselves in preparation for the invasions of their previous homeland. Nearly each of them was ready to

die to defend what was theirs from an godless horde of wretches who sought (at least in their minds) to destroy and defile everything they held dear. A fate which they could not allow least the final beacon of the Almighty's light face from the world. A fate which they could not allow to come to pass no matter the price that they might have to pay to prevent. Thus they were beginning a broad campaign of works designed to fortify strategic choke points, reinforce existing defense structures, rally additional levies to further expand their manpower reserves, and begin the evacuation of civilians from combat zones wherever they might develop.

Last edited by [The Scandinavians](#) on Thu Jan 12, 2017 9:30 pm, edited 1 time 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



The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by [The Macabees](#) » Tue Jan 31, 2017 8:27 pm



Dasch, Southwestern New Empire Mid-December 2026

[OOC: Continues from [the first section of the final post in Imperial Recrudescence](#). Apart from introducing a new character, this short post is meant to further elucidate on how the supply of personnel works and how the war is affecting The Golden Throne's other activities.]

The word bloodbath does not do it justice.

— Reginald Deboirs, *The Final Subjugation*
(2066 C.E.)

Ehecatl wiped the sweat off his forehead with the back of his hand. How long had it been since he last took off his helmet? It felt like days. *Had it been days?* Surely not. In these times, it was hard to tell how long you spent in the pit. Time holds no context in Hell. *I must be in hell*, he thought. *Hell must be Canisper.*

The fighting had been rough, real rough. Canisper's streets, which were nothing but narrow burrowed pathways that crisscrossed the upper layer of the city, were full of the city's poor, who were exactly the type of miserable fools to enroll in "military service" with the *Anax* — that damned fool "king" who didn't know when to admit defeat. The little fuggers' he managed to press into service certainly didn't get much in the way of training, but they weren't lacking in weapons and in those tight, winding tunnels the locals called roads they sure put up a hell of a fight. Many of the 314th Theohuacan *Auskilares'* men had spilled blood in that drab excuse for a suburb, many had died.

Ehecatl leaned back against the wall of the platform taking him and the remnants of two infantry companies up to the surface. He looked around at the other men and noticed that together they had a total strength of about three-fourths of what they each should have had individually. What hadn't been left behind in Canisper were in medical wards below the surface, waiting to be taken to where the sun shined (through clouds of dingy irradiated fog) — if they stabilized.

Soldiers were supposed to keep their helmets on until they reached the Green Zone, a thick arch of frequent bases in what remained of Dasch's suburbs, long lost to post-apocalyptic deterioration. No one reprimanded a soldier for taking a quick breather, though.

Not in battles like this one. Plus, the elevators were isolated from the surface, so there was no harm in it anyhow.

The platform thudded and stammered as it came to a stop. Ehecatl's superior officer gave him a stern look and he put his helmet back on, allowing it to seal along the rim of his suit. On the steel ceiling, just above giant doors split down the middle, was a red light that turned green as soon as sensors felt that all occupants were properly sealed from exogenous elements.

With a metallic screech akin to a thousand chalkboard with a thousand nails apiece, the doors slid open. On their other side was a warehouse whose vaulted ceilings must have been over two hundred feet tall. That's how it felt, at least.

Soldiers were everywhere, marching or walking to one area or another as if they were tens of thousands of tiny little ants crawling around in the farm they were trapped in. Most of them wore suits of cloth fabric; these were the civilian and otherwise scientific, or administrative, staff. The ones in battle suits were just as easily distinguished. No one walked without some kind of hazmat suit, because although the inside of the warehouse was too sealed from the unforgiving New Imperial environment, the fear of an unexpected missile or mortar attack was consistently imprinted in their mind by the one idiot — the one who felt it unnecessary to follow orders — inevitably caught by such attacks.

They marched through the river of flesh, around robots and other mostly automated machinery which moved personnel or equipment one way or the other, all the way down to the other end of the warehouse where there were rows upon rows of tracks leaving through concrete tunnels. Some of these carried trains awaiting passengers, others were empty, and the remainder were just seeing new trains coming in, laden with fresh stock of meat for the grinder. Ehecatl looked at them. Some of them had the hardened faces of veterans, their mouths solemn and their eyes grim. Most were fresh-outta-bootcamp; you could tell because they had that stupid grin that boys not yet turned men often had before their first combat mission.

Ehecatl wished he could still warn them to turn back, still tell them to go back to their families.

Give them twenty of your years, they will give you and your entire family — your parents too, if they are alive — citizenship. Not much benefit there these days, truth be told. But, they will also give you riches, which were the spoils that most of the *auskilaes* were after when they signed up. With the number of occupations undertaken by the Golden Throne, seeing combat was expected. No one signed up under the pretense that they'd never see war. But, few had joined truly knowing what their ultimate destiny was: to fight in the muddy quagmire of a marsh that dominated just inland of the southern Scandivan coastline. They would be bloodied first, whether here in New Empire or any of the other perpetual insurgencies throughout the territories. Those unfit for a tougher conflict died here or worse, while the rest were rotated directly to Mokastana or Haishan, where millions of men were being amassed for the impending invasion of the Gothic slaver stronghold.

When are my orders coming? he wondered. That question had been lingering in the back of his mind for three months now. Having been in New Empire since the beginning of the peacekeeping mission, surely Ehecatl was a prime candidate to be sent into the next phase of his journey towards death. Friends who had already been stationed in the far-eastern staging areas, hosted by the Mokans and Haize, had told them it was like paradise. Almost like being at home. But, the luxury of it all was all an illusion, for soon no doubt the true war would begin. Ehecatl envied the weak. At least they had managed to escape the hell to come.

Then again, it was tempting to never have to fight in the cavernous slums of Canisper again. He was like a man between the torturer and Satan. A death by drowning or one by immolation (quite literally, according to the rumors).

He boxed the anxiety away as he entered one of the cars of a train that his column had been marched to. No one had paid them much mind. They were too wired from battle for anyone to risk talking to them. It was one of the few things he liked about the profession, the copious amount of quiet time to himself. He took a seat in one of the open chairs. They weren't cushioned and were rather uncomfortable, but then again he was in battle armor and a good chair would be hard to come by in these circumstances no matter where one was.

The trains were more like metal containers with curved roofs. Their walls held no windows and were made of a thick steel said to be able to stop most small arms fire. Ehecatl had seen bullets get through it, back when these babies had been first built. Sometimes enemy mortars got through the defenses, and when they did they could be especially venomous. He had never had one successfully hit a train he was in, but Ehecatl had heard enough stories to raise the hairs on his arms, even with all the shit he had seen. He couldn't see them, but the tall, thick steel and concrete walls that rose to either side of the track as it emerged onto the surface of old Dasch offered some comfort. All of them had seen videos of the lasers too. They supposedly zapped enemy rockets and mortars right out of the skies, like he did clay discs with his shotgun back home, but he'd have to see it to believe it.

It was a fast trip to home base. Something to do with magnets, he was told. In less than fifteen minutes their ride was slowing down and docking, almost as if it were one of those aluminum sardine cans that the civilians in the big cities called metros. Ehecatl was a country boy, so he didn't much care for any part of the whole train thing.

The railcar's doors slid open to reveal another warehouse-type station, although this one was comparatively smaller and occupied by administrative personnel who oversaw the movement of soldiers to and from the city. At the other end, all along that wall, there were various doors covered by thick, drab steel gates without a single perforation or hole that revealed what lay on their other side. Like the one they had just come from, this warehouse was too blocked from all external light and, indeed, from the outside atmosphere — all military buildings in New Empire tended to be, of course. Truth be told, it made serving in this irradiated hellhole quite boring unless you were barracked at one of the bases in the constitutionally-aligned cities, where the women were said to be loose (for the right coin purse) and the gents peaceful enough. *Alas, one doesn't choose his deployments*, Ehecatl said to himself, with a hint of melancholy in his mental voice.

What he would give for some *pussy* right now. He'd have to do with one of the females on base.

He walked with the rest of his company through a maze of checkpoints, which did everything from reading his vitals via his suit to checking the contents in his pack, in case he was smuggling in contraband from the city. God forbid the men and women who spilled their blood for the empire a little bit of leeway. There were other units coming back from the city with them, so the process as a whole took quite a bit of time. Some of the men slept inside their suits while they waited if they had re-wired their sensors to warn them when the person in front of them moved a certain distance forward. The noobs usually didn't have this luxury, although it was a secret typically given out by the veterans after a first mission. There was always the designated 'hook-up' on the company-level, and if not you could usually get the ordnance *sargent* to do it for you if you brought someone in the know along with you. Ehecatl didn't take advantage; it had been some time since he was last able to sleep on demand.

They got to a final checkpoint, right before one of the big metal gates covering one of the doors slid open to reveal a dark tunnel. Here, a woman in a cloth hazmat suit scanned their suits, usually simply waving each person through one-by-one. Sometimes she'd greet you by your rank and name, and then tack on a, "Report to out-processing."

"*Aftkorp*al Ehecatl. Report to out-processing. You're scheduled for 0800 hours, tomorrow," she said, her voice dull and emotionless.

He stood there for a second without moving, until someone behind him shoved him forward. *Out-processing*. It was the first time he had heard it said to him. Usually, whoever they ordered to out-processing would be gone the next day. Not even a trip back to the barracks — they packed your shit for you and, from what he had been told, you'd be gone by the end of the business week. *So my day has finally come*, he thought. He wasn't sure whether to be solemn or ecstatic; he was leaving hell alright, but he might as well be entering another hell.

The trip to the barracks, an expansive web of interconnected buildings located near the center of the huge base, went slower than usual. He had a lot to think

about and it wasn't the type of thoughts that one regularly invited into his head, and so time dragged. He wondered where he would be shipped to next, whether to Mokastana or somewhere else. The invasion of the Scandinvan Empire had not begun yet, but perhaps it was about to unfold and that was why he was suddenly getting new orders. There were also rumors on a gargantuan floating base that the empire was building somewhere out in the far eastern reaches of the Morridane Ocean. Perhaps that was to be his destination.

Ehecatl and his comrades, most (if not all) of which he would never see again, traveled 'home' by tram. This one had thick windows that made looking at anything in particular difficult since the glass was almost opaque. They had a green and brown color to them, almost like a combination of vomit and sand. It was beautiful in its own way, the unreal glow. He thought of it as the ultimate transformation of man: a glassed nuclear battlefield where even the cockroaches struggled to survive.

Deep in his stomach there was a tension between despair and happiness. Despair at the knowledge that he was deploying to almost certain death, but happy at the thought all the same. After two months fighting in Dasch, he was ready to die.

[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.]

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The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by **The Macabees** » Mon Feb 20, 2017 8:58 pm



Somewhere, Scandinvan

January/February, 2027

[OOC: Continues from [here](#) and [here](#).]

Day 31: Disaster stems from tranquility. I know that now."

— From the journal of *Sargént* Jarl Gabán

I.

When Gabán awoke to see another man's face, his first instinct was to panic. He reached for the knife at his belt, but it was not there. Whoever his captors were, they had stripped him of his weapons...and his uniform, it seemed. He turned his head every which way, looking for *something* — a stick to stab with, if nothing else —, but his shoulders were fastened to the ground by two strong hands.

His gut felt as if it were on fire, the pain shooting down his legs and up his torso like lightning bolts. Gabán bent his neck forward to look at his stomach, and when he saw the long, thin tongs plunge into a gaping wound along his right flank, his eyes widened in shock and his mouth opened as if to scream. Even dirt-engraved and covered in blood-infused sweat as it was, his face was pale and drained of all blood. His eyes rolled back into his head, and suddenly Gabán passed out again, the back of his head saved from smacking into the rock underneath by a gloved hand...

II.

...Jarl Gabán's eyes blinked as he awoke again. At first, the light was overwhelmingly blinding, and as he slowly turned his head to one side, his surroundings only gradually came into focus. He found himself in a cave, and next to him something radiated heat, and when his hearing came back to him a fire crackled. Against rock walls danced the flames' eerie shadows. There were voices, and across the firepit were two blurry figures sitting on two crates. Or were those rocks?

One of them was speaking and Gabán caught the tail end of it. "...patrol routes are narrowing. I've found an adequate location about two clicks upstream for now. We should move now."

Patrol routes? Upstream? Despite having his senses back — mostly —, Gabán was a confused as before or worse. What was his last memory? The Ironstorm. The house. *The standoff*. He had been wounded, went prowling for meds in a remote Scandinavian village, and he had managed to get himself into a fine puzzle. He remembered running off into the woods...when had he passed out? That startled him visibly. He had been found. Captured? These men spoke Díenstadi, so they must be allies. Still, it was best to be prepared. Gabán's fingers fidgeted for his weapon, although he was becoming more and more aware of a permanent pain that beset his body throughout and he did not seem able to move his hand very far at all. Regardless, he could not find the sidearm or its holster. *I have been disarmed*. Had he not been better trained he would have surely been in a panic.

One of the two men noticed him moving about. "Looks like he's finally coming around. It's about damn time," the man said. It was the same voice that Gabán had heard earlier. The accent was right. The speaker stood then, unfastened a canteen from his belt, and twisted its cap off and he walked around the fire to him. "Can you drink on your own?" he asked, handing the flask over.

"Who are you?" asked Jarl, on edge and suspicious.

The man looked at him for a while, then responded, "We're the guys who saved your ass." He extended his arm out further, until the canteen was almost just beneath Jarl's nose. "Yep, found your body in the woods. Figured we'd be charitable and pull you out of a hot situation. Here, drink," he added, when Jarl continued to give him a confused look.

If Gabán could have, he would have snatched the flask away. As it was, he could not. It was certainly not for a lack of trying. But when he first made an attempt at moving his arm a sharp pain shot through him as if the spear point of a pike was being driven through his arm and down his torso. A long, agonizing grunt was the sign he gave of it, but he tried slower this time and, despite the ache, he grabbed the canteen and pitched his head back. The taste of water on his cracked lips was sweet. He became aware of how thirsty he was. How long had he been out? "How long has it been since we landed?" was the question he asked, his voice unexpectedly weak.

"Nine days," said the one who had offered him water. "You got hurt pretty bad. Looks like you broke a few ribs. Not to mention the giant gash on your flank. I had to retrieve a few pieces of suit that had somehow managed to get lodged in your—."

The other man, who had until now remained seated, cut his partner off, "Hold on the sitrep, *primsargént*. The man just woke up, let him get his bearings straight before you give him all the 'good' news." He stood then and walked over to join them by where Jarl was resting. "My name is *Komsargént* Milos Kabanis, Twenty-Fifth *Mosso*. This is *Primsargént* Hans Níalis, Thirty-Second *Mosso*." Jarl opened his mouth to introduce yourself, but the *komsargént* rolled on. "We know who you are, *Sargént* Jarl Gabán," he said, taking Jarl's identification tags out of his pockets and dangling them from his hand. Kabanis handed them back, "These are yours."

Jarl pushed himself up slowly, leaning his back on a tall stalagmite. He opened his palm and the *komsargént* dropped the tags on it. His whole body ached as if he had been hit by a giant sledgehammer and he grunted with even the most minimal movement. After a few seconds, he found a comfortable — comfortable enough — position. "Twenty-Fifth and Thirty-Second, fuggin' A. Did the whole drop go fubar?" he asked, when the waves of pain subsided a bit.

"Yup," answered Níalis. "As far as we know, we're it. We're the mission." Looking at the canteen, which was still in Jarl's left hand, he added, "You can keep that. We got plenty of water around here."

"That's about the sum of it," said the *komsargént*. He sighed. "Listen, we are transitioning to another location tomorrow, and we might have a harder hike the day after that. I don't expect you to carry much in the state you're in, but you'll need to carry yourself at least. I'm not going to lie to you, son. We're deep in hostile territory. This is a big country, and there's just a few us, and that gives us an advantage. You, out of all the odds, managed to stumble into

a patrol that had been sent out to scout the area during the night of the landings. They came from a base about fifteen clicks east of where we picked you up. They intensified their patrols in the area thereafter and it hasn't slackened much. Níalis and I have been moving as fast as we can to exit their area of coverage, but they seem to be expanding their search faster than we can walk. You've been slowing us down. With you awake, we'll be picking up the pace. I'll wake you later for a meal. Rest up for now, because you'll need all the rest you can get. We move out o'four hundred tomorrow morning."

"Wait," said Gabán, before the *komsargént* started to walk away. Kabanis stopped just as he turning his torso to stand. "When you found me. Did I have any pain meds on me?"

Kabanis looked at the *primsargént*, then walked away. Níalis turned to Jarl and shrugged, "Nine days in hostile territory, with no rations, the ammunition that we came with, and an unconscious cripple is a lot of fuggin' days. Whatever you managed to scavenge, we appreciate it. It's helped us stay alive and, by extension, that means you too. Go to sleep, Gabán. You have a long day ahead of you tomorrow."

"Why did you help me?"

Níalis gave him a hard look that could have made a strong man buckle at the knees. "We have a long, bloody war ahead of us, and two of us ain't gonna cut it. Three of us probably ain't much better, but it's a start. I just hope that you prove worth the effort. Heal up, *sargént*. You need to save your energy, because if you can't suck it up real quick I'm afraid your days are numbered." He did not give Jarl a chance to ask another question before he stood from where he had been crouching and walked away. Jarl looked towards the far cave wall in silence until the ache settled into a faint glow and he fell asleep.

III.

Three weeks later, the wound at Jarl's flank had barely healed. He had fractured a few ribs too, as it turned out. Later, the *komsargént* had told him that, apparently, they had programmed some of the suits to release their parachutes late, increasing the danger of the impact to the soldier, but decreasing the window of opportunity the enemy had to blow them out of the sky. It was another one of those "experiments," Russian roulette the general had called it, and it was a trade-off that Jarl wasn't sure he was comfortable with. In any case, that was now in the past and the least of his worries.

The arduous journey through the Scandinavian hinterland had taken every bit of energy he could muster. If he was a lesser man, the wound tugging at his side would have claimed him by now. Through forests they marched, thick, twisting roots tugging at their feet and branches striking at their faces. They camped for only four hours every night, which really meant enjoying two or three hours of sleep every night — depending on how many fire watch shifts you got. Hilly terrain made the hike all the more difficult, and it was common for them to veer off path and around rocky slopes in efforts to avoid coming into contact with the local population. This was as much because their sole algorithmic translation system had not yet learned the local language, as it was because they were determined to avoid engaging the Scandinavian military or local security forces. For three weeks, their mission was to stay alive and, with broken bones and a slow-healing wound slashed down his side, Gabán was by far the weakest link.

He soldiered on regardless. During the first few days he had been basically worthless, but they followed a small stream where there was plentiful food and the trips were short. As he became more able, they started to trek farther and become more daring in their adventures. They began to turn away from the river to follow a more unpredictable route. Here their source of food — raccoons, opossums, porcupines, and the occasional deer — were far more sparse, but so was the enemy.

What gave them the most hope, however, was that they continued to see signs of allied life. All operatives earmarked for the operation were given instructions in case they were isolated from command, and it included leaving pre-determined symbols where one could. Some did it more, most did it less, but it was on the eleventh day that Gabán and the two others had stumbled upon a small, miniature flag dug upright next to a tree trunk that towered

above it. They had almost not seen it had it not been for Níalis' sharp eyes. On the fifteenth they had seen another of their kind. If by the same person they did not know, but it was reason enough to believe that there were others out there fighting the war.

Now they slowly made their way between and around the tall, giant firs and thick, swollen beech trees that populated a grove that traveled up a tall hill. Less than four clicks to their south the forest broke into an expansive sea of farmland. That direction they avoided like the plague, preferring instead to make camp on high ground. Jarl Gabán grunted and snarled his way up, although truth be told his pain echoed now more than it stung. His bones were still broken, their healing interrupted by every obstacle Jarl climbed and with every late night raid they dared to undertake, but their ache was now faint, it was normal. At first, he always took up position between the other two, but now he took up the rear. Kabanis and Níalis walked together more often than not, joining heads every so often to plan and to make decisions for the group — Gabán rarely took part in those sessions.

Otherwise, they spoke very little. All three of them were keenly aware of their surroundings, as they intensely stared in all directions at once it seemed. A stray child wandering away from his village could expose them, let alone a security patrol or an armed townsman, and so their heads swiveled as their feet stepped softly.

Finally, they reached the top.

At what was very nearly the highest point of the hill sat a tall statue made of granite. It was a proud, tall-standing figure of a man wearing some sort of long cloak, lined with gold and draping down to his feet. He stood on a marble base with an inscription, with his name in large letters of the Scandinavian tongue. There were candles on it and around it, most were by now extinguished, but the ones left burning signaled recent traffic to the location. The sun's last rays were now almost completely suppressed by the thickness of the grove around them, and by now very little light filtered through the thick, impenetrable wall of branches and interlocked leaves that extended above them like a ceiling.

Just at the cusp, though, where the granite statue stood, the locals had cleared the forest. From that perch they caught a narrow glimpse of the land beyond the forest. Tilled land with gold and green crops gravitated around a series of villages and towns spread almost in a line a dozen or two kilometers apart. These were connected by a rural road, patrolled every so often by local security garrisons. It showed no signs of the ongoing war, it was untouched. It was beautiful.

They made camp on the slope defiled from civilization. Gabán held first fire watch, which also meant he held the last, so he managed a whole two hours of sleep before they packed up by one in the morning that very same night.

The *kom-* and *primsargénts* talked between themselves at the top of the hill while Jarl took care of concealing their camp site. It was his fault really, that they treated him like this. He had ceded authority to them during the first week, when he was too injured to have a say. They got used to that arrangement and things to where they were now. But a man had to earn his say, and if the two more experienced men thought that Gabán still had not earned his way to the table then there was nothing left to do but hustle and build that respect. He brooded in silence, careful to keep his feelings to himself, as he made sure that all of their tracks had been covered and that all signs of their presence were gone.

When they finally came back, the news wasn't good. "Gabán, you stay here with our supplies," said the *komsargént*, his voice sweet with a tinge of saccharine. "Níalis and I are gonna do a little recon to see what the nearby village has to offer us. Hopefully, we'll find some good stuff. I could use some g'damn aspirin."

"Remember to grab books," said Gabán. The books were the most important part. Without them, their mission here would be a failure.

"Don't you worry," replied Kabanis, "we'll handle this. You keep our shit safe here and keep healin' up. We'll need you to help run some of these missions soon enough, once you're in the right condition. I'll tell you what, keep an eye

out on the road. We don't know what kind of schedules local security runs their patrols, let alone the military, but we sure as hell don't want to be caught off guard. If you see something come down that road, give us a signal. Use this smoke grenade and throw it down the slope of the hill towards the direction of the enemy. Then move out and we'll rendezvous a klick as the crow flies in the opposite direction. If Níalis and I aren't back by sunrise, leave without us."

"Oh, stop being melodramatic," said Níalis. Kabanis chuckled. Without a further word, the two of them slipped into the dark forest in the direction of the farmland. They would make it back without incident — Gabán got to hear the stories.

IV.

"I'm going too," said Jarl Gabán, his voice tough and stern. His face was drained of emotion, with the hardness of a rock to it.

Thirty-days now it had been. His bones were still broken and the wound on his flank still tender, but these were mere inconveniences now. He was like a new man. Four days ago he had joined in on his first raid — alone. They had said it was too dangerous. The town had its own small garrison of local *genderarme* or police, perhaps eight officers in total with additional staff. Two of these lived in their own homes, low-level commanding officers most likely. The rest lived in the barracks, running only erratic patrols. But the town, small and rural, seemed peaceful enough that there most likely wasn't much police work to do in it, and Kabanis and Níalis soon relented.

Gabán had raided a small general wares store, stealing food, medication, and even clothing that they could use as rags for injuries. He then made way for the local church. If there was one guaranteed literate class in any society, it would be the priests. From churches they took books which they would later scan using their translator system. This would store all this text in a database, and run it in a program against known fragments of Scandinavian canonical scripture, which provided a base from which they could start to translate the local language. If they were still connected to a network, the process would have undoubtedly gone much faster. As it stood, though, they were deep behind enemy lines. The invasion had not yet happened and was not due to happen for quite some time. They were on their own and isolated. If they were going to learn the Scandinavian tongue, that would be on them. Taking as many books as they could during their raids was prime, and churches always had the best selections.

By the time anyone had suspected the town had been robbed Gabán was already on his way back to the campsite.

He demanded that he accompany them on tonight's attack. They had been emboldened by his own adventure four days ago, and with ammunition and other equipment running low they figured it was time to upgrade their covert ops from armed robbery to attacking forces that could defend themselves. So they planned to strike at a small garrison similar to the one they had seen four days before, where Gabán had claimed his first victory.

Kabanis gave Gabán a hard look, but when the latter failed to press his case the *komsargent* muffled a grunt under his breath and eventually gave up, "Okay Gabán, but if you get your ass killed that's not on me. You do a little raid in the middle of the night against a village and you think yourself an all-star. Shit, you best bet those boys down there are caught unawares, I'd hate to see you in a firefight with that wound. But, since you think yourself a hardass now, we might as well see what you got. We're gonna hit that barracks building and we're gonna clean it, you think you're up for that?"

"You bet your ass I am," growled Gabán. "I've been up for that since the beginning. I ain't denyin' that was in no fighting condition at first, but things have changed. It's been a month and I need to do something more than just check the baggage and light signals. If we're a team, I want to be part of it. So hell yea, I'm up for that."

"Settle down there, boy," said Níalis. It felt like a taunt, but Gabán decided to ignore it.

So did Kabanis, who sighed. "Alright, with a third man the plan changes a

little." The *komsargént* was crouched around a diagram he had drawn in the dirt. He retraced parts that had been wiped away when they had gotten up, before Jarl had worked himself up enough to confront them about his lack of participation in the attacks. The drawing was of the barracks building, from what they could see from their position and from a reconnaissance mission Níalis had run last night, while Gabán and the *komsargént* took up position on a nearby hill overlooking the town, ready to block the road in case of an inbound patrol.

"There are two known entrances, here and here." He tapped a small stick at top spots showing doorways, one in the front and the other in the back of the building.

"Before hero over here offered his services, I was going in through the back and Kabanis would pin them down from the front," added Níalis. He crouched down beside the *komsargént*, as Gabán did the same. "I have to admit, having a little support on that doesn't sound too bad. Kabanis, I say you and I go in through the rear. Gabán, you enter through the front and pin them down. This is a simple raid, let's not make it harder than it needs to be."

Typical that a Díenstadi give the orders, no matter than the Frommian *komsargént* was technically the most senior in rank. Gabán took a mental note of that. "Okay," he said, "what happens once the shooting starts?"

"Good question," replied Kabanis this time. He drew a question mark inside the box representing the barracks building. We don't know where their bachelor personnel sleep. Once the shooting happens Níalis and I will search the building. You stay put somewhere in the shadows and lay down the law when they react. We don't need to kill all of 'em, remember. This ain't no fight to the death, no deathmatch, just a simple raid. Our outcome is to come out heavier in bullets and the weapons that fire them, so focus on that. Once we pin them down, we find the armory. Questions?"

"What if a patrol rolls in?" asked Gabán.

Níalis grunted, "Since the watcher wants to roll with the big boys and don't want to keep watch no more, I guess that'll be a risk we have to take, now won't it?" The stare of contempt he gave Gabán was as cold as the northern icelands. What Jarl had ever done to Níalis to deserve the dislike he did not know, but he was sure that it much to do with why Gabán did not participate more in the raiding.

"We'll cross that bridge when we get to it," said Kabanis, who was staring at the diagram in the dirt as if it held the answers they were looking for. "Ain't too many civilian security convoys at the moon's peak, anyways. Anyways."

Níalis was still looking at the *sargént*, the third wheel, with that frosty stare. He shifted his eyes down to the diagram and added, "That's the jist of it. We'll go over last minute details before the mission, let's get some rest for now."

"I'll take second watch," said Gabán. He had learned that it was better to volunteer first, lest the other two decide for themselves who takes what and give him the double-shift. He had had too many of those in recent nights." He headed back to his mat on the ground while the other two continued to talk between themselves about him, no doubt...

V.

They descended into town down the hillside and through fields that swayed in the night's cool breeze. They crept through the shadows of the inner streets with light feet. It was not a long trek to the barracks building, which was positioned near the southern edge of the village. It was made from an old brick building, its plaster skin and wood-framed windows and doors in need of repair. Its façade was covered by tall oak trees with broad, extensive crowns and these continued down the building's flanks, like a natural colonnade. They made good cover for the three operatives who darted between them, taking up position. Gabán crouched just beyond a bar of light that illuminated the narrow pathway that led from the street to the front double-doors of the barracks. Kabanis and Níalis took opposite sides and traveled to the rear, where they met on either side of a larger metallic door that sat inside a gated parking lot in the rear.

Coordinated by time, they sprung into action simultaneously.

The *primsargént* moved in first, checking the door for any wires first. He motioned for Kabanis to advance, who stood from his perch and trotted down to the door shotgun cradled against his right shoulder. Three shotgun shells in quick succession shattered the door's hinges into smithereens, and the door hung in place for only a second before it fell and clattered onto the floor just past the threshold.

Níalis moved in through the buck-frayed doorway first, followed by Kabanis, who had quietly added three more shells to his shotgun's magazine. An empty shell shot out as he stepped into the building, pumping a live round into the empty chamber.

At a predetermined time, mere seconds after the first three shots cried shrill-like, like the screech of the morning alarm, throughout a quiet night in deep slumber, Gabán crept to a position just near the front double-doors. He could hear footsteps inside, but they were moving in the opposite direction, towards the sound of gunfire. Someone must have been awake on guard duty. Jarl shrugged motionlessly to himself as he pulled twice on his trigger, two rounds going through the door and into space unknown. With his right hand he swung one of the doors open and then, now in a semi-crouch, he walked in. The atrium was empty, but a wheeled-chair still slowly spun in place.

An open door led to a hallway further into the building and, after setting up a small explosive-with-tripwire at the threshold of the entryway, Gabán waited just outside of the interior passage, rifle pointed down the hall, his finger just barely restraining itself over its anxious trigger. As he got himself comfortable, the tremors of a quick spurt of small-arms fire sounded out. A man cried out, whimpering in his language. A shotgun blast silenced him.

Kabanis and Níalis must have moved fast, because the gunfire picked up soon after. They were quick, the sounds almost always one-sided at first, as they caught men unprepared and, worse, in their sleep.

Gabán waited faithfully at the end of that hall. Upstairs, above him, footsteps pounded on the floor from the waking men rushing to take arms and defend themselves against the onslaught. Although Níalis and Kabanis were just two men against many, joining the *Koro Kirim* with the element of surprise could be more than deadly. So it proved, two elite special forces soldiers with more than twenty-five years of combined battlefield experience made mince meat of half-dressed policemen who up to this moment had thought their enemy to be amongst the peasants and farmers they surveyed.

A man stepped out on the other end of the hallway. Jarl shot once, the bullet striking through the man's left leg. He fell to the other knee, but not before Jarl squeezed another round off. This one entered square in the back. A third bullet, which went through the head, finished the job. After the last hollow cylinder of brass clinked onto the tile, the hallway fell silent again.

The thuds up above became heavier suddenly, the sound of bodies hitting the floor.

Jarl waited in the atrium still, as, at last, silence befell the entirety of the building again. The town, though, was showing signs of life. In the distance, dogs barked at each other and at their echoes, and the wind carried wondering voices. Forty-five seconds later, someone on the other end of the hall whispered, "Dagger."

"Blade," replied Gabán, his voice just as quiet. Jarl moved through the passage. Along the walls on each side were lined up photographs of various officers, some of them now long retired, some had died tonight. On the other side, in another large waiting room, stood the *komsargént* and *primsargént* poised against the wall. Kabanis' face was covered in blood and the sleeves of his jacket were dripping something viscous. Níalis was panting, and his eyes did not flare as he saw Gabán. No, they showed more weariness than anything else. He had just killed many men, many fathers, many lovers tonight.

Níalis nodded at them and he moved out, taking a stairway that took him to a basement. Kabanis moved behind him.

In their stead, Jarl set up another small explosive just at the end of the hall that connected to the atrium. It was a one-sided contraption that would scatter a storm of steel metal scraps in a leg-mangling torrent, set off by a wire so thin that the human eye would have to strain to find it. Then, he made his way to the rear door, where he took position just behind a wooden fence that made a wall for a small storage area just at the inner mouth of the parking lot.

It seemed a very long time that the two other men were in the basement. Dogs still yapped and, although he had seen not a soul yet, he knew that the townspeople were up and wondering what the sounds of battle had been about.

One might describe what happened next as a perfect storm, the simultaneous combination of the worst possible conditions, like the key to a bomb that ignited it. It was the steady rhythm of a series of heavy vehicles coming down the road that could be heard first. It was what Gabán did not hear that came second. Preoccupied as his attention and ears were with the wheeled party crashers, he failed to catch the wounded local *genderarme* officer who crawled on the floor with one hand, the other tenuously holding onto a submachine gun. Neither did Gabán notice his two comrades climbing up the staircase, until finally he turned his head just in time to see the enemy fire a stray bullet into Níalis' leg. The *primsargént* collapsed like a puppet. Kabanis managed off a shot, but not before the gunman did too. The enemy's bullet went wide, but the *komsargént's* struck home.

Kabanis ran up to Níalis, who was clutching his leg on the floor, gritting his teeth in an effort to not scream out in pain. Around him were countless rifles and boxes of bullets strewn across the tile flooring. Blood streamed down his pants in droves. The wound was deep and Gabán caught bone when glimpsed at it. If he hadn't allowed himself to get distracted he would have caught the guy. This was his fault.

The look Kabanis, who was still carrying captured weaponry and ammunition in hand, was giving him said as much as well. "You were supposed to be covering us up here," said the *komsargént*.

"Aye," replied Gabán, solemnly. "I have no excuse. But, we have bigger problems right now. There are vehicles approaching, whether they are security forces I don't know. Either way you slice it, we need to get out of here. I'll carry Níalis myself, you just lead me out of here. We take what we can."

"All of this, a wounded soldier, for what? For a couple of rifles? Fuck that," growled the *komsargént*.

Gabán pressed, "We don't have time to think a better plan out. Let's get the *primsargént* out of here. Take what you can, I carry Níalis, you lead us all out here to safety. We'll have to try again later, when we can."

"Watch who you give orders to, *sargént*." Kabanis' face was one of fury and disgust. He had reason to be angry, but this was not the time to deal with the personal problem that Gabán had created for himself. That grave he would finish digging later, once all three of them had survived this ordeal.

Níalis was still writhing on the ground and was losing fluid fast. Jarl turned away from the *komsargént* and inspected it, rummaging through a pack on his side for whatever impromptu medical equipment he could spare. He wrapped the knee up as tightly as he could and then drew a small belt he had taken from stolen loot to use it as a tourniquet. Níalis could possibly lose the leg, but he would keep his life — if they could get him to safety in time, where they could tend to the injury. Even then, there were no promises. The *primsargént's* wound was a bad one, for the bullet had become lodged squarely in the bone. They were suddenly disturbed by the sound of screeching tires outside.

"Fuck!" Kabanis swore. "This is *your* fuggin' fault, Ga—"

—an explosion ripped through the brittle barracks' walls, knocking Kabanis off his feet. On the floor, Níalis groaned. He was dying. It had been the explosive Jarl had planted at the front entrance. "Shit," he said, "they're here. No doubt moving on the back too. We need to move, *now*. Fuck the guns. I take Níalis, you watch our backs."

Shouts in foreign speak came from the direction of the explosion. The hall was

now covered in ash and soot, with debris still falling off the walls and roof.

Gabán started to pull Níalis from the shoulders towards the rear door. Kabanis was still trying to square events and figure out the next move. Gunfire erupted from the atrium and bullets struck the walls around them, sending fragments of wood, brick, and plaster in every which direction. The *komsargént* started to fire back, but did so only selectively in a bid to conserve ammo. But with every second they wasted they lost another opportunity to leave out the back and escape. Every second that counted down was every second of advantage they lost to the enemy. But when Gabán crouched down to pull the wounded *primsargént* over his soldier, the man pushed him away with weak arms and exclaimed, "Leave me here, boy. You and Kabanis take off with the loot, I got you covered." Níalis gave Jarl a long, hard look, and added, "This is on you. Don't let it happen again, because next time it may be you who pays for your mistakes."

A pained Jarl looked back at the *komsargént*, who stared back at Níalis in shock, as if Gabán wasn't there. "Stop talking stupid, Nía—"

A hail of bullets through the hallway interrupted him and over the cacophony the injured *primsargént* yelled, "GO!"

Kabanis still stood there, frozen. Níalis pushed himself against a wall, rifle in hand, and pointed it towards the direction of the atrium hallway. Gabán took Kabanis by the collar and pulled him towards the rear door. By the time they had stepped out and gotten to the parking lot, someone had tripped the second explosive the *sargént* had set. A stunning blast erupted from within, shaking the earth and lifting the pebbles around them.

Running down one edge of the parking lot, keeping in the shadows as much as possible, they ran into a fire team of security personnel who had been flanking the building in a bid to cover the rear. It turned out to be an ambush, with four or five men opening fire around them. But fighting *koro kirim* was like wrestling with lions. And so Gabán and Kabanis battled their way through it, and then fled into the small, narrow streets that crisscrossed the southern perimeter of the town. Behind them the gunfire in the barracks building continued for some time, until finally, at some point, it simply ceased.

With a heavy concious, the two survivors ran on until they met the woods, and from there they kept running.

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Havensky
Diplomat

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

by [Havensky](#) » Thu Feb 23, 2017 8:57 pm



Airship Carrier HRA Defiant **Task Force Hell; Scout Group** **350 km from Vismer**

The wedge-shape of the *Defiant* cut through the sea of clouds high above the Central Gothic Sea just east of Drakonian airspace flanked by the *Defender* and the *Dauntless*. The Scout group had run ahead of the rest of Task Force Hell to perform reconnaissance of Vismer's air and naval defenses. The satellite photos could only tell the Armada so much. For this next stage, they needed to get a little more up close and personal.

Thousands of feet below, a dozen *Ravana* class submarines swam silently through the sea in perfect silence.

Before Task Force Hell could even consider liberating the islands of Shen Almaru, the Scandinavian base at Vismer had to be rendered inert. They didn't need to conquer it, but they did need to ensure that the slavers could not launch a counterattack at the rear of their formation as it made it's way towards Shen. That meant raining destruction upon their ports, airports, roads, power stations, fuel depots, and then mining the entire area around any port cities to prevent anything getting in or out. It was also important politically. The Southern Wall alliance would only be taken seriously if it proved it could mete out retribution for attacking a member state. Vismer needed to not only be knocked out, it needed to be burnt.

At the predetermined time, the center of each of the three Defender-class airships opened up to reveal a hangar of Sirius-Class drones. Robotic arms moved the kite shaped drones one at a time from their hanger racks to the runway. As soon as the drone hit the runway the engines roared to life and quickly took off from the carrier.

Nearly three dozen drones were now in the air as the three carriers turned back towards the main group. The drones spread far out and began their descent towards the slaver island. Below, the crew of the HRS Mako sat in silence as they began to get readouts from the drones sensors. The Ravana-class submarines boasted several supersonic cruise missiles and as the drones spotted defenses the submarines in the group would take turns lobbing missiles at them. It would be slow and tedious process, but it would soften the island up before the main group arrived.

Last edited by [Havensky](#) on Thu Feb 23, 2017 9:00 pm, edited 1 time in total.

The Skybound Republic of Havensky
(Pronounced Haven-Sky)

Territory held in
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**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](#) » Sat Mar 11, 2017 8:22 am



Theater: Nicaro & Firmador

[Map](#)

550km Northeast of Firmador
March 2027

Eight months. That's how long it had been since the [loss at Salvasupuesta Sea](#). Admirant Jonn Noram had been suffering a long itch for retribution and finally, *finally*, that day was at hand. There, somewhere southwest of him, so close that he could also smell it, lay Firmador and Nicaro. He had been turned back from it once before. But this time, he could not and *would not* lose.

This time, he had brought with him two Indestructible-class aircraft carriers, not just one, along with six strategic projection vessels. The pirates had scored a small victory against his forty-ship task force, but now his numbers were almost tripled. Apparently, the Kriemada had been able to afford scraping the ships from some other unfortunate fleet, which would now be understrength or more so understrength than they had already been. But such was the new dog-eat-dog way of the imperial military, since with the war in Gholgoth the *Fuermak* did not have the material to deploy at full strength everywhere it needed to be. Of course, in different times the fleet under Noram's command might have been over a couple hundred strong, but for now the admirant was better off simply appreciating that he had been afforded a strengthened fleet at all — in different times, he would have most likely been put in a room with a desk and a stack of paperwork for his loss at Salvasupuesta last year. A growing military in need of experienced officers had saved him.

"There's no time like the present," Noram whispered under his breath, as he looked at a table-top, three-dimensional display of the country and its surrounding waters.

Covered with multi-colored symbols over terrain that looked real and tangible, like a model, the table was the accumulated battlefield intelligence that the *Fuermak* had on Nicaro and Firmador. Everything from satellite photographs and video to on-the-ground intelligence from operatives was fed into a secure database, which then generated visual models like these for commanders to have the information they needed to make the best possible choices. It was an amazingly advanced program, but as pretty as it was, it was only as good as the interpreter. The admirant had learned that the hard way when twenty enemy frigates posing as cargo ships sunk eleven of his ships eight months ago.

It would never happen again.

But, Noram could not get the retribution he sought just yet. No, it would take time to plan the surgical strike that would bring him closer to that goal, and it would take more effort than just his own. The victory to come would not only be his, but also that of the hundreds of special forces of operatives crawling through Firmador's and Nicaro's jungles, stalking through its plains, and humping up impassable mountains for the sake of preparing for what would be one of the fastest and most surgical operations in the history of the Golden Throne. More ground pounders would come soon and the victory would be theirs too. They were all allies in this common endeavor to defeat yet another enemy of the Golden Throne and to bring the empire the retribution it deserved. What made Noram the most content, though, was that there very little those pirate dogs could do about it.

For they would soon be the victims of Operation Sudden Justice.



Matagalpa, Firmador

7 September, 2027

Within the lush, dark green, and frighteningly dense jungle of western Nicaro lay the tropical city of Matagalpa. An ocean of tall skyscrapers in its center gave reason to the fact that it had been one of the first cities to declare its loyalty to the Ordenite-backed contra government based in Sandino, which was only a few hundred kilometers away. While not a coastal city, nor a major mercantile center in the traditional sense, what Matagalpa had was a developed financial system — developed, at least, for Nicaro and Firmador. With San Carlos to the west and Sandino to the east, Matagalpa's convenient location between the two made it a sensible intermediary, and if there was something that an intermediary would always need it was capital, the financial kind. With its rich crust of elite and upper middle class families, it was only natural for the city to align with the right-wing contras.

It didn't have to be necessarily so. Early on, when Nicaro and Firmador had first devolved into civil war, it was the Golden Throne's hope that Matagalpa would side with their preferred faction — the Gente National Liberation Front. The Battle of Salvapuesta was a symbol of lackluster imperial ambition, and under its nose the Ordenites, Mokans, and Alemanni had all involved themselves in the conflict. But with war now raging between all relevant parties, the opportunity had finally come for the Golden Throne to rectify the situation by force. Matagalpa would, once again, fall within its crosshairs.

The city was bathed in a sky painted in the purple and orange tones of a fresh sunrise. There was a sense of that early morning calm that stirs before cityfolk rise for work, before the noise of the city. No cars stirred on those broad downtown avenues that lay between luxurious, colonial-style bank and government buildings.

Then, the heavens rumbled.

From the bruised sky emerged a hell-like torrent of black and silver shapes that grew larger as they approached ever closer. They wavered beneath the heat of the rising sun, their edges blurring in and out of the light. Far away from the city still, a bulb of fire exploded, then another and another, and smoke started to rise upwards towards the clouds like colossal black pillars. People emerged from their homes and apartments, looking out from their balconies or windows, or from their yards or the streets, to witness the cause of these terrible sounds, as the ground shook beneath them with every impact like an earthquake. Some stood there mouth agape, others cried, and while none of them were ignorant of war any longer — the civil war had stripped all from their innocence —, still they trembled for they knew that this was no longer the same war. Something big was happening.

What change would bring they did not know. Many looked up at the sky thinking that perhaps these were the signs of a closing war. They would be filled with emotions of awe, fear, hope, and uncertainty. Would this be an end to the violence or just an acceleration? Or, was this something else altogether? Would it come with the intent to oppress or could the Nicaroan people look

forward to some respite in their toils?

Thoughts, though, soon turned to panic when the air raid sirens began to wail.

It was rare to see the aircraft flying overhead, but you could hear their thunder as if they were next to you. Those who have never lived a bombardment find it difficult to identify with those who have, because they have no inkling of how truly frightening a bombardment can be. It is a time when you reflect on your life and you realize your insignificance. No matter what you have achieved, no matter what you have earned, you do not matter and you may die. It is a feeling that sinks deep into one's core, like a disease, one that will haunt one for as long as they live. And as men, women, and children alike curled up in their rooms, against a wall or under a bed, or fled through the streets to perceived safety, it began to rain. But it was not raining water; it was, rather, a storm of men and iron — hundreds of them, perhaps thousands, descending down upon Matagalpa like an angry swarm of armored locusts.

Like a torrent, the Ironstorm had come to Nicaro and Firmador. Brief flashes lit up the sky, and if one was looking that person they would see the almost invisible shape of a small disposable re-entry vehicle. These had been just released by low earth orbit carrier stations, and while they were not subtle, the strategy was a fast one. Together with the bombardment, which was now encroaching into Matagalpa proper, the attack would surely take the locals by surprise.

Missiles were now screeching over the city itself, crashing into various targets, both military and civilian. Within the city itself, police stations were turned into rubble, as were any radio towers and other communication sites. The attack was rhythmic and tactical, not overwhelming. Residential districts were almost entirely left alone, except for strikes on larger power stations and local security buildings. Sometimes the missile struck something other than its target, causing a tragedy that would soon be forgotten beneath the excitement of much grander things at work. Those inside Matagalpa would count themselves lucky, regardless, for the violence was worse outside of the city, where the contra government's military was struck with impunity.

In this chaos landed the seven hundred operatives who had been inserted via Ironstorm. They parachuted down to two separate landing zones along the northeastern rim of the city, on either side of Matagalpa International Airport. Around their location, the bombardment continued with equal intensity as enemy military units were pelted by missiles and bombs before they could gather their strength and counter-attack.

In Matagalpa, few would know what was happening, and in a few hours their confusion would be further inflamed by the sudden beat of battle which floated in from the direction of the airport.



Batis, Firmador 7 September, 2027

Many hundreds of kilometers away from Matagalpa, before any bombs had fallen there, not even a ray of light peeked over the far horizon where water met sky. A thick fog clung to the shoreline, moving with it as if it were alive. Hidden behind the hazy darkness, twelve catamaran landing craft hummed while they cut through the waves. Just over three thousand terkos, as Macabean naval infantry were called, approached.

Batis had seen quite a bit of naval traffic over the past year. At one point, it had been a commercial port, but now it was used to bring in Ordenite aid. Now it was the Golden Throne's turn to use the city — If they could take it.

There were two major port facilities of note on the western coast of Firmador: Batis and Liberia. The latter was held by slavers and had to be accessed via a narrow strait, with Alemannia on its opposite side. The Alemanni had been mobilizing on the border with Nicaro and Firmador for several weeks now, and their subtle allegiance with, and ties to, the Fourth Reich unsettled the Golden

Throne's political and military forces. If the Alemannians reacted negatively to the Macabean invasion, an attempt to take Liberia early on would lead to early battles between the two. If, instead, Batis was taken, it would postpone a major confrontation with the anarcho-syndicalists until the *Fuermak* had earned itself a firmer footing in their war-ravaged target and it would score another major blow to the contra government, which remained the principal arm of Ordenite influence in the area.

South of Batis stretched a series of beaches which beneath the sun would have been golden and beautiful. They ran along the once-quiet, but now decrepit, town of Zarzamuélas. At one point, in a time long past for this forsaken country, these shores would have had their brilliant, twinkling surfaces — from white-foamed shoreline to pedestrian-packed boardwalk — crawling with half-naked tourists bringing their hard earned money to spend it on free flowing drugs, sex, and any other dozen sins that Firmador specialized in. That was before the war. Now, they lay solemnly bare, their once fine sands now scarred by uncared for mounds of duly colored wild grasses.

As they closed in, the still-dark sky was suddenly painted by an iridescent aura of violet, orange, and red. Like lightning, it too was accompanied by thunder and, seconds later, explosions that churned the land like shrieking fireballs. Here the bombardment came from naval cannons and ship-launched missiles, as they unloaded their arsenal in an orchestra of smoke and fire.

Somewhere out there, in and around the Batis area, were *koro kirim* who had come in from allied GNLFF territory, in the vicinity of Sandino. They were the morning's directors working their mad magic.

Far away, in the sea behind the landing force, aircraft were gathering around something they could not see, like carrion birds, until in groups of four they began to make their journey to the coast. It seemed like minutes before they screamed overhead until they finally disappeared somewhere over Firmador, where they struck as far west as Matagalpa and Masaya.

Finally, below, the landing craft hit the beach along two beaches, infantry forces split evenly between the two. Two struck the northernmost landing site carrying three BSI-120s total and an engineering vehicle, upon which the squadron provided fire support for lightly armored infantrymen who were scurrying up the defilade and taking position along a widening perimeter. Resistance here was light and it was evident that any defenders had been caught unawares, which made the taking of Zarzamuéla an easy enterprise. Things had only just begun, though, and about ten kilometers down the road, sitting on the edge of a southwestern suburb of the city, sat a garrison complex, which at this point was still under intense naval bombardment. Completing the neutralization of this garrison was the next order of business, for it would open the road that would take them into Batis' port area. Half the landing force remained to fortify Zarzamuéla and prepare for the next landing party, while the other half started their journey north — including the BSI-120 squadron.

As the battle south of Batis intensified, about eighty men were inserted via three tilt-rotors along a bare patch of jagged, cliff-dominated, and unpopulated coastline north of the city. They moved quickly into a small town that sat on the main highway, overpowering local security forces that had just been bombarded by withering offshore cannon and missile fire. Prisoners were hog-tied and thrown into the small, rusted cells of a small gendarmerie barracks, where they would remain until the battle was at an end. Civilians were told to stay indoors by megaphone and any that ventured outside were promptly captured and taken to a small sports center that sprawled on the western border of the municipality.

A wifi jammer was set up almost as soon as the fighting had started, and whatever communication infrastructure the bombardment hadn't destroyed was quickly neutralized by the ground team. The town was in the dark.

Once the town had been adequately secured, the eighty men fortified themselves within hidden and reinforced positions along the main roads. Observation posts from which they could warn of inbound enemy columns were set up along the area's edges, and the roads were quickly sowed with smaller anti-vehicle and anti-personnel mines that could be set off remotely. When the contra military tried to counterattack from the north, they would have a vicious ambush to contend with.



Masaya, Nicaro
7 September, 2027

Between GNLF and DRNF territory lay less than a hundred kilometers worth of no man's land, which whistled no bird's tune and listened to no animal's howl. All, even the trees, was dead. Dead, maimed bodies lay sprawled in clumps all around, the bloody remnants of the near-constant skirmishes fought between the two rebel factions. Many a wife had lost a husband in this strip of land, many a mother their sons.

In the burned tree line of the jungle, on the GNLF side, lay thousands of fighters crouched within the foliage and brush. They were mostly rebel soldiers, though it was easy to see the metallic shine of the *koro kirim* amongst their ranks. "Consultants," they were called. Their consulting was often deadly and direct, and for months now they had been used in Firmador to train and support GNLF troops, leading war parties on offensives into Contra and Chinadenga territory. Until now, DRFN was more of an afterthought, and engagements between the two had been relatively limited.

But things had changed.

The *Fuermak* and *Agén Enkubier* — the Golden Throne's intelligence service — had reviewed clear evidence of an Alemannian military build-up on their border with Nicaro. Masaya would be a good springboard for a subsequent offensive into Chinadenga-held Nicaroan isthmus, where a possible front with the Alemanni would be the shortest and easiest to defend. It was unsurprising, then, that the Macabean-backed GNLF was anxiously poised to spill south in what was about to be the biggest rebel offensive in the civil war yet.

Some twenty-five thousand fighters were amassed for the task, backed by a rebel-crewed battalion of sixty-four Nakil tanks and four companies of fixed long-range 160mm artillery. While these were liable to receive counter-battery fire, the Macabean-supplied rocket-assisted ammunition gave them a range that their enemies simply most often could not match, and these guns were expected to play a key role in the taking of the DRFN capital. To build this formidable force, *koro kirim* "advisors" had weakened the northern garrisons used to skirmish with the Ordenite-backed Contra government by stripping personnel from their units. With the unfolding imperial attack in Matagalpa, the Contra government was likely to have its hands full for the time being, and so if there was a time to be risky it was now. At the crack of dawn, as the first half-asleep jaguar growled awake, the GNLF launched Operation Blazed Cunning with an opening salvo that terrified even the mighty gods.

As a division's worth of infantrymen carrying rifles, grenade and missile launchers, machine guns, and an assortment of other weapons, crossed empty land, four squadrons of low flying imperial GLI-44s coming in from Firmador offered their support by suppressing trench systems and cannon batteries. All the while, the Nakil battalion charged ahead and plunged toward Masaya like a needle looking for a vein.

"Plunged," of course, was a relative term, for in the thick tropical forest of Nicaro the vegetation was so thick that even the elephant-like Nakil's suffered as they traversed over felled trees and dense underbrush. Not that they favored speed, regardless. Visibility was almost null and engagements could often be at least than fifty meters, and they moved with a leopard's caution. There was no telling when an enemy soldier could lift a palm's broad, flat leaf to reveal an anti-tank missile. Too many GNLF tankers had died that way, already. Too many burned Nakil carcasses burned and steamed within the dark, unforgiving jungle.

It did not take long for the first clashes to begin. DRFN militants patrolled often and the GNLF build-up along the border of their southernmost holdings did not exactly go unnoticed. It was too large of a deployment for a rag-tag group of hardly-trained, half-starved adolescent boys to conceal with any

efficiency. It would be their loss, for they would be the ones who were cut down by enemy fire as they opened fire.

With the help of the *koro kirim*, they pushed the enemy further south with fierce momentum. And though air support was fleeting, it was enough to cement the offensive's accelerating initiative.

The air smelled of crisply torched and rotting flesh, and men screamed for whatever mercy the gods were willing to give. But there was little mercy given, truth be told. Discipline was a word without meaning here, and as GLNF forces passed through villages they gunned down women, children, and the elderly alike. The men were rounded up and questioned as supporters of the rebels, while these begged that they were but simple hunters and farmers, only to be executed. All the while, defending DRFN battalions conducted a less-than-orderly fighting withdrawal, hoping to gain precious hours for reinforcements to arrive. Imperial air support, as limited as it was, would see that those efforts would be nigh impossible, even into the night if need be. But there many hours of day left, as the sun climbed up towards its apex, as Nicaro and Firmador burned beneath its scorching heat.

Last edited by [The Macabees](#) on Mon Apr 10, 2017 10:08 am, edited 1 time in total.

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by [EsToVnIa](#) » Mon Apr 03, 2017 9:09 pm



Theatre: Nicaro & Firmador

Damaes Juliānum

So-called Forbidden City

Perifapol, Thessalia SSR, Alemannic People's Empire

August, 2027

The Damaes Juliānum (Palace of Julios) was the central place of residence for the Autokrateira of Alemannia and the General Secretary of the National Party for the Emancipation of the Proletariat. The palace, built between 2000 and 2013, was a colossal beast; an amalgamation of concrete, steel, and stone. Covering an area of over 350,000 square metres, the palace is a compound of the central living area, itself containing over 1,500 rooms, two guesthouses and meeting rooms for the rare foreign dignitary visit, a botanical garden, a 7,000 capacity Acropolis of Lusatae that was open to the public, a cultural centre, and barracks for the 500-soldier strong Red Guardians of the Revolution that served as the personal defense for the upper echelons of the Alemannic government. It was the crown jewel for the Alemannic communist state, a suitable bastion for the "advancement of World Socialism."

Situated some twenty five metres underground, the metaphorical beating heart of Alemannia was buzzing with activity, more so than usual. The Special Operations Command and Control Centre was the home away from home for the Central Command for the National Liberation Armed Forces, the People's Tribune to the Autokrateira, and leadership of several security and intelligence agencies. Some 200 television screens lined the farthest wall, each lit up with live feeds from satellite images, autonomous reconnaissance UAVs, CCTV cameras, and TV and 5G transmissions. For months the intelligence apparatuses had been gathering information on the situation in Nicaro and Firmador, subtly noting the increasing presence of Macabean special forces and other foreigners in what was the self-described "Alemannic backyard." This was not without reprisal from Alemannia, who over the months had been sending advisers and special forces teams to the ambiguously named "areas of interest", the primary focus being areas under control by the Sadinistas Nuevas. The lack of concrete SN control over the Alemannic-Nicaroon border made such deployments

easy.

In the centre of the command, hub was a large, glass-walled room, in the middle of which was a large oak conference table with enough generic chairs to seat twenty-five: the Autokrateira, General Secretary, and the twenty-four member People's Tribune. General Balo Triaro was one of the few men that held positions in the far reaches of the administration. The Marxist revolution in 1866 fueled a similar women's liberation movement that saw a cultural shift from the traditional patriarchy of the Alemannic Khaganate to an egalitarian, borderline matriarchal culture of the "Alemannic Empire" — an empire not built upon tradition and royalty, but instead built on the principles of Marxism and other far-leftist theories. As such, Triaro constantly felt a need to prove himself. Perhaps after today, he would no longer feel the need to do such that, but only time would tell.

"They're waiting for you, Comrade General," a uniformed officer informed Triaro, who nodded in response, and walked towards the open glass door. Stepping into the conference room, Triaro sat down at the far end of the table, directly opposite from Autokrateira Aloisia Xenia Musarra, who had been appointed to the office just a few years earlier. To her right side was the General Secretary of the National Party for the Emancipation of the Proletariat, Atena Mironeska, and to her left was Chairwoman of the People's Tribune, Raqæla Vantilkiotusa. After giving a sharp salute to the Triumvirate at the far end of the table, he took his seat and two officers shut the glass doors, sealing off the conference room from the main hub.

"The Aquilia Military District reports that it should be fully mobilised by early September," Gen. Vasilika Kantaxena, announced now that everybody was in the room. Kantaxena was the Chief of Staff for the National People's Liberation Army and in some ways the most powerful person in the room.

"That's not quick enough, we can't afford time with the timetable," Natalia Floreana, intelligence attache from the Standing Commissariat of State Security, chimed in.

"There's too much material to move out of storage in the timeframe that's being given. We'll need at least six weeks minimum before final preparations can be made," another officer snapped a response.

"The Golden Throne—" Trairo despised referring to the Macabean lands as that—"...has special forces in the area according to our own contacts. At the very least, we need to deploy preliminary forces and push towards Managua while waiting for reserve units to finish mobilising." The room was silent now as the generals, admirals, air marshals, intelligence directors, and party leadership fixated their gazes on Trairo, causing him to sink ever so gently back into his chair from the pressure. "Enough of the district is mobilised to make the initial push. SN forces are weak and inexperienced. They shouldn't be much trouble."

"We need to secure Managua swiftly, need I remind everybody here," Musarra said to the surprise of everybody at the table. Her cool demeanour, on account of being director of the Popular Commissariat for National Unity and Security for several years before her tenureship as Autokrateira, usually meant she was a silent observer during these meetings, speaking only when directly asked or when necessary. "Taking Managua is only the first step on a very long road of wrestling Nicaro and Firmador from the Fascists and Orientals. Whether they acknowledge it or not, they are Latins just the same as us. It is the duty of the strong to help the weak, even if they do not yet realise they need the help."

Operation *Lukresia*
Managua Metropolitan Area, Sadinista-controlled Nicaro
17 September, 2027 - Day 1 + 4 hrs
15th Air Assault Brigade

News of the Golden Throne's assault sent shockwaves throughout the Alemannic government and expedited the necessary machinations to launch the tentatively named Operation *Lukresia* three weeks ahead of its planned launch.

Initial planning for the operation called for the deployment of airborne and spaceborne forces to capture key infrastructure installations and airfields to facilitate the rapid movement of conventional forces into Sandinista territory, all the while elements from the so-called Aquillia Military District would be moving up the western coast to link up with forces in Managua. The goal was not the total destruction of the Sandinistas but rather establish an ad hoc border should the Macabean forces decide to drive southwards. Simultaneously, naval infantry would be landing at three sites 200 km west of the Slave State-controlled city of Liberia with the similar objective of pushing north to again establish an ad hoc border. Unlike with Managua, Alemannic High Command hoped Liberia can be persuaded to voluntarily stand down to allow the usage of its port to reinforce the border against an expected Macabean assault. That was the plan, at least, time would be the only gauge on whether or not it was followed through.

The cold, metal coffin Private Justinian Akropolites found himself in could only be described as claustrophobic in the strictest sense. The 19-year-old was fresh out of training and assigned to "Seserea" Company - 481st Separate Orbital Assault Battalion, one of the few units trained in low-earth orbit insertions. An irony given Justinian's advert phobia of heights. The pounding of his heart was the only thing reminding him that this was the real deal and not just a simulation. Every couple of seconds was matched with a loud mechanical grinding as the controllers onboard the low-earth orbit station made minute algorithmic adjustments to the targeting computers to ensure the majority of the four hundred and fifty soldiers being deployed by orbital insertion reached their landing zones. Justinian's company was selected to be the fourth wave and assigned to capture a hospital near the outskirts of the city. The panels lining the sides and overhead of the capsule lit up, indicating to Justinian that deployment was mere moments away. Now the radio was alive with voices from the rest of the company as they checked in, when it was his turn, he managed to mutter an "all systems green." Two more mechanical grindings were ended by the countdown. As the launch controlling officer said "one" over the capsule's radio, Justinian closed his eyes as he felt the sudden jolt of the capsule being launched.

The small window directly in front of Justinian's eyes was his only gateway to the world around him. The yellow-red heat as the capsule drove down to the surface made seeing out of it impossible. All Justinian had was the monotonous voice of the capsules autopilot to keep him company as he descended further and further down. *So far so good* he thought as glimpses of clouds appeared through the window. He spoke too soon. Suddenly the capsule shook violently as it hit a wind gust and slowly tilted forward until it was descending perpendicular to the ground. By now Justinian had a full view of Managua, the great city full of fire from hours of missile strikes from Alemannic ships positioned off the coast. The entirety of the downtown area was covered with thick, black smoke that rose high into the heavens. Every few seconds another fireball erupted from the concrete jungle below indicating that the bombardment was still underway.

"Contact in t-minus thirty seconds," the autopilot's monotonous tone brought Justinian out of his

catatonic trance and back to the harsh reality that that ablaze city was where he was going. Slowly the jets on the capsule tilted it back upright and the thunderous roar of the descent boosters ignited as the autopilot counted down. When it hit zero, again Justinian was jolted as its parachute was deployed. Some minutes later, the loud clanging of metal against concrete alerted the private that he was back on solid ground. Almost immediately upon landing, the door to the coffin hissed open with a loud pop and, rifle in hand, Justinian climbed out of the contraption where he was greeted by his squad, those who had survived the trip down at least. He was joined by six others: squad leader Adrianari Vataze, corporal Kalix Bardas, and privates Basil Zimiskes, Quintin Rhagabe, Pegari Timiskes, and Gabriela Lusapena.

"Where are the others?" Justinian asked, turning and grabbing his rifle from its case in the capsule.

"Unaccounted for, but we have orders," Adrianari replied. The gashes and chips on her combat armour indicated that she'd already been greeted by the Sandinista militia within the city. "C'mon, quickly now," She barked again and started walking east towards their objective. Instinctively, the six soldiers under her command followed closely behind.

The entire air was full of the cacophony of a modern war: missiles shrieking, distant and near explosions, diving mortar shells, and of course the crackling of gunfire as Alemannic soldiers battled the Sandinistas. Jet engines overhead indicated that the first and second waves' objective, capturing the Managuan airport on the outskirts of the city, was completed and regulars were being flown in to reinforce the airborne vanguard.

Soon, the squad found themselves on a tight, narrow street littered with debris from the destroyed bank a block away and garbage from the residential apartments on either side. The gunfire only a few streets over had been their main source of direction, but with it ceasing, they were definitely lost now. Not that any of them would admit it, however. Despite this, they pressed on along the street, hugging the facades of the buildings that lined either side. As they moved passed a utility store, an old man brandishing a small pocket knife lept out of the doorway and lunged at Pegari. Catching the blade in his right shoulder, Pegari grabbed the man's right hand and pushed him into the glass display of a toy store adjacent to the utility store. The man surprised that Pegari was seemingly unaffected at having just been stabbed, shouted whatever obscenities popped into his head. They fell on deaf ears as several gunshots rang out and the old man collapsed onto the sidewalk.

"You okay?" Gabriela asked as she lowered her rifle.

"Yeah, just a little cut," Pegari replied after spitting on the man's body. "Seems Verenia favours me today," He continued with a short, dry laugh.

"Well, hopefully, she can favour all of us until this is over and done with" Quintin chimed in. "Even Basil too," he joked.

Basil, the company's token-Christian, said nothing and instead gave a half-genuine chuckle.

Still, they pressed on and emerged at an intersection. As the soldiers passed a ransacked pharmacy, eight shots rang out and pelted the wall in between Justinian and Kalix, causing the seven soldiers to dive down into the opposite wall. Adrianari peaked up and glimpsed four Sandinista militiamen crouching behind a knocked over table in a book store.

"Four behind limited cover, bookstore," She shouted out. Like clockwork, Kalix raised his machine gun on the wall and started firing, blasting the wooden table and causing splinters to fly out in all

directions. Gabriela, Pegari, and Basil opened fire with their rifles, hitting two men while the other two ran off. As the Alemannians calmed down and regained their focus, Justinian noticed that one of the injured Sandinista fighters was squirming and mumbling some sort of language, Spanish he figured. Raising his rifle, he cracked off three more shots to the surprise of his squadmates.

"The hell was that for?" Quintin asked loudly, his ears trying to readjust to normal volumes once again.

"He was still moving," was Justinian's reply.

Quintin didn't reply but gave an understanding nod.

"Everyone in one piece?" Kalix enquired as he scanned the bookstore, machine gun poised to let loose.

"All here," Basil replied while the others gave reaffirming nods.

"I see the hospital!" Gabriela shouted, pointed at a tall building with a lit up red cross on the side.

They continued down the street and turned left, moving past the smouldering wreckage of a Sandinista tank. Whether it was destroyed by an airstrike or ground forces couldn't be determined, but the important thing to the squad was that it was no longer functioning.

"Ady! Where the fuck have you been?" the voice of sergeant Fiator Lusaenus called out.

"We landed east and they never told us which direction we were headed," Adrianari replied.

"Well, fuck that. Half my squad didn't show up to the rally point while no communications have been coming in about what's going on everywhere else," He paused as another explosion from a missile rang out from a block away. "Where are you guys headed?" He enquired.

"Hospital," she said, pointing at the five-story building three blocks from where they were.

"Let's get going then," Fiator said, picking up his rifle and motioning his squad to abandon a jewellery store they were looting.

The combined 16 soldiers moved down the street and into the hospital parking lot, taking care to check the parked cars for any potential improvised explosive devices the Sandinistas might have placed. The combined squads approached the entrance, stacking up on both sides of the doors and prepared to shoot their way in. As they entered the hospital lobby, twenty civilians held their hands up, indicating clearly that they had no weapons or anything. Moving past them, the 16 soldiers split up into three squads. Justinian was grouped together with Basil, Kastix, Pegari, Gabriela, and a soldier from Fiator's squad, Corporal Synesia Glyka. The five of them were assigned to clear out the surgical theatres while Fiator's squad took care of the maternity ward and Adrianari's secured intensive care.

As they passed through admin offices, they heard gunshots behind them, followed by shouting in Alemannic. Eventually, they reached the main theatre room, it was empty and bare of anything of worth, only the table and smashed windows and jars remained. As they entered the room, each covering the back of the other, all seemed well despite the sounds of death out from all around them. As they prepared to declare their half of the hospital clear, at least eight Sandinista fighters came charging out of the side room, armed with scalpels and other hideous looking medical tools.

Roaring and screaming the men caught the squad off guard, Gabriela was stabbed through the shoulder with a scalpel at least twice, falling to the ground.

Basil managed to shoot down a fighter charging at him and another, who fell back through a window into the room he came from. Synesia was tackled to the ground by a tank of a man, his large hands around her throat. As Basil prepared to shoot this beast of a man, a scrawny fighter jumped onto his back and pulled him to the ground, his arms tightening around his own neck. Kastix saved him by swinging his machine gun from the barrel across the attacker's head, causing it shatter against the wall.

Justinian was wrestling another fighter with his rifle, his face full of fury and fear, eventually he overcame his assailant with a kick to the ankle, breaking it. As the fighter fell to the floor in pain, Başaran grabbed his head and repeatedly smashed on the white tiled floor. As Basil recovered he looked to see Synesia's life fading out of her face, pulling out his combat knife he rushed across the room and drove it down into Synesia's attacker's head. Throwing the body off her, Basil turned to help Justinian, however, he was swift and strong enough to lift his attacker's arm up over his mouth, biting down into it with all the strength in his jaw.

Breaking away, Justinian turned and proceeded to stab his attack continuously in the chest with his own combat knife.

Pegari for his part was again, wrestling someone with a sharp object in his hand; a pattern he hoped would stop. Pushing the attacker over, Peragi headbutted the young fighter, who must have been between 16 and 18, losing consciousness. Taking the scalpel, he ran it across the fighter's neck, killing him in a messy manner. When it was over, Peragi fell onto his back, silence befalling him.

The entire squad was in silence, only heavy breathing breaking the sound of war outside. Justinian sat up and held his head in his hands. Peragi sat on the operating table and proceeded to wipe the copious amounts of blood off his face. Synesia too sat up and stared into the face of her deceased attacker.

"I think we ran out of all our favour for the day," Gabriela said to deaf ears, nursing the two puncture wounds in her shoulder.

Synesia's radio coming to life broke the silence that hung over the room.

"Glyka have you secured the west wing?" Fiator's voice asked.

"West wing secured, all hostiles cleared. Over," she replied, audibly drained from the events that had transpired some minutes ago.

"Good, good. Job well done. Take ten." the voice crackled out.

One day down, but how many more to go?

Operation *Grægoras*

109 km west of Liberia, Gente Slave State-controlled Firmador
17 September, 2027 - Day 1

The landing sites chosen for Operation *Grægoras*—the Alemannic god of the sea—seemed arbitrary at best. The beaches that stretched from all along the peninsula renowned regionally for the crystal clear waters and bright, white sand. Now they were but a shadow of their former selves as months of war and hardship destroyed what virgin beauty remained. Bodies, dead animals, and rubbish lined the beaches while the smouldering husks of vehicles lined the roads of the fishing communities that called the now-desolate wasteland home. Some twelve hours of near-constant bombardment by Alemannic planes and naval vessels did little to help the situation.

Unlike in the south, the Alemmanic High Command

had little reason to believe there was a strong enough enemy presence outside of Liberia to justify the tremendous bombing campaign undertaken. In truth, the terror bombing was just that. A show of force to the Gente Slave State and the people trapped within its non-recognised borders that they were dealing with a power they have never dealt with before. Strategically, Liberia was the crux of the slightly ambitious Alemannic campaign against Firmador and Nicaro. The city was vital for controlling the straits and what the Alemannians called the *Mare Nostrum*. That said, the Alemannians were fully prepared to decimate Liberia should it not willingly submit to Alemmanic rule, all under the auspices of "destroying the slaver threat," should the need arise.

Before then, however, the 91st Red Banner Naval Infantry Brigade, supported by auxiliary units from the 11th Guards Tank Army and special forces units, would have the honour of leading the spearhead towards Liberia. The brigade was to land and then push north to the city of Boca De Sol, which once captured would serve as the main operations centre for all forces in the peninsula.

In the early hours of September 17th, coinciding with the first wave of units deployed to Managua, the first wave crawled its way to the beaches. The LCACs zipped along the water from the landing ships through the morning twilight. Minutes later, they hit their beaches and the marines filed out of them and into cover. Some gunfire cracked out as whatever few slavers in the area opened fire on whatever this mystery force was. Small abrupt firefights erupted along the beach, brief flashes of light and smoke giving away their positions in the thick jungle. Almost as swiftly as they had appeared, the gunfire ceased one by one as the assailants either retreated or were dealt with through returning fire or artillery. No doubt the slavers would be reinforcing the area as news of the landings spread, but for now, the marines would have to take advantage of the relative element of surprise.

Last edited by [EsToVnIa](#) on Mon Apr 03, 2017 9:10 pm, edited 1 time in total.

Most Heavenly State/Khamgiin Tengerleg Uls

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Drakonian Imperium
Spokesperson

Posts: 126
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

Nunquam non Paratus*

☐ by [Drakonian Imperium](#) » Thu Apr 06, 2017 9:11 pm

QUOTE

Theatre: **Gholgoth**

**EXERCISE Urgent
Typhoon**



Multinational combat operations offer difficulties in command and control, coordination, interoperability, and combat readiness. Exercise *Urgent Typhoon* aims to ease the burden created by these issues, addressing them among participating Gholgothic Militaries. As such, the purpose of the exercise is to develop and improve strategies and tactics for conducting large-scale naval and amphibious operations while expanding cooperation with and between Gholgothic Powers. Furthermore, due to the current wartime operational environment, *Urgent Typhoon* will prepare participating forces for succeeding combat operations in the region.

Urgent Typhoon will be one of the largest military exercises conducted in Gholgoth and Varathron. The exercise will include elements of the Imperial Drakonian Army, Navy, and Aerospace Forces, the Territorial Army and Navy of Mille Mortifere, Volunteer Drakonian Army, the Disian Colonial Army, the Navigator's Guild of Mille Mortifere, the Legionary Armada of Havensky, the Imperial Armed Forces of the Pantocratic Dominate of Emperor Pudu, the Imperial Army and Navy of Jagada, the Argent Guard, the Blazing Sword Mercenary Company, Salamander's Mercenary Organization, and Lord Brittius' Own Private Guard.

Urgent Typhoon will take place on the western coast of the largest island of Mille Mortifere: Argentia. In the 13th Century A.D., the island was first discovered and then occupied by Drakonians. The name of the city of Saris is derived from long pikes used by its natives inhabitants called "Sarissa" by the Drakonians. In 1874, the old city of Saris was destroyed in raid by force from the Sanctan Empire (modern-day Tersanctus). The current city was reestablished the following year to the north of its former ruins. Perched on the slopes of Mons Amauros, the mountain of shadow, is a town named for its ancient stone citadel, Rubellum has long been used as a refuge in times of conflict for the inhabitants of the Sarissian Plains. The Saxa Vagus River, meaning "rocky fugitive," runs past Rubellum and splits into its north and south fork before Saris. New Saris lies on the northern bank of the north fork of the Saxa Vagus. Further to north of the modern city is the Clarus River, so named for its bright waters, the river springs from the hill country to the northeast.

COMMAND

Urgent Typhoon was planned and organized by Marshal Horatius Grantus, Imperial Drakonian Army and Lord Admiral Vitalis Mercurius, Territorial Navy of Mille Mortifere. Marshal Grantus will remain in overall command of the exercise, while General Jeronimus Pontus, Territorial Army of Mille Mortifere, will command the Exercise Observer-Controller Force (OBSFOR). Supreme Allied Commander, Sky Marshal Richard Bexar, Legionary Armada of Havensky, will command Allied Forces, Blue Forces (BLUFOR). General Martinus Sergius, IDA, will command the Opposing Forces, Red Forces (REDFOR). Additionally, on BLUFOR, all Drakonian and Drakonian Affiliated Forces will fall under the command of Admiral Adrianus Ventura, Imperial Drakonian Navy. All Pudite Forces will be under the command of Fleet Admiral Khudoi, while the REDFOR contingent of Pudite Force will be under the command of Colonel Nestor Prozimir. Jagadan Forces will be under the command of Lord Commander Milea al'Thonne, Imperial Army.

MISSION

To increase combat readiness and improve integration of participating forces, the goal of the exercise is to test, assess, and rehearse command and control and the interoperability of multinational Gholgothic forces all while conducting joint operations in a confined battlespace. BLUFOR will conduct a mock amphibious landings and raids, airborne operations, maneuver, and assault exercises. Furthermore, after the commencement of the combat exercise logistic units will rehearse support operations. REDFOR will practice defensive operations and provide an aggressive opposition to BLUFOR.

BLUFOR

Objectives

- Make Amphibious Landings on three beaches to the south of the mouth of the S. Saxa Vagus River.
- Airborne Forces will support the beach landings and secure bridgeheads across the N. and S. Saxa Vagus.
- Landing Forces will push to link up with Airborne Forces holding the S. Saxa Vagus Bridges.
- Assault and secure Old Saris and link up with Airborne Forces holding the N. Saxa Vagus River Bridges.
- Assault and secure Saris; begin landing Follow-Up Forces in the Port of Saris.
- Push north assaulting and securing Rubellum. The Combat Exercises will be complete with the capture of the Citadel of Rubellum.
- Follow-Up Landing of the Logistic and Support Units, Engineering, and basing for additional Pudite Forces will continue after the conclusion of Combat Exercises.

REDFOR

Objectives

- Delay or Prevent the Landing of BLUFOR.
- Prevent BLUFOR from capturing bridgeheads.
- Counterattack and Repel Landings and bridgeheads.

- Successfully simulate the strike of at least one Tactical Nuclear Weapon.
- Defend Saris, Old Saris, and Rubellum, resisting BLUFORs attempts to capture those objectives.

Rehearsals are a vital component of successful military operations. They insure all echelons are able to familiarize with operational plans, and allow the testing plans and all aspects of operations, as well as allowing for testing of communications and informational systems. In addition, this exercise allows unfamiliar militaries to work together and familiarize themselves with each others standard operating procedures.

Urgent Typhoon will bring together the militaries of Havensky, Emperor Pudu, Jagada, Mille Mortifere, and Drakonia allowing these forces to unite and work together more efficiently than would have been possible in a sudden, necessary operation. The current political climate in Gholgoth presents unique challenges and while *Urgent Typhoon* can not address diplomatic issues it can present solutions to military problems.

* Latin: "Never unprepared."



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Democratic Socialists

by **Mokastana** » Wed Apr 12, 2017 8:59 am



THEATRE: NICARO AND FIRMADOR

Jungles East of Masaya, Nicaro 17 September, 2027

War had come to Nicaro and Firmador, not just in the form of short skirmishes that everyone was familiar with, but modern warfare, with all its fury. In the North, the Contra Government backed by the Ordernites was under siege. Both in their largest Port, and their largest inland city, the latter thanks to orbital dropped forces. In the chaos, the National Front of Nicaro invaded the Duel Republic Front of Firmador, reaching all the way to Malaya, their Capital, or so the rumors said. Rumors also circulated of an impending Alemannic invasion. If that was to happen. Then it wouldn't be long until the various international powers split the divided nation apart. Because of this, it was time the Jiyu Front made a move.

Lieutenant Major Viktor Vega sat in a earthen bunker hidden by branches and leaves, with him were the "Generals" of the Jiyu Militia. Of course, they had come a long way from the poor rebel army they had once been. Backed the the People's Unified Federation, the Jiyu had been a part of the PUF's efforts to secure their interests in a fellow Latin nation. Weapons had been smuggled in, and with them the Federal Navy had sent their own Elite Naval troops, the Blue Frogs, to teach the locals about the weapons and tactics. Of course, the biggest aid the Jiyu Front was not the weapon shipments, but the partnership with they had with the Tsarina Cartel. Her fields and factories built and sold drugs, but she brought in millions of foreign currency. That money bought supplies, medicine, homes, and vehicles for the growing Militia. The Jiyu needed money, and she needed men to protect her Empire. It was a natural partnership. Together they pushed the Samoza Cartel off the Mainland, and now, they looked north to the weakened Duel Republic Front of Firmador.

Their refugees fleeing the war were rescued and sent to work the fields of the Jiyu front, while the Jiyu forces pushed North. Money and clean food converted enough of the local military to make the advance easier than expected, but Viktor knew their was more trouble on the horizon. Rumors of Koro Kirim backing the National Front of Nicaro spread among the refugees they saved. If so, perhaps an uneasy peace could be built between the two, at least for the moment. If not, then they were in for a good fight. The Jiyu were surrounded

by enemies, their only secure border was with the Duel Front of Nicaro, no doubt an act of mercy thanks to the Tsarina influence in both factions. Hopefully, the GNLf would be open to friendly relations as well, given both factions outlook on fighting slavery in the land. Just then, a runner entered the Command Hut.

"Generals, Sir, the Alemannic invasion has started!"

Just what Viktor needed, even more complications.

Liberia, Liberia Free State **17 September, 2027**

Liberia, Capital and temporary home of the Tsarina Cartel, stood like a beacon of civilization on the war torn coast of Firmador. It's towers and markets were open, smugglers bringing in goods from all over the world. Televisions, computers, cars, and simple (plus some exotic) foods flowed into the city's port. To pay for all these goods, Liberia no longer sold slaves, but drugs. Grown in Eastern Firmador, being sold all over Western GD as far as Zvezda, the local Cartel was making millions, enough to keep their army happy, and people content.

But much like every other foreign intervention into the Gente del Agua, life was never that easy. Criminals made poor governors, and the Tsarina ruled fairly, but harshly. Her soldiers protected the docks and city streets, but the Slave State continued to launch attacks into her territory. Local crime had been on the rise until she began cutting off hands of thieves, and public executions became a common punishment for Capital Crimes. Still, governing cost money, and taxes required records, and laws. Neither existed here. There wasn't even a single currency, dozens floated around the city, and everything was sold by cash. The Tsarina had experimented with starting a bank of Liberia, and it started slow, but was beginning to take off. It was using banknotes from the Golden Throne as its primary currency, a safe choice for the moment. Things were beginning to look up for the city when the bombs started falling.

The western roads, leading into Firmador were under attack, scouts reported nearly constant explosions. Someone was bombing them, but missing, almost intentionally given the distance. The Council who ran the city met in the Luxury Hotel turned government office, and in one of the top rooms, three of the five met to discuss.

"You idiots, they are sending a message."

The man without a name spoke up first, silencing the group before they could even start. Despite living in this country for almost a year as an aide to the Tsarina, no one knew who he really was. They just called him "Fetch", a nickname for a game one would play with a pet dog. Only "Fetch" was not the neighborhood friendly dog that everyone loved. He was a loyal mutt to someone far far away, working with foreign governments to keep the weapons and food flowing from the East. Even in the middle of a war his supplies kept coming in, but everyone knew he only stayed because his Master wanted him here. Yet, the Tsarina kept this pet around because as long as his Master's needed the Tsarina, he would Fetch anything for their cause.

"What message would that be, Fetch?" one of the Councilors spoke up, a short German man by the name of Hans. He was local, and did good to make sure the docks and the Tsarina's logistics ran on time, but he knew little of military matters. Her third councilor, a former Zvezdan Police Colonel by the name of Vladimir, responded, catching on to Fetch's meaning:

"They want us know, they bomb with... lots of strength, but they don't bomb us, they bomb to show us. To show off their power. They give us time to respond, to surrender. "

Vladimir's Spanish was still a work in progress, but he was an intelligent man, able to hold conversations after only a year of practicing with the Locals. Hans thought for a second, before exploding in a frenzy of words.

"We ship millions in drug money every day out of this port! They can't seize it, don't we have defenses? Giving up this port will kill the Tsarina's cash flow!

We have to fight!"

Fetch interrupted, "Fight? Against another faction? Sure. We could probably even fight off a small invasion, but Alemnania won't be sending a small force, they will want a staging point for invasion, and we have the most valuable port this side of Firmador. They aren't sparing us, they are sparing that dock."

"So what do we do?" Hans asked both the Police Colonel and the Foreign Agent. Vladimir turned to Fetch, who only shook his head.

"This is a tide even I can't turn, they've cut us off from the rest of Firmador, and probably control the inland Sea. We need to send word to the Tsarina that she is going to lose her Capital. Perhaps she can earn it back at a later time, but for now, we should surrender and yield to the invaders."

"What?" Hans couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"Hans, Vladimir is a good cop, and good soldier, but he doesn't have the forces to keep the peace and fight a war. Things are going to be crazy in this country soon. The sooner we hide the Tsarina's assets behind the battle lines, the better. I need to disappear, if the Alemnians know she's been getting foreign aid, they'll want to know from where, and that's a fight you don't want to get involved in."

"So you're running away?"

"I'm going to take a boat north with what I can smuggle out of the city. I'll bring some of the Tsarina's most loyal men with me. If she takes Medellin, we can start over there. If not, we'll make something work."

"Fine, run away like a dog with your tail between your legs, we'll stay and protect the Tsarina's Empire."

Fetch walked out without responding to Hans's taunts. When it was just Vladimir and Hans, they both looked at each other before the Police Officer spoke up.

"I need to hide our products we have around the city, and protect our cash, find the bankers and make sure our money is safe. You, you need to set up explosives on the dock. I send you my bomb soldiers. Understood?"

"Explosives, why?"

"When we surrender, we negotiate. We need a bargaining position."

Over the next few hours as the two men began their work, a civilian radio station started broadcasting a notice of surrender to the Alemnamic forces and a request to meet with their leadership at a location just west of the city.

Medellin, Somoza Cartel controlled island 16 September, 2027

14 million Universal Standard Dollars. 14 million. Universal. Standard. Dollars. Two years ago, that was more money than Sasha Tchernova had ever seen in her entire life. It was enough to live like a king, maybe open a school, or set up a fantasy kingdom far from the horrors of war in a tropical paradise, like Mokastana. Well, maybe not Mokastana, she had too many enemies there. 14 million dollars was once a lot of money, but today, it was merely a deposit on a far more expensive operation. One that if it went well, would pay off a hundred fold. A simple, 14 million dollar bet.

The Somoza Cartel knew how she had taken out the Slave State, starting out as friends and then betraying them with sea-launched missiles. It was something they planned on avoiding for themselves. All shipping to their home island was now boarded and searched as it crossed their islands in the North, and anti-missile defenses were set up on the East of their home island to block land-based attacks from shore. She knew about those only because she had tried to burn the island previously with some missiles from a Firmador military unit bribed into service. The Somoza had an island Fortress, while she held the mainland. It was a standstill. Until today.

Mercenaries from Nifon, rumored to be exceptionally ruthless, would be her trick to take out Somoza command. Organized by her associate Mr. Mondragon, aka 'Fetch', the foreign mercenaries would tip the scales in her favor. Two million for the sub, travel, and confirmation of strikes, and three million each for the Tomahawk cruise missiles it would fire. The Mercs had no vested interest in Nicaro, other than the desire to make money, and Nicaro was turning into a seller's market. Destroying the Somoza Cartel leadership would kill the richest man in Nicaro, but they knew with him dead, his organization would crumble apart. The lieutenants would need Mercs of their own as they squabbled over his fallen Empire. That meant the dead man's fortune would be wasted on infighting, or a Mercs salary, depending on you look at it. Everyone won, except Mr. Somoza.

Watching the satellite feed in a recently occupied Nicaro army base, a representative from the Nifonese Merc organization told her that they wouldn't be able to track the missiles, but shortly after launch the mansion on her screen should be blown to hell. She would know the time of launch, and see the impacts. It was good enough for now. Launched from under a hundred kilometers away from the target, the missiles had about five minutes of flight before they would impact. Oddly enough, most of the that flight time would be over land. The Nifonese coordinating the attack explained that a missile strike over the ocean could be spotted by modern air defenses, while flying through the island they could hide the missiles in the terrain. Most enemy AA was to the East and protecting Medellin directly, therefore the safest route was up from the south, through the mountain passes.

Unknown to Sasha though, was that two minutes and 13 seconds after launch, the missiles were spotted. Not by air defenses, but by a few Cartel soldiers watching over a processing plant hidden in the jungle. They thought at first the missiles were coming for them, but when the missiles passed, they scrambled for the Satellite phone to call the plants north of them. Word continued to pass, until someone realized that Medellin was a far more valuable target, and north of all of them. They needed to be warned.

Three minutes and 23 seconds into the missile's flight, and a call had reached the Somoza home. The phone call was frantic, taking up precious seconds as the missiles passed yet another drug camp. The words were short, inbound missiles from the South, get to cover. Although the Mansion Villa where the Somoza family lived was large, the shouts spread word fast. Three minutes and 58 seconds into the flight, and the head of the Somoza family was notified, barely taking the time to put on pants before running downstairs to find his children. He picked up his daughter and raced to the basement, his wife and son closely behind. Elsewhere, at four minutes and 22 seconds into the missile's flight, air defenses finally spotted them and began firing S-300s to intercept. Inside the mansion, the door to the basement and the bomb shelter inside were already opened, protected by guards and waiting for the family. At four minutes and 40 seconds, Señor Somoza was just outside the bomb shelter door. At four minutes and 52 seconds, the first cruise missile struck.

The ground shook as parts of the Villa ceased to be, exploded into fragments of Terracotta colored debris. Expensive cars flew in the air and security burned outside. A clock tower in the fortress villa fell into the courtyard, collapsing onto a freshly pruned garden. The buildings were built to withstand bullets and small bombs, not cruise missiles. One alone tore a side of mansion to shreds, leaving the walls exposed and dead scattered. The second missiles only served to finish off what barely survived the first. With most of the complex destroyed, the second missile crashed into the remains of the Mansion's first floor, detonating over the basement and killing all inside. The third missile crashed just short of its target, the S-300 finally doing its job.

The devastation on the satellite feed was oddly satisfying to the Tsarina, finally seeing her largest rival put in the ground. To be sure though, she had spent the last three million putting a very expensive special forces team into place outside of the Villa. Roughly 18 men would now begin to kill their way into the remains, and confirm the target for her. With an image of a burning Villa on the screen, her aid, Hector Moldova poured shots of Vodka to celebrate. Surviving leadership on Medellin would be given a choice, join the Tsarina, or die. With luck, and a little more application of force, the war for Nicaro and Firmador drug supply would be over soon.

She would soon learn of the attack on Liberia, and find her operations in the east cut short, but for now, a hard fought victory was to be enjoyed.

Outside of Rivas, Sonoma controlled territory 28 September, 2027

It was time. The PUF had removed most of their resources from the Nicaro Civil War, but not all. A single Naval Infantry Transport Flotilla had been in standby in the Holy Marsh, and began its moves when the Golden Throne began its attacks. Sailing to the target took nearly a month, during which they learned of the invasion by Alemnania. A nation with growing ties to their enemy the United World Order. The war in Red Star Union was getting intense, with thousands dead, the war in Castille de Italia fairing better, but even more costly. Both fronts had millions dedicated to them, and here, on the ass end of the Greater Dienstad, a single Division was moving in, to support their 'allies' in the Golden Throne, whether they wanted it or not. Luckily they would not be facing a strong enemy, just a well funded Cartel army with somewhat modern weapons. At least it wasn't the first time the PUF Navy launched attacks against a Cartel.

Their target was a strategic island guarding an inland sea. With this position, they could begin launching missile attacks against pirate forces and help clean up the god forsaken hell hole of their former enemy. Using Damocles, they found good beaches to land on, and some of the defenses. To be sure, a batch of Hellion 2 cruise missiles were fired at the island though only a few targets were marked, mostly clear military installations and a radar dome. The rest would be found by the Hellions mid flight, when enemy AA lit up the sky with missiles and radar, most would be engaged. The missiles, flying low, would also scan for enemy anti ship defenses and threats to the landing forces, engaging them as well. Commanders would watch from their CnC rooms on the amphibious assault ships. Seeing the Hellions' AI mark and engage targets in almost real time. This was modern war, and it was only phase one.

Phase two came the next day, FA-60F Outlaws and Cobra Attack helicopters flew in to finish the job, bombing bases and roads to the beaches. They quickly assumed air superiority and cleared the lower anti aircraft guns and beach defenses. By the second day of bombing most serious defenses the Cartel could throw up were destroyed. That night, a broadcast was sent over the island, demanding they surrender to the People's Unified Federation. Any military target waving a white flag would be spared, and brought into custody.

The next morning, the assault began. Helicopters flew in Naval Infantry escorted by Cobra attack helicopters, MAV-31s and LY10 tanks made landfall, securing the beaches for their LCACs and LCMs with the heavier vehicles. Most military units surrendered on sight, giving up their positions and yielding to the invasion. Many even began giving up locations of weapons caches and hidden bases to the invaders, hoping to gain favor. It would only be after complete occupation would the Commanders learn why the capture went so well.

Cartel leadership, recognizing the military assault, fled the island for safer harbors. With their leaders abandoning them, the remaining soldiers had to desire to fight a losing battle. A few fought back, mostly to avenge their fallen comrades or because they didn't trust the surrender, but the island still fell quickly. Within six hours of first landing the Naval Infantry had a headquarters set up in Riva, the ports open for additional units to be unloaded, and most of the island secured. By nightfall, the Federal flag flew over the entirety of the island.

Now, they dug in. Knowing the chaos about to unfold on this front.

Last edited by [Mokastana](#) on Wed Apr 12, 2017 11:56 am, edited 4 times in total.

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The Macabees

Senator

Posts: 3870

Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

QUOTE

The coastal mountain range of southwestern Drana, Scandinavian mainland.

Operation Willled Vengeance

Early May, 2028

Calm seas beckoned an end to the spring winds, but the storm had not yet ended. It had merely been transformed, as rain withdrew to fire.

For this, the Golden Throne had brought forth the brunt of *Kriermak* Gholgoth to bear. Some eight thousand ships lay arrayed across a broad, disjointed 'line' that was more accurately a series of independent fleet groups, fleets, and *eskúadras* in a cohesive enough formation. From where the most advanced ships sailed they could see the Scandinavian mainland, from the western tip all the way to the east, as a faint, grayed silhouette that blended with the sky. The Macabean naval force was reinforced by allied Imbriniumian warships that numbered perhaps just as many, or perhaps even more. It was a formidable force, but more impressive still were the thousands of landing craft advancing through dark blue waters, leaving an army of wakes behind them like tails that marked a path through dirt. To this, the eye could add the thousands of aircraft that boomed overhead on bombing runs or to close in with the enemy. A formidable sight, indeed.

Peppered throughout the dozens of carrier and marine *eskúadras* were seven hundred and sixty battleships, with their turrets trained towards the enemy. These were joined by over two thousand Ingerier- and Grospek-class battlecruisers, which ought to have been called nothing but warships of death — arsenal ships, along with the Taniat-class, that specialized in a specific facet of their art. These nearly three thousand capital warships represented the brunt of deployed offensive naval power, to which one could add the mind-boggling figure of one hundred and twenty Indestructible-class aircraft carriers and four hundred Dienstad-class strategic projection vessels.

If a navy larger than this one had ever been built, mobilized, and deployed by another nation, then Fedor would not be the only fool. But, as it stood, *Kriermak* Gholgoth — or the three-fourths of it represented here — was an awesome and unequivocal display of imperial wealth, as few governments could afford a luxury such as this one. Of course, it was not just capital that was up for sacrifice.

Within those metal behemoths and the thousands of landing ships fast approaching their respective coastlines were all men and women who could very well die here, in this place. Their sacrifice was the greatest of them all.

There was no distant thunder, no flash of light across the faraway heavens to give warning. It came suddenly, like the thunderstorm-driven rains of Beda Fromm. The fleet's large guns, on dreadnoughts and battlecruisers alike, opened fire almost in unison, but even they paled in the bright light and blinding flashes of rocket engines boosting missiles out from the decks of these same ships. There was certainly a musical rhythm to them. For rather than fire *enmasse*, there was a pattern to them that albeit hard to pin down was certainly there. It was a calculated bombardment not only in support of the landing parties — striking the nearby low-rising mountains with impunity —, but also a more strategic effort against command centers, radar stations, missile batteries, and a host of other targets that were known and guessed to exist alike. Certainly, as the battle progressed, the offshore naval bombardment would only grow more accurate and more deadly.

As this chaos unfolded, cruisers performed anti-submarine and picket duties, forming successive lines of defense, oriented mostly

towards the north, where their enemies lay. Above, Blackjesters escorted by a pair of GLI-76s apiece kept a tight early-warning patrol, some far enough away from their mother ship to detect just over the Scandinavian coastline.

Bombers which had been flying through light gray clouds, well above the landing craft below, unloaded their bomb bays far from shore. Escorted by GLI-76s, these trekked to a rough perimeter from which they could engage enemy aircraft looking to disrupt the landings, but still not so far that it exposed them to the better part of the enemy's integrated air defense system. The Fuermak knew little of the latter, but it did not doubt that it was complex, extensive, and absolutely lethal against those which underestimated it. It would have to be dismantled over the long-term, and this task perhaps would never be fully accomplished. Not that it would deter the Golden Throne.

Beneath this hailstorm of fire and steel galloped on the hundreds of smaller crafts below riding fast and hard towards the muddy beaches of southern Drana...

...*Komsektor* Aridna, Westernmost Beach of Drana

Jaro Kinsila was born in 2004, the year of reunification and of the ascension of Jonak I. His mother died giving birth to him in the town of Karu Jitsal, just south of Sidi Rezegh. Jaro's father had been killed only six months earlier, one of the last casualties of the *krierstat* wars — his transport was taken out by a stray landmine in the already conquered lands of eastern Ruska. He was taken in by his paternal grandparents, sparing him the life of a beggar orphan or that of a foster child. Inspired by his grandfather, Jaro joined the *Ejemacht* at the age of fifteen, soon after the bloody War of Golden Succession came to a close.

The catamaran skipped over the crest of a folding wave, hitting the water with a loud splash. Overhead streaked the fleet's munitions with their hellish screams. It caused the hair on the back of his neck to stand upright and a sharp tingle to travel down his spine before these emotions were suppressed by a quick injection of synthetic chemicals and the accompanying neural shock.

He graduated from basic training at *Barbakán* Martel Levov, an enormous base stranded in the middle of inhospitable Arras. The summers were swept by an arid heat and the winters by a frigid cold, and those that lived there did so only because of the nearby bases and, of course, the expansive proving grounds. But, Jaro would learn to yearn for the days that he was a mere tadpole in a river full of soldiers. It was only two weeks later that he found himself boarding a ship destined to Theohuanacu, a place where they said men become boys. If only the refrain captured half the truth, then it may have warned Jaro and his new brothers of the fiery hell that awaited them. Sometimes, at night, Jaro still saw the faces of all the squadmates he lost. They haunted him, as did the gruesome, gut-wrenching memories of midnight firefights in the narrow, yellow-hazed streets of Tiwanaku. He could still feel the skin on his wrists and hands boil and blister like they were being cooked alive. The pirates liked to pair Clark-2 and mustard gas.

Jaro looked at the man next to him, the new guy. Only sixteen years old, fresh from a three-week R&R, and already 'a winner' of an exclusive ticket for the shores of western Drana. "Travel the world," the recruiters always said.

It would be said later that any man — or woman — who emerged from Tlaloc unscathed was a lucky son of a bitch. In the military, the vets used to claim that the first tour was the easiest. *Bullshit*. The mustard gas in Tiwanaku was just an introduction, a mere taste of what the pirates were willing to do. Jaro's first tour ended with a few skin grafts. On December 2021, the southeastern cities revolted and, Jaro, who had been garrisoned and settled in the northeast of the island, found himself once again on the frontlines.

This time, he'd end his second campaign with one arm less than he came with, after a bedroom booby-trap waiting for him just inside the frame of the doorway. Clearing buildings lost its pleasure there.

As the craft plowed forward through rough seas, the very top of the infamous rolling mountains showed themselves for the first time. They had all been briefed on those 'hills,' as the brass had called them; not that this made Jaro feel any better. Intel didn't know exactly how many of the enemy waited there within the shadows of rocky outcroppings and deep valleys. Millions, they said. He looked all around him — most had barely lived a quarter of their life, if that. They all rode together towards an uncertain fate.

His left arm felt natural, like it had always been there and as if Tlaloc had never happened. In truth, it was replaced at a hospital in North Point and Tlaloc would forever be with him. The new one was supposed to be better. It interacted with the battle suit organically, as much irony as there is in that choice of words. It certainly felt and looked real; the skin would sink under the pressure of your finger if you stabbed at it. Still, it wasn't the arm he was born with. Jaro didn't have much time to think about such things anyway, for it was only two months before he was cycled back into his unit and back into the fighting in Tlaloc. This time, though, he kept all his limbs, even if his sanity and humanity were still slipping away one death, one bomb, one civilian massacre at a time. By the time the fighting in Tlaloc had ended, Jaro might as well have been full machine for what little soul was left in him.

Platoon sergeants began to bark instructions at their men as if the end of the world were nigh. One man, of Stevidian faith, painted the cross across his chest with his fingers. Jaro shook his head, for he knew God was a lie.

As if the battle for Tlaloc hadn't been enough on its own, the pirates soon rebelled again. This time the war would last twice as long, and it was twice as bloody. Any spirituality that lay within Jaro, somewhere, hidden inside some deep crevice of his heart would soon be burned up along with the rest of what remained of whoever he was long ago.

The true nihilist believes in probability. When, under the sweltering, skin-clinging humid heat of a mid-June day, he and the other seven men of his *sektón* were ambushed while on patrol, it wasn't God, the gods, or Will that allowed him life. Not even as the enemy's machine gun struck one of his comrades, then the next, and then another, until all but he were felled, did he believe for one second that there was a higher force at work there. Indeed, if there was one, it could only be the devil. But no, not even the lord of the underworld himself was here. That fifty-two rounds were fired, nineteen of which landed on some target, killing three of them and wounding another four, and missing him, was not providence. It was *chance*; a roll of the dice; pure probability. Besides, no god would ever subject a man through this sort of hell — not a benevolent one.

The only conclusion Jaro had come to from all of this was that he was a lucky man. But, every man's fortune runs out sometime. The question was, would that be today? Would it be tomorrow? Or, would Jaro come out of all of this alive, only to die on the street, the victim of a drunk driver or some other idiot? That was the problem with probabilities. You don't have to pray to God, but whether you pray to chance or not, it's always going to find you and sometime, somewhere, it's going to *fuck* you. He looked at the young man next to him again, who looked back with a face with the look of a person who was coming to full realization of just what he hadn't gotten himself into. "Keep your head up, son," said Jaro. "Face death with pride."

The kid gulped and, just as he did, they hit the beach.

Golden shores welcomed them, and around the exit ramp rose the shoreline in its soothing way. But that was all that was calming

about this day. With the first rays of sun peeking through the opening door came the sound of artillery and gunfire. What sounded distant from within the metal walls of the landing craft was up close and personal as soon as they were ready to disembark.

Just as his right boot hit the sand, an artillery shell hit about forty meters away. Under most conditions, Jaro would have been dead a split second later, or at least severely maimed. But his armor kept him protected from the worst of the shrapnel, even if it felt as if he were being pelted by rocks. The sixteen-year-old boy, for despite his uniform there was no way a person that young could be called a man, was not as fortunate. He had veered right after exiting the landing craft, under orders of his squad leader. The shell struck almost right where he had been, and when the smoke cleared all that was left was a bloodied torso wrapped in battle armor, surrounded by a dozen other bodies that were obviously suffering from heavy injuries. One kid was crying next to another one who looked at his severed arm in shock, silent and most clearly no longer 'here' in the metaphysical sense of the word.

All around, dirt was flung high into the air and it was difficult to see even twenty meters ahead. Smoke machines and grenades were already doing their work to obscure the landings, and of course the artillery strikes were having an effect on their own. Altogether, compared to some of the stories his grandfather had told him when he was young, of when he had landed on the beaches of Sarcanza in the summer of 1934, this was mild. But, 'mild' is relative and for any man who hadn't seen much of war, it was all still as terrifying as a forty-four-tonne Frommian tank about twenty feet from your foxhole on a cold winter morning along the Soborguntia Frontier.

Not Jaro, though. He had already seen it all, and lost it all. Jaro's fears had been suppressed long ago, and whatever wasn't the suit would take care of. As tens of thousands of men moved up the beach, he helped move his platoon along, urging stragglers forward and holding the overly-eager back. They moved towards positions about two miles inland, where they would meet at the foot of the mountains ahead and upon which the real fighting would begin.

Under the shrill wail of the cross-fire of shells, they moved forward. The ships well off-shore, and well out of sight, helped where they could, suppressing Scandinavian artillery and anti-aircraft batteries wherever they revealed themselves. Their aircraft-launched aircraft, and bombers operating out of Golghant, joined in as well, striking targets before they could do too much damage to the Macabean forces slowly arraying themselves below. It was easy to look at them and see the destruction they wrought and feel safe, but Jaro was all too much of a veteran. The truth was, nothing's easy and everything can be deceiving...

...*Komsektor* Boris, Second-to-the-Westernmost Beach of Drana
Follows from [this post](#).

Ehecatl had never imagined himself to ever stand on the beaches of the Scandinavian mainland. In fact, he had never even heard of the Scandinavians until a few years ago, scarcely months before those Gothic pigs had instigated the Tiwanaku revolts. As a kid, if he was on any foreign beach, it was the sparkling sands that ran along the crystal blue seas of the Thacu Island or even the famed Levante coastlines of northern Safehaven (and now a Havenic territory of the Golden Throne). And he was holding a piña colada to boot.

But never had he seen himself holding a rifle, wearing a uniform made out of metals, plastics, and glass, or on possibly the most horrid beach on the face of the planet.

Explosions came from all sides at once. Artillery shells slammed against the soft, deep sands mercilessly, while naval fire rocked distant targets in a frenetic pattern that seemed to have no pause. All around, tens of thousands of souls disembarked in a steady stream of flesh and machine, interrupted by the steady rain of enemy cannon fire. Ehecatl had hardly ever seen so many men in

once place, not in a war at least. He had gotten used to the dark, grimy, and unbearably humid subterranean passageways of Dasch's Canisper neighborhood. That had been hell, but what he was seeing here was, for him, truly incredible. The beach was almost black as far as he could see, and behind him, out at sea, was another wave of landing craft coming in and, behind them still, the silhouettes of some of the ships of *Kríermak* Gholgoth's most advanced picket line. It was breathtaking, but it made him realize how insignificant he truly was, all the same.

He had stood on a beach like this before, at home, of course. As a young boy, he would stand at the edge of the water, wondering whether the horizon looked just as beautiful off other shores. He had felt just as insignificant then, making a promise to himself to one day visit some faraway coast. If only he had known how foolish that path would be. That kind of insignificance still had a warmth to it. At least he was home, and there was no better place to be. Here, on Drana, he felt miserable and alone, even with as many people as there were around him. Ehecatl was just a number; a body. If an artillery shell fell on him now and killed him, who would remember him? Who would honor him? No one.

"Snap the fuck out of it, Ehecatl!" He whipped his head to get a perfect view of *Sargént* Xipuahuomo's tonsils, as the man yelled at him while dragging him through the sand and up the beach. A shell hit maybe sixty meters to their left, spewing an eruption of dirt and human tissue. On their other side, a Nakil tank belched fire, firing on something unseen just over the lip of the slope.

The *sargent* let go of his iron-tight grip on Ehecatl's shoulder plate to stalk off in another direction after some other soldier caught dazed in shock.

For his part, Ehecatl rejoined the rest of his unit as it trudged up the hill towards the low grasses of the bluffs and cliffs that loomed above the coast. With every step the deep sands bent and fell away, wrapping his foot and holding it down as his power armor's servos whizzed to assist his legs. The world around him was pure, frightening noise, and he could feel the drugs that the suit was pumping into his veins run along his body, suppressing that scared little boy standing on the beach, realizing now in what kind of trouble his curiosity had gotten him. Beneath the metallic shell around them, his knuckles bled white as tightly wrapped as his fingers were on his rifle's pistol grip.

Enemy resistance here was minimal, apart from the regular showering of steel, explosives, and blood-drenched sand. Even that wasn't too bad, given the fleet's unwavering offshore fire support — the enemy were probably keeping their heads down just as much as the men crawling up the beach were. Whenever they opened fire, the ships responded three-fold.

They soon reached a small coastal road that connected a string of fishing towns with the larger port city of Drasdag, which sat further to the west. Ehecatl's platoon was now advancing with the rest of the battalion, towards a village no more than three kilometers down the road. The highway, if it could be called that, was narrow and pocked, although not necessarily worn in a way that would suggest heavy traffic. Ahead of them, two HIM-TACs were traveling on either side of the road with attached mine-rollers and 'zappers' on their roofs, followed by two platoons of heavy armor. Ehecatl's battalion traveled on foot — to conserve space in the landing craft for more infantrymen, they had been told.

After a twenty-five minute hike, they moved into the village swiftly and without warning. Another battalion, supported by two armored platoons of their own, struck from the other side. The mountains were on their left flank, and another ten minute walk would put them at their feet. As Ehecatl moved through empty streets, he couldn't help but feel that he was being watched.

The town was abandoned, or it had been evacuated prior to the

landings. Not a soul stirred as the Macabeans made their way down the main road and into the interior. They broke off into their platoons to independently move through the various smaller streets that branched off and crisscrossed the village's interior like tendrils to a spider web. Ehecatl took position as the third man in his fire team, keeping his rifle steady in the direction of the clay tile roofs that loomed over them on either side. There were still two hours 'til noon and the sun was still creeping over the tall stone walls of the town's homes, its rays reflecting off the roofing like a blotched mirror. A light shadow still was cast upon them from the eastern wall and a tame, cool ocean wind whistled down narrow paths, adding only to the sounds were those of their boots on the pavement and of the vehicles driving through the larger avenues and streets. Otherwise, all else was silent...and eerie.

In fire teams, they cleared houses one-by-one. Ehecatl led his own. He posted up just outside the doorway into one, allowing his lead man to check the frame for explosives and other booby traps. When the lead man, a young soldier named Nuhatel, nodded the all clear, Ehecatl moved to put a couple of rounds through the locking mechanism. Nuhatel followed up quickly with a kick to the door, forcing it to burst open. They rushed in, rifles at the ready and pointed every which way, to find only an empty house. Not one person; not in the kitchen, not in the rooms, not hiding in the attic. They moved on to the second floor, but still they found nothing. Not even a stray dog traveled these parts.

After about thirty minutes of searching, house-to-house, and finding nothing, Ehecatl and his fire team found themselves on the fourth floor of an attic that rose above the rest of the house, like a small stub of a tower. There was a rickety, old door on one wall, framed by rays of light that were seeping in through its many cracks. Nuhatel trotted over to open it, with Coyotl to provide cover.

The sun burst through in full force as soon as the door had been kicked open, off its rusted, half-decayed hinges. With one arm over his eyes, Nuhatel said, "Corral down below. This gives access to the wall around it, looks like."

Ehecatl walked over to take a look. The corral was empty, with nothing to show for one-time habitation other than the tread prints left behind by a tractor that had been clearly been evacuated along with the house's residents. Even the chickens were absent, probably taken for food by the Scandinavian soldiers waiting for them in the mountains whose coastal hills were no more than a thousand meters from the village's northern perimeter.

It was getting hotter and the men, and he, had been on the move for over three hours now. That, combined with the long voyage from the fleet to the shore, had drained much of their energy, and if they were alert as they were it was thanks to the narcotics being inserted into their bloodstream. Ehecatl moved away from the door, back into where it was cool, in the dark attic room that, admittedly, smelled of octogenarian musk. Many of the family's possessions were still here, including old toys, a baby's crib, and other items that they had stored here over the years. Neither had they taken with them the rats, which scurried between boxes and just along the base of the walls.

A shot rang out.

Nuhatel dropped to his knees. Blood was pouring out on one side of his helmet. Ehecatl had almost not seen it given the suit's jet black paint job, but he could see the crimson-colored drops fall from the helmet onto the shoulder module. The time it took Nuhatel's body to hit the floor felt like an eternity, even though only a few seconds could have passed in total. It was when the second shot rang out that the world sprang into action.

"Sniper!" Ehecatl yelled out. He lunged at the soldier who had been covering the dead man and pulled him into the attic and away from

the doorframe.

A third shot was heard, and then another one, and another one, but they were becoming more distant. Outside, NCOs and officers were yelling and screaming at their men to keep their heads low. 'It's coming from the church bell tower,' Ehecatl heard more than once. Small arms fire picked up, but from where they were Ehecatl and his men could not make out whether this was all allied fire or if the enemy had decided to retake the town. More sniper fire quickly crescendoed into the boom of a tank's cannon and the cracking of stone, followed by the sound of rubble tumbling onto the streets — and buildings — below. Finally, the world settled again.

Ehecatl crawled over to where Nuhatal's limp body was laying, and with the help of his power assist he dragged the soldier's corpse to safety. He knew the man was dead. His helmet's display told him; in fact, it gave him data for all of his men's well-being, those in the fireteam at least. Still, there was something human about checking, investigating what had happened and whether something could still be done about it.

But, there wasn't much to see except blood and shredded brain tissue. A wide hole had been bored into the left side of the helmet, but the bullet that did it had not come out the other side. There was a dent there where it should have emerged from, but the helmet's armor — and Nuhatal's head — had slowed the round enough to where it most likely shattered against the other side. "Most likely anti-material ammunition," he muttered, almost under his breath. "Went clean in. Remarkable precision." Not that any of this mattered much to the man who had taken the bullet, of course.

Rising to his feet, he turned to other two soldiers and, as solemnly as the drugs allowed him, said, "We must keep moving. Coyotl, take point, back down those stairs."

The two men nodded and did as ordered, their emotions just as suppressed as their fire team leader's.

It was when they reached the second floor of the attic that they heard the first screams of the enemy's barrage. Ehecatl had his mouth half open, ready to give orders, before a shell tore through the wall upstairs, then through a second wall, and finally through the house's roof, before exploding somewhere below towards the entrance of the home. Another one crashed and blew up somewhere nearby, and they could hear explosions throughout the town.

The floor shook and rumbled as the barrage intensified. It went on without respite, striking again and again. Ehecatl urged men to move faster until they reached the bottom floor. The wall that the attic and the house had once shared was now gone, replaced with the burning rubble of what at one time was the house. Some of the walls still stood, but like ruins from an ancient city they were scarce and looked to crumble. From where they stood, they could not see much of what was going on. Most of the two battalions that had moved into the town had secured themselves somewhere, anywhere. The streets were empty, but then again, Ehecatl could see no street but the one the house sat on. Any view he did have was obscured by smoke and dust, raised afresh by the second as the Scandinavians continued to pound the Macabeans who had been foolish enough to sweep into the village.

Ehecatl squatted to sit on the floor, his back to a wall. While he gazed at the destruction, his men followed suit and found themselves a niche to hide in while the barrage ran its course.

As his mind took him somewhere far, far away from this hell, he barely noticed when the distant growl of Scandinavian guns was joined by the roar of *Kriemak* Gholgoth. Dozens of large-gunned and VLS-equipped ships shifted their attention to the threat. Scandinavian artillery positions were triangulated automatically by the *Fuermak*-wide battlefield management system, and as soon as they revealed themselves they were pelted by naval cannon fire or

missiles, and oftentimes a combination of both. It was an awesome display of firepower, by both sides, and as much as this day would be forever engraved in history as the start of a great battle, Ehecatt only wished it for it all to be over...

...*Komsektor* Darius, Third and Final Beach

A screech tore through blood-colored skies and a PDL hissed and zapped to shoot another shell out of the sky.

Sometimes they would hit, sometimes they'd get zapped. There were too many of them to get them all, but once the PDLs rolled up the situation had at least been substantially alleviated. The Scandinavians had prepared barrage points, it was clear. Once the Macabears converged upon them, the Scandinavians would open up and wreak unquestionable havoc. Sometimes, they'd use snipers to pin you right before their attack. It was savage, but effective as hell. Fortunately, together with intense fire support from the fleet, the PDLs had at least slowed the enemy bombardment to a steady trickle. But this relative peace was only for the coastal strip that ran down Drana's southwestern coastline.

The front had moved and with it the battle. Macabean forces were slowly trudging uphill, into the perpetual range of low mountains that imposed themselves parallel to the narrow coastal plains. They were resisted all the way, whether by deeply entrenched enemies or concrete pillboxes that were both well hidden and well fortified. Behind them was the fleet, of course, always willing to belch fire in support of the troops on the ground, but they were fighting an enemy that had planned for this eventuality and was ready for it. It was a hard, long march, with fighting and shelling all the way. Machine gun nests were particularly nasty, hiding behind sandbags or inside bushes near local hilltops, turning each ridge into a bloody battle. The enemy got their own, of course, but it was a gruesome task that paid a heavy, heavy toll. Attrition had set in, but the momentum of the invading army was fed by a giant, complex military infrastructure to transport some sixty million men total along southwestern Drana in waves. The stream was continuous, and it would continue over the coming days.

Kapitán Viktor Loebil looked back at the ocean, as his company walked in two columns, snaking up a mountain that rose to a height of perhaps just a thousand feet. It was a thousand flare view, as the sun brightly glinted off the hulls of thousands of landing craft moving to and from the beaches. Larger tugs moved in designated lanes between the smaller landing craft and they towed parts of temporary harbors that were being built to widen the stream of reinforcements.

Each beach was to have two, and Loebil could see the beginnings of the couple that would service *Komsektor* Darius. Old, mothballed vessels had been brought out with *Kríermac* Gholgoth and then towed to position, where they were sunk as blockships to provide a bit of shelter against harsher currents and the possibility of summer storms. The skeletons of makeshift piers spread into the water like fingers on a hand, and these were connected to an area on the beach itself that was being paved over by a series of floating roadways. Engineers were hard at work to set the harbors up, hustling even under fire as they were.

It was a spectacular sight to witness, especially as one added to that initiative the tens of thousands of others who were moving up the sand into designated deployment zones, from which they were quickly moved to the front.

In his five years of service, Loebil had never seen anything like it. Even during the great siege of Tiwanaku, where as a young *aftleutnant* he saw his first action, paled in comparison to what he formed a part of now. He had read, and been taught, the history of the War of Golden Succession. In his mind, day-dreaming in class or while reading his books, he imagined what it must have been like to

fight at Ishme-Dagan, where over a hundred thousand tanks bruised and battered each other on a gargantuan battlefield covered in dust, debris, and smoke. He imagined that Ishme-Dagan must have looked a lot like this, at least in terms of sheer human *presence*. But, Loebil's imagination was failing him, because Ishme-Dagan was a mere cubling in comparison. Nothing as audacious or as ambitious as the invasion of the Scandinvan Empire had ever been attempted in the empire's history.

"*Kapitán* Loebil," said someone, bringing the *kapitán* back to reality. He almost looked around to see who had spoken, if it were not that he knew better. It had come through his comm system and it was battalion commander *Komandánt* Aurel Gerot. "*Kapitán*, do you copy?" The man sounded irritated.

Loebil hadn't realized that the *komandánt* had been talking for some time now. Had he really gotten *that* lost in all that was going around him? He swore to himself under his breath. A dangerous game to play, that. A slip of a man's concentration could end with dead men, his own men, victims of his negligence. It was a lesson hard learned to those who had fought in Tiwanaku that summer of '23, where traps abounded and one little mistake, a heartbeat's distraction could turn you into an amputee. Anyways, whatever Gerot had said Loebil would have to figure it out for himself. Not that he'd ever let his superior officer think he was lounging on the job. "Copy that, *Komandánt*," he responded, belatedly.

"Good, keep your men's heads up," was all Gerot said back.

The sounds of battle had already been deafening, but now they surpassed even that. No birds squawked, no mountain lions growled. If they did, they couldn't be heard over the noise of aircraft fighting overhead, the blasts of cannon and artillery fire, and the incessant clatter of thousands of firefights being fought all over the southwest of the Scandinvan mainland. And now, as they neared the front, it was all getting louder. You could almost hear the crisp *crack* of the bullet as it fragmented against the marrow of some poor sod's bone, or the *tear* of a man's liver as a piece of aluminum shrapnel cut through it like butter. Dirt and soot lifted by the perpetual cannon fire and counterfire, and not to mention the movement of men and machines alike from one position to another, cluttered the view of the field and, had it not been for the display they looked at within their helmets, they would be marching up the mountain almost completely blind.

Loebil switched to a private comm between his squad leaders with only a simple subvocal command. Impressive what technology can do nowadays. "Keep your heads up and your eyes open—" He was threatened with an interruption by the sudden nearby explosion of an enemy shell, which sent splinters enveloped in a growing cloud of debris, but he talked through it as if nothing had happened. It wasn't the first near miss today, nor would it be the last. "Orders downloading now."

As he talked, walked, and scanned the shrubbery around him, he also approved battalion-level orders. Upon his approval, these were automatically dispersed to his squad leaders and to his XO, the young *aftleutnant* Xochipilli. The system allowed for the quick communication of orders, but also gave the commanding officer the right to — and responsibility of — vetoing higher-level orders if the local situation called for it. Most of the time, it made his job a whole lot easier and gave him more leeway to focus on the tactical situation. Symbols on each man's HUD informed them of their objectives and their orders, down to squad- or fireteam-leaders, better than any officer could through words.

He had sat in a lecture once that explained how all the equipment in his battle suit worked. As much as it captivated him then, Loebil had forgotten much of it by now. The instructor had said that each suit was installed with a common deep-learning algorithm that would learn your stimuli, the inner workings of the mind. It was true, the longer you served, the clearer the instructions. What each

man, or woman, saw in their HUD was unique to them in some way.

The HUD also replaced their vision with a screen that was a rough analog to what was really out there. Each man something akin to the video feed, but heavily marked with symbology and outlines of three different colors, and shades in between. It was a map, but one that was alive and interacting with you. Along your head, down your spin, and throughout your skin ran sensors attached to the inside of the suit. These sent subtle electric and chemical impulses that alerted you to one threat or another, helping you categorize threats. At its base, the system was good; but, the deep-learning algorithm gave it all an almost unbelievable degree of accuracy. Loebil could "see" the hundreds, no thousands, of soldiers ahead and around them, slowly making their way up one mountain or the next. They hid behind makeshift emplacements or behind some kind of cover, even if it was a bush with hardly a leaf on it. Snipers lay prone, camouflaged as best as they could make do, striking at targets across one of the dozens of valleys and canyons that crossed the broken terrain.

When they topped the ridge the full extent of the battle came into view. The hilltops across their positions were aflame and hidden behind a low-flying literal fog of war. Gunfire went in every direction, as friendly and enemy forces clashed on almost every level. They fought over the most insignificant of terrain, whether it was a local height or a sudden turn in the path. The Scandinavians resisted where they could do the most damage, and as Loebil and his company rushed into position he could see his fellow soldiers struggle to attack defensive positions from different angles and directions. Reducing the enemy here was proving just as difficult as was expected, or perhaps more so even.

Loebil's company continued to move as two columns, now headed down towards a narrow pass that was flanked by a sheer rock wall on one side and a sudden drop to a valley on the other. There was fighting on the other side of the hill and in the valley below too. Scandinavian machine gun nests were set up around these chokepoints with overlapping fields of fire, and it showed. The pass had to be opened, but so far Macabean forces had been pinned down and attempts to flank the enemy positions had only led to finding more of them.

The horizon flared red, as the battle extended all the way from *Komsektor Aridna* to *Komsektor Darius* — almost one hundred kilometers.

Ahead awaited a company's worth of friendly troops that were holding what they could of the pass. They had been significantly reduced by the ambush and were just about ready to fall apart. Loebil's unit was ordered to reinforce them and cover their withdrawal to the rear, where they would be remade with scraps of other shredded formations. This they did with the expected hassle, including the withering enemy gunfire raining down on them.

Before they had much time to do anything, the rises from which the enemy was firing erupted in a series of blasts. *Kríermada* firepower was a frightful thing and no sane man would ever wish to be on the receiving end of it, but the *kapitán* felt no pity towards the Scandinavians. Loebil could hear the screams of the dying and wounded from where he stood, although all the same it could have been his comrades who were going through the last throes of life as the blood slowly drained out of their wounds. To him it was all a haze anyways, and he could hardly tell the difference between the hair-raising screech of an inbound cruise missile and the wail of the surface-to-air missiles. Overwhelmed by the pure cacophony of noise, he could feel his veins bulge with the sheer volume of chemicals being injected into his bloodstream, something which only made him all the more anxious ironically enough. It was all he could do to focus on his objectives and not simply break down and weep instead.

When the bombardment ended abruptly, and the dust had not yet

settled, Loebil and his company started to move further down the pass. It twisted left around a hill that formed a local height to a taller mountain behind it, putting most of it out of direct sight. 'Use UAVs to scout ahead' was step one in any field manual, but the fighting had already gone on for a while and few birds were operational in the air. "Must have been shot down," the *kapitán* murmured to himself, his comm set to passive so that no one could hear him but he could still receive.

It was all unsurprising, really. Navigating a UAV, as stealthy as they were, through enemy-infested terrain was easier said than done. Besides, if the Scandinavians were smart, they'd make themselves hard to see, even to a UAV. Surely, if he had his men launch their own, these would be shot down too. Well, there was no harm in trying. "Launch a drone, let's see what we have in store," he ordered, switching his comm to a private channel with his XO.

A couple of minutes later, the drone was in the air, flying low and using the terrain to hide its presence as much as possible. Electric, it did not make much noise, even if it wasn't designed to stay airborne very long. But, it didn't need to; it just needed to give them enough information to save them from walking into a massacre, like the company they had relieved had done. It was a piloted by a two-man team which stuck with the XO and the company-level mortar attachment. One man flew the thing, the other looked at its video feed. The path continued to rise ever upwards, towards a 'hub mountain' that rose about seventeen hundred feet — one of the taller ones in the area. The rock wall on the left side gradually transitioned into another hill along which ran the dirt path, and on the right the valley narrowed until the hill nearly overlapped with another that led to another direction. And there, overseeing the area as a whole, was a concrete pillbox built into the side of the taller mountain.

That was about all that Loebil was able to see before rifle fire from another direction ripped into the drone and shot it down.

They kept moving forward, slowly, their eyes looking everywhere at once. The pillbox was still almost a thousand meters away, but that was short enough to allow its occupants to suppress Loebil's company as it tried to make its way around the bend. One soldier, a fresh Theohuanacan recruit who went by Zolin, received a few rounds to the torso. These didn't penetrate, but the anti-material round that hit his leg sure did. He crumpled onto the ground, causing a short panic as Loebil's men dragged Zolin with them as they withdrew back around the bend and out of sight.

Pinned down, they waited and watched the flanking units slowly made their way forward through the valley, where finally they reached the path that deviated over the hill that forked off on a route that ran around the pillbox. It was still within range of the enemy emplacement, though, and soon enough they too were pinned down by heavy machine gun and small arms fire.

Scariest of all were the snipers. Both sides used them, but entrenched and knowledgeable of the terrain as they were, the Scandinavians were the most effective. Loebil did not hesitate to respond with mortar and rocket fire, and he could see that others were doing the same. It was an effective way of dealing with them, but only after the snipers had revealed themselves — usually with a bullet through a man's head. Loebil could sense his men's nerves begin to fray, and if they had any reason to breath easy at all it was only because it seemed that the enemy marksmen preferred to kill the officers over the enlisted recruits. Not that this made the *kapitán* feel any better about it.

They waited behind the convex wall around which the path wrapped for almost thirty minutes while supporting units continued to make progress on the flanks in an effort to get behind the pillboxes. But, as already made patently clear, the Scandinavians had prepared their defenses well.

It was a platoon of GRX.40s that finally opened the route, even if only for a couple thousand meters before the next ambush revealed itself.

The ground rumbled as their tracks clinked and clanged over uneven terrain. Heavily armored and armed, the GRX.40 was designed as a mobile urban fortification. And although their engines were not made for this type of taxing travel, the *Ejermacht* had found out soon enough that within the narrow confines of shallow mountain passes, the GRX.40's protection was indispensable. Indeed, an anti-tank rocket fired from somewhere near the pillbox struck one on the glacis, bouncing off with hardly more than a meek explosion. Another struck, and then another one, but the steel beast continued to roll forward like a giant pushing its way through a hail of stones. Around the bend all four of them disappeared, their actions visible to Loebil only through his HUD, until finally a Scandinavian rocket managed to hit and damage the lead vehicle's right tread.

Immobile or not, the GRX.40 had gotten as far as it needed to go. It elevated its 155mm gun under fire, as the enemy desperately tried to destroy it. The other three vehicles in the platoon followed suit and, once their cannons were trained towards the target, they opened fire. The pillbox was struck by four thermobaric shells and, seconds later, this was followed by a second salvo. Over and over again they shot until the return fire had quieted down and they were sure that the concrete fortification had been destroyed. This earned them a two-minute barrage, until the battery had either moved or was suppressed by Macabean naval or artillery fire.

When the smoke settled, the burnt out carcass of one of the middle vehicles remained. The other two behind it were quick to pick up the crew of the immobilized GRX.40 in the lead and then withdraw back to cover.

Not that any of this had ended the chaos. Mountain passes and valleys echoed with booms and cackles as the battle continued without respite. If one particular fight had been resolved locally there were tens of thousands of other ones raging simultaneously. With a heavy groan, Loebil rose to his feet and ordered his men forward once again, with all to look forward to being the repetition of the same deadly, bloody cycle...

...Citadel City, Skyan Republic

Under the cover of the early morning fog, *Kriergrup* Vismer slipped out from where it had laid anchor just southwest of the southern Skyan coastline. Parts of the fleet group had arrived years earlier, during the initial effort to reinforce Skyan defenses after the daring Attestor raid that had prompted the country into the war. The majority of it trickled in over time, slowly accumulating as to not startle the Gothic governments that watched on at the conflict as it unfolded.

With this new voyage, Operation Fallen Fortress was underway. The operational document had been floated around to allied commands, including the Skyan's, as a theoretical Macabean invasion of Vismer, a large fortress island that dominated the northern approach to Drana. Originally, it was decided to undertake a two-prong invasion, one of Vismer and the other of Tiami. Intelligence had gathered enough evidence to credibly suggest the country's likely entry into the war on the Scandinavian's side. After more thought, the second prong was removed from the operation, as the preemptive invasion of Tiami was seen as too much of a risk to the already precarious imperial relations with the non-aligned Gothic governments. Ultimately, it was agreed to scrap the operation altogether, when the Skyans volunteered to strike the island on their own. Or so it had seemed, at least.

Because whatever it was that had been agreed to, the reality was that *Kriergrup* Vismer was headed west, almost hugging the coast as it soon turned north.

Its raid *eskúadras* sailed ahead, with a double-layered picket facing mostly west- and northwards. Behind them came the carrier and marine *eskúadras*, the latter of which escorted additional transport vessels that could have very well been a fleet group of their own in size — enough to carry ten million men, it was said. Each of these had an anti-submarine and early warning screen of its own, so that sprawled out over the ocean as they were it looked like a vast and formidable formation of concentric and overlapping semi-circular rings that maintained pace with the many vertebral columns of capital warships and transports that traveled within them.

Naturally, the raid *eskúadras* were the first to sail through the strait between Havensky and Briska, emerging on the other side to protect the heavier capital and transport ships as they made their way through. Fighter aircraft and AWACS flew overhead, wary to stray over any national airspace. Neither did the fleet group mean to disrupt neutral and allied merchant shipping, for which it left two clear — albeit heavily guarded — lanes of passage through its formation.

The escorts in the vanguard waited for the last of the carriers, supply ships, and transports to cross the strait and then put in distance between themselves and the rest of the fleet again. A rear guard, that condensed into a three-layer screen once the perimeter was short enough, followed through last. Once entirely on the other side, the *kriergруп* continued north, wrapping around Tiurabo as the first day's sun came down. As a deep, starry night settled in, another shift ended and a new one took over, and the fleet group moved without pause up in the direction of Crimmond. By the third day, Tiurabo on their right transitioned into uninhabited, and perhaps uninhabitable, territory. At their speed, the westernmost fringes of the Drakonian archipelago were only a day or two away, and so the *kriergруп* slowed down to stretch their voyage. Success, after all, could not be rushed.

And as calls and memos flooded into the embassy in Citadel City, the Macabees kept their intentions quiet.

[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 Thu Apr 13, 2017 5:17 pm, edited 2 times in total.

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Havensky
Diplomat

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

The Road to Dawn

by [Havensky](#) » Sun Apr 23, 2017 3:29 pm



This evening, with the consent of Senate High Council, I instructed Supreme Allied Commander Richard Bexar to begin operations against the Scandivan island of Vismer. Our forces in cooperation with our allies, shall begin heavy bombardment of the island to render inert its military and economic power.

HRS Orcinus

Task Force Hell - Brimstone Fleet
Off the coast of Vismer, Gholgoth

Commodore James Koji stood center of the darkened command and control room of the *Ravana*-class submarine HRS *Orcinus* and watched the clock on the wall.

Tick tick tick tick tick...

The *Orcinus* and two dozen other *Ravana* class submarines were awaiting the appointed hour of judgement day. The submarines had spread out in a long time of destruction off the coast of Vismer. Their mission had been two fold. The first, was ensure that there were no hidden enemy combatants standing

between the Brimstone Fleet and their targets. The second, was to present a nice first wave of strikes against the slaver fortress island.

Tick tick tick tick tick...

The submarine pack carried hundreds of Vishnu cruise missiles which would be lobbed at radar installations, communication towers, power plants, ports, airfields, airports, bridges, fuel depots, and any previously identified missile installations. This would be followed up by the rest of Brimstone Fleet launching their own barrage at enemy army bases and follow-up attacks on ports, airfields, and finally any targets of opportunity that popped up - mainly missile batteries that were expected to fire back at the Brimstone Fleet.

Tick tick tick tick tick...

Koji looked at the clock again and typed into his command console.

All hands, Brimstone Actual: Prepare to launch on my mark, over

Tick Tick Tick Tick Tick..

As the clock on the bulkhead spun around to the top of the hour, Koji typed in the command to fire and held off on hitting send until the pre-ordained time.

Tick Tick Tick Tick Tick...

Ifrit, Ifrit, Ifrit!

The pack of submarines breached the surface of the ocean waves and opened up their missile tubes. Over three hundred cruise missiles launched from their tubes sending green tinted plumes of smoke into the air and over the horizons.

It is true, I confess, that the conscript armies of the Scandivan Empire vastly outnumber our Legionary forces. It is true, that the Sons of Erid and their henchmen have brainwashed and radicalized thousands of fighters for the sole purpose of participating in a scheme to deliberately destabilize the region to serve only their own domestic political goals. Those goals, not to build up a nation that treats everyone with fairness and equality, but instead to unify themselves against a common enemy to galvanize their population to ignore dissenters and perpetuate the abominable institution of slavery.

HRS Unity
Brimstone Fleet
Off the coast of Vismer

The *Unity's* hull crashed through the waves of the busy sea as Brimstone Fleet sailed towards the shores of Vismer. Sea Marshal Marcus Titan stood on the command bridge as the clock ticked down to zero.

Tick tick tick tick tick...

It was unnerving just waiting. Titan has expected the slaver's to send a fleet out to oppose them. However, it had been all quiet so far even as they treaded closer to the their optimal firing range. He turned to look at the flight board.

"Red Squadron, standing by, out."

Sixteen Accipiter fighters led by Lady Thorn launched from the *Independence* broken up into four flights. These would stop any enemy aircraft launched and help the fleet to find SAM batteries and target them for annihilation. This was probably the most dangerous job in the fleet.

"Blue Squadron, standing by, out."

Fourteen Spitfighter aircraft appeared on the board in the ready position. Also launched from the *Independence*, these multirole fighters craft would help intercept enemy aircraft as well as hit any targets of opportunity spotted by Red Squadron.

"Gold Squadron, standing by, out."

Finally, twenty-four Blackheart attack aircraft reported in ready to hit bunkers, command centers, SAM battery locations, and anything else that Red Squadron found that would make an interesting target.

This potent mix of fighters and attack aircraft was repeated by two other aircraft carriers *Liberty* and *Freedom*. They were joined mid-flight by drone squadrons launched from Airship Carriers *Defender Defiant*, and *Dauntless*. All together, over two hundred jets were screaming towards the Vismer coast.

"It is also true, that never before have so many nations come together to defend common values and a desire for peace in this region. Together with our brave allies, we will form a southern wall to defend our freedoms and liberate those under the occupation of the slaver empire."

Below, three dozen *Naga[i]-class arsenal ships* had targets pre-programmed and launch tubes at the ready. Each *[i]Naga* heavy strike cruiser carried a potent arsenal of 480 Makara and 152 Shingami cruise missiles that would be pointed at military targets throughout the island.

Tick...tick...tick...tick...

Titan checked the time again.

"Ready the flak screen, let's get ready."

The flak screen was a bit of a misnomer. What Titan really meant was the forty-eight *Devil*-class battleships that were riding in the front of the formation. Each one began to tilt themselves to enable all of their railguns to the forward position of the fleet. Their captains began to charge up their railguns in preparation for shooting down any incoming cruise missiles.

Ifrit, Ifrit, Ifrit!

All at once, every offensive ship in the Brimstone fleet began to launch their cruise missiles quickly passing the fighter jets. Their green contrails filling up the sky. On the island of Vismer, a thousand missiles began to fire back at Brimstone.

The battleships aimed their guns in the air and began to fire intercepting rounds. High above them, *Skyan Flying Fortress*-class airships began to power their lasers and tag incoming missiles. The CWIS on all vessels began to fill the air with bullets.

The sky had been lit on fire.

To those in the Pudite Resistance, I say unto you... hold fast to hope and stand strong. Regardless of how dark these times may seem, the dawn is coming!

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!**



Ghant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

by **Ghant** » Sun Apr 23, 2017 5:06 pm

QUOTE

The Snake and The Salamander

*"He who has lived and thought can't help
despising people in his soul;
him who has felt disturbs
the ghost of irrecoverable days;*

*for him there are no more enchantments;
him does the snake of memories,
him does repentance bite.”*
— Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*

The Port of Uzcanda
Hegosu, Gholghant
Early May 2028

At long last, the time had come, and the anticipation hung high in the air. Eloi Xurio could smell it, thick and heavy like sap carrying on the wind. His eyes felt tied down by weights, as though it pulled at them. Through those tired brown orbs he peered out, gazing upon the grove in front of him. It was abandoned when he saw it, devoid of anything except from the trees that hung over the cliff and the rustling of their verdant green leaves. As the late afternoon sun warmed his back, he breathed in deeply through his nostrils, revitalized by the fresh surge of oxygen that swept over him. The years of musty cellars and rented out back rooms had constricted his lungs and his life. But this—this was different. As the trees blew in the wind, swaying to some kind of silent spiritual ritual, their branches waved at him, welcoming him to their open space. He sat down on a nearby patch of grass, took in another deep breath, and grinned when the dry, dancing leaves tickled his ankles. He contemplated the irony until he laughed so hard that tears of delight trickled down his prematurely-aged cheeks, but for the first time in his life, he was afraid.

It seemed as though the trees careened over the edge of the cliff in order to stare down at the sea that expanded out into the horizon, and Eloi joined them in their spectating. Below were the great warships and sea-faring vessels of Gholghant, and the port-city of Uzcanda teeming with the vast multitudes of men readying themselves for war. *A war most ill-advised*, Eloi thought with dread. *A war that could result in our doom.*

The arrangement made with the Golden Throne was such that the southern Gothic Kingdom of Gholghant would be used as a FOB and a staging ground for their invasion of the Scandinvan homeland, further to the northeast past the continent. The island of Uzcanda, where the city of the same name was located, was off the coast of Gholghant to the southeast. It was beholden to the largest island in that chain, called Hegosu, home of the famed House Hegosu, with their commonly-known blue winged snake banners.

Indeed, Hegosu was the staging ground for the force bound for the Scandinvan Empire, to participate in the Macabean so-called “Operation Willéd Vengeance.” It was true that the Golden Throne thirsted for revenge upon the Scandies, as the Gholghantar called them, and they were not alone in their thirst. Many of the Gholghant, be they from Dienghant or Gholghant, had been affected by the Scandinvan slave enterprise, to varying degrees.

It was known amongst their people that in the eastern lands of Gholghant, many people were either the descendants of slaves, or related to some that were. In Dienghant, the slave trade was very real and tangible for them, as the activities of slavers were

often in their very own waters. That was why when it came time to fight, the Ghantar of those lands could not be dissuaded, not by the Emperor, not by Henoor Zaldua,

Some amongst the nobility were aware of this, at least. The Emperor of All Ghant might have been a soft, ivory-tower minded man of forty who had been on the throne for twenty-one years, but at least he erred on the side of caution, preferring to negotiate with his fellow Gothic Lords in an attempt to avoid all out regional war. Lara Jarasa made deals as well, supposedly on the Emperor's behalf, but even she couldn't stymie the tide of public opinion, which was decidedly in favor of action against the Scandinavians for violating the Gothic Pact, which the Gholghantar held sacrosanct.

So it was that they gathered en masse on the island of Uzcanda. Volunteers, soldiers-of-fortune, free-riders, mercenaries, freeriders, and noblemen's knights and retainers...suffice it to say, many able-bodied men from several different walks of life wanted in on the action. Henoor Zaldua was hard-pressed to interfere, lest he incite insurrection. Thus, the great lords of Gholghant, with their minds already made up, prepared to join the Golden Throne.

That was why Eloi was there...he didn't have a dog in this fight, rather he was tasked with being the eyes and ears for the Ghantish Imperial administration, far away in Zahaghant. Eloi himself was from Dienghant, from a fishing commune on the northern coast of the province of Burgezal. He worked his way up first as a thief, and then as a spy for the Duke of Burgezal after he was caught by some of the Duke's men. He was given a choice between hard time and leniency were he to serve the Duke, so he did, and did so well. He caught the attention of the higher-ups, and eventually he found himself there in Uzcanda, on the edge of the Sea of Hegosu.

Eloi stretched as he stood up straight, tugging at his brown cloak and enjoying the feeling of the ocean breeze running through his hair. He didn't have much time to dally around, for the Gholghantish fleet would be departing at midday for Vismer, passing through the islands of Harida, and then around the coast of the continent, past Lamhek and Subcon. Vismer was just beyond that, and so too would be Golden fleet, with which they would rendezvous.

Operation Willed Vengeance, they call it, Eloi thought most bemused as he turned his gaze from the expanse of ocean back towards the grove. *What sort of revenge isn't willed?* The will of Erid's enemies was truly great of late, and it seemed that only Eloi himself feared his wrath. *For the Scandinavians are not a people one wishes to provoke.* The Macabeans didn't know that they way the Ghantish did, but then again...lately the Ghantish didn't seem to either.

The grove was somehow tranquil, yet ominous at the same time, with a sense of deep foreboding emanating from the greenery. It was as though the trees, swaying gently in the breeze, were trying to warn Eloi not to go, not to join in this folly crusade. Alas, Eloi was a man loyal to his liege, and a man with nothing to lose but his own life. *It never amounted to anything anyway,* he thought sadly,

recalling a life of disappointments and letdowns. *Men like me are the sort of people that ought to go on such an adventure. None will mourn my passing, not like these green boys with rifles in their hands...*

Within the grove was a circle of tall trees, beneath them a patch of earth shaded by their full branches. There was a circle of small stones there, old and weathered and cracked. From it was a path of similar stones that wound through the forest, snaking back down towards the outskirts of the seaside village. Eloi walked its length, passing beneath the trees, their leaves shaking in the wind as it rushed through from the sea. In places the sunlight broke through the thick foliage, casting a dull light upon the grass.

It was there that he saw her, standing between the trees, concealed by their shade. She appeared as a specter might, a figment of his imagination made real by his tired eyes. Yet she was real, a wiry feminine figure with hair like a shadow and a cape to match. She stood tall and proud, silent and stern, unaware of anything around her, aside from the trees that she seemed attuned to. It then suddenly dawned on Eloi who she was. *A snake in woman's clothing...*

*I lie in wait, in evening shade.
Will soon unveil the plans I've made.
Slither, crawl, and lurk around.
Approach unnoticed, take you down.*

*You think you want to charm me out,
this sweet shy girl who roams about.
But tables turn and I'm the one
who draws you in, your heart I've won.*

*Deceit and lies from my lips hiss.
Spread poison with my serpent's kiss.
Coil around, cut off your air.
Choke you, take you to my lair.*

*I shed my skin beneath the light,
but it's too late for you to fight.
Can't move under my watchful eye.
Your lust, it leaves you paralyzed.*

*Predator to prey, my pet.
I'm one that you will not forget.
Be careful of the friends you make.
Just never know which one's the snake.*

"Mariana Hegosu," Eloi called out. "You shouldn't be out here in the forest alone." While Eloi didn't know Mariana especially well, he knew her father, Lord Ector Hegosu. Ector was a man who took after his house's sigil no doubt, sly and shifty as a winged snake might be if the beasts were real. His daughter was hardly any different, willful and headstrong and charismatic enough to sway others to her cause.

The noble lady turned around slowly. She was pretty enough, with a heart-shaped face and long, wavy black hair that ended in ringlets at her elbows. Her eyes though were beads of aquamarine, bleak and remote, and her mouth a wide arc of mischief near cruelty. She possessed a woman's body beneath her black tunic, but had a man's vigor that was easily discerned.

"I would say the same for you," Mariana countered with a blank expression on her face. "These woods are no place for old men."

Old man, she says. "I am only thirty-six, but to humor you, I'd say that wisdom comes with age. A pity then that you are so young."

"Ah, and you think me unwise then, Eloi Xurio, for I am ten years the younger. Unwise because it is my endeavor to join an expedition to Vismer, to wage war upon the treacherous Scandinavians, who have grown so insolent as to break the Gothic Code, and as of yet still bind our kindred in chains of iron." The young woman moved through the grove upon serpentine legs, her gait slithering.

"A child who wishes to play at war," Eloi clarified. "When our government, that of the Emperor and the Steward and their ministers have done everything they could to avoid it, to maintain peace."

Mariana laughed, and leaned up against a tree with her gloved forearm. "And you think peace is free, Dienghantar? Peace is paid in blood, always has been. How many slavers have ravaged the shores of Dienghant, how many Kravenites have cast their gaze upon Gholghant? You think sitting idly by and hiding behind treaties, pacts and codes will keep our people safe? If you think so then you are as much a fool as the Vetalians that swung from ropes at Hab Centre Six."

"Attacking Vismer isn't the solution," he practically yelled. "They have stood for thousands of years, never succumbing to such foreign incursions. The Macabeans and their ilk will soon learn that Erid's Chosen are not so easily laid low."

She pushed herself off of the tree, and pointed towards the northwest. "Even now, the might of the Golden Throne is upon Vismer, and they are joined by the strength of Imbrinium and others. The Gothic Lords are slow to stir, as is their way. By the time they bother themselves to intervene, the campaign will be in full swing. Strike fast, hard and true, and by the time we must leave, our cause shall have already prevailed."

Foolish child. "Your optimism is refreshing. You shall learn in due time, my lady, and sooner than perhaps you'd like."

"On the contrary, I'm learning quite a bit already," she teased. "That our time has come. That is why the generals and admirals of Gholghant avail themselves to us. Heenor Zaldua reeks with the stench of fear, and the Emperor hesitates as frequently as he draws breath. Fortune favors the bold, Eloi, and none are more bold than we who would fight in the name of what is right and good..in the name of justice."

Justice? This is madness. "We shall see, Mariana Hegosu," Eloi told her gruffly before turning back in the direction he was originally walking, back down the winding path down the sloped forest towards the village. "We shall certainly see." He didn't turn back to see her there, but he knew she was. She thought she was invincible, that she had everything figured out. *She doesn't know shit.*

Eloi did, however. Born in 1992, he was raised on the edge of northern Dienstadi seas, to a fisherman and his fishmonger wife. They were poor, and had little

to their names aside from a ramshackle house in shantytown and more children than anyone could reasonably afford. In those days the Ghantish watched the evolution of the Golden Throne with wary eyes, cautiously noting how like locusts, they slowly consumed the lands around them. The people of those lands had to pay for the missteps of their leaders, and were subsequently cast under the yoke of the Golden Throne.

Perhaps that was why many of the Dienghantar regarded the Golden Throne with a suspicion, for Macabeans were a conquering lot. Dienghant had the luxury of being on the periphery of Dienstad, rather far away from the potential depredations of the Golden Throne. All the same, Eloi wanted to avoid military service as much as he could, though ironically, military service couldn't avoid *him*.

The Dienghantar's thoughts swam around him as he made his way down the path, through increasingly sparse trees that gave way to more and more light than could be found higher up the hill where the grove stood. Eventually the trees parted, and the village was within view. On its outskirts stood old, tall stone towers, some with beacons and banners streaming from their tops. The walls were eroded down to low blocks of moss-covered stubs covered in bird shit, the places where gates used to be now merely gaps of tall grass where rabbits and field-mice now dwelt.

The path was straight now, descending down into the village past some common grounds that as of now were swarming with armed men. They were training in various fashions, be it target practice, close quarters combat, endurance training, marching in formation, tactical maneuvers, etc. It was a decent combination of seasoned soldiers and green boys, Eloi reckoned, though he pitied them all the same. *All the preparation in the world won't prepare you for what's to come...*

The town was an old one, but well maintained. It had several light blue buildings with white-washed roofs and neatly tiled shingles, with large bay windows and arched balconies abound. Spectators made themselves comfortable upon their elevated perches, eating and drinking and watching the unfolding spectacle beyond the comforts of their homes. Even the gulls gathered to observe, congregating upon the roofs and rails of Uzcanda.

The harbor beyond the coast was filled with ships of war of various sorts, everything from battlecruisers, arsenal ships, support vessels, landing craft, etc. They bore the many flags of the lands of Ghant, most of them of Gholghant, though Eloi recognized some from Dienghant and others still from Zahaghant, though those were few in number. Compared to what the Macabeans and Imbrinians were undoubtedly bringing to bear it was quite meager, but Eloi supposed that it was the thought that counted.

Among the soldiers that Eloi identified were, to his surprise, men of the Sacrificial Lambs Company, those ill-fated men who went to fight against the Kravenites in Vetalia at Hab Center Six. Captain Mo Batiz was walking the streets with his arms folded behind him, a man that Eloi knew in passing. Captain Mo had been in Hab Center Six, and oversaw the evacuation of Ghantish soldiers as the Kravenites

dropped their firebombs on the city. Eloi had heard about that after the fact, how some men were too far away, too wounded, too driven to madness to be saved. Those that escaped on the Skyan choppers watched them get incinerated by the flames.

Now here they were, ghosts in black uniforms. Eloi didn't envy those men, having to survive the horrors of the Kravenite Wolf Brigade only to then go and die in Vismer. *Truly no such thing as rest for the weary.* The Dienghantar watched them move about, expressionless. They knew the sort of danger that awaited them, unlike the rest, but none seem to take heed.

That was when Eloi saw him, a young man clad in burnt orange beneath the bright sun. His hair was a short, strawberry blonde, a few freckles scattered on his face and neck. He was a nice enough looking boy, tall and dignified with broad shoulders and a flat chest. The young man sniffed the air with his broad nose as he walked the path up the hill, inspecting the men doing their training exercises. Eloi recognized him after a few moments.

*A salamander, I stretch out, unfurl
Tasting your scent, your presence so near.
Longing, oh longing
To sink my fangs into you.
Bite and in turn devour,
Make you fall victim to my maw.*

*The feelings grow
And I try hard to squirm free
Shake loose the skin that can no longer contain
The all consuming desire,
Which makes my very senses swell
And every muscle flex with a heated tension.
A Salamander I writhe with anticipation,
Hunger.*

*A mythical fire,
Only fuel will douse my flames.
Give me water and earth
And I shall only burn all the brighter,
So hot I will consume everything I touch.*

*You fuel my passions
The sight of you the kindling,
Words the supporting pyre;
A single touch the flame which ignites it all.
Let me be the hunter and you the hunted
Like a beast let me pursue you
Predator seeking prey
A heated dance in the dark.
Till we meet all in one wild game
An equinox
Where our roles reverse
And in metamorphosis begin the game again.*

*Thus I shall quell my cravings
Feast upon your beauty,
Smother you in a tangle of hot embers.
Until I come to rest, congealing slowly,
Like some cast bronze masterpiece.
Revealing cool limbs and sated smile,
Watching all but my essence drift away.
A castle in the sand, my desires crumble,
Melting into the rising tide of calm tranquility.*

*I shall cradle you, keep you ever so near.
With one final kiss I shall part,*

*Till eternity again
be desired by the heart.
And the fires stirred, awake once more
Creatures of desire and passion
Are all we are.*

"Gorri Salamana," Eloi called out. The young man looked up and met his gaze with a faint smile. Gorri was the son of Lord Thrain Salamana, who ruled the province of Muskarota not far away from Hegosu. The Salamanas, after the Jarasas were the most powerful of the ducal houses on the mainland of Gholghant. The Salamanas, like the Jarasas, were a recalcitrant and headstrong lot, often chafing at Imperial authority, such as their power afforded them. While the Jarasas of late labored on behalf of peace, the Salamanas craved war, for like the fire-breathing salamander upon their sigil, they were a truculent lot.

Though not so much Gorri himself. "Eloi Xurio," the young man said gingerly with arms outstretched in order to embrace the older man. "I had not thought to see you here."

"Nor I you," Eloi replied as he hugged Gorri, clasping his shoulders afterward. "You shouldn't be here."

"I know," the young lordling responded with a sigh. "But honor compels me."

There's no honor in suicide. "The honor of your house is great, I know. Anytime I'm in Muskarota, your father is quick to remind me of that. All the stories of old about their knights in orange armor with their pikes and spears, waging war against the northern dragons...I'm sure you know them all."

Gorri laughed and said "of course I do, though for what it's worth I've never fancied myself a warrior..."

"So go home then," Eloi barked at the boy. "Vismer is where doometh dwell. Your father's men, and all the other men gathered here will be sufficient for the cause." Eloi liked the boy and did not wish to see him die. It would be a great pain to him to have to return Gorri's body to Muskarota in a bag, laying him at the feet of his father and having to explain why his son was dead.

"You don't understand, Eloi Xurio," Gorri repeated more sternly this time. "It is not just the honor of my house that compels me to partake in this operation."

"...What else compels you then, my boy?" the Dienghantar was genuinely interested in hearing the boy's logic. *Perhaps he intends to prove himself to his father...*

The young man gulped. "...Mariana Hegosu," he blurted out. "Where she goes, I shall go too..."

...Why didn't I see this coming? "You're going to get yourself killed over a girl, Gorri?" Such was the fate of young men with pining hearts, to go to great lengths to get the attention of their beloved.

"I will not die, unless it is to save her," Gorri replied nervously. "Vismer is as you say, a dangerous land full of peril. If something were to happen to her if I

wasn't there to help her, I could never forgive myself. That is why I must go...because my conscious requires it, as dictated by my heart's desire."

"Just tell her how you feel and be done with it then," the older man said with an exasperated groan. "She's a warrior, and you are not. You shouldn't be going."

"That would never work," Gorri shook his head. "She would reject me outright, and laugh at me behind my back. She's never noticed me before, never taken me seriously...I must prove worthy of her affections. I will do that in Vismer, Eloi. Do not worry too much about me, I won't be on the frontlines or anything... I'll be with my Uncle Cygnus."

This is stupid. Cygnus Salamana was the Lord Commander of the Gholghantish Armed Forces, an appointed position by the Steward that came with it great power and responsibility. From what Eloi had heard, there was some disagreement between the Steward and Lord Cygnus about the degree of Gbantish involvement in Vismer, until eventually Cygnus decided to commit the country outright, on account of Skyan involvement. "Well, I can see there's no dissuading you, Gorri. I will keep an eye out for you. Just try not to do anything dumb, okay?"

Gorri nodded and embraced Eloi once more. "Thanks, Eloi. You're a good man...I can see why the Steward and the Emperor are so fond of you. I'll be careful... you be careful too." After saying that, Gorri walked past Eloi, going back in the direction he was walking, up the hill. Eloi shook his head as he watched the younger man walk off, and continued down the stone path down to the edge of town.

All around there were men giving speeches in the streets, some about the righteousness of the war against the Scandinvans, others warning that such a war would bring about the doom of Gholghant. Eloi was inclined to believe the latter...for the Gbantish had lasted as long as they did by not bringing too much attention onto themselves. Even in recent times with the rise of the Kraven Reich, the Gbantish coasted along, members of the Gothic Alliance in good standing. To stoop to the level of the Scandinvans, he thought, made them no better, and such a status was like to invite trouble the likes of which Gholghant had seldom seen, or was prepared to overcome.

Eloi hung around the outskirts of town for a time, listening and watching as the last of the exercises were. Then men began to shuffle about in formation as they streamed into the town towards the ships at dock, forcing Eloi to walk in the same direction. Most of the moving of supplies, weapons, vehicles and munitions had already been done, so getting the men on board was the last thing to do.

There was a great deal of commotion about this as well, as the streets were packed with soldiers streaming in an orderly fashion down the paved streets towards the ships. Eloi looked above to see many old men, women and children look down upon them, some crying, some shouting words of support and encouragement, others just watching silently. *The young men must have joined up*, he thought as he looked around and didn't notice any amongst the spectating crowds. *The next generation will be one*

of women, no doubt...

At the helm of one of the ships stood a tall and powerfully built middle-aged man, wearing a garish burnt-orange military uniform complete with a black cape, gloves and hat. On his coat were numerous medals, and the great fire-breathing salamander on his chest. This man was Cygnus Salamana himself, staring down at all the soldiers that he was going to send to Vismar to fight, and possibly die. *At least he's properly dressed for the occasion.*

When he raised his hand, the Ghanter stopped moving, talking or doing anything else besides look up at him. Even the people of the coastal town stopped what they were doing and stared. Only the gulls squawking remained...cawing as they flew about in search of easy food, carried by the gentle ocean breeze. Then Cygnus Salamana began to bellow through a loudspeaker.

"Men and women of Gholghant," he began. "For millennia we have lived in the shadow of the great powers of Gholgoth, and for centuries, we have remained hidden in the veil of our isolation. We signed and carried out the Gothic Pact between our nations, and for just as long we hoped, and prayed, that it would keep us safe. No more! What good is a shield that no longer works? Did that shield protect the people of Vetalia from the Kravenites? Did that shield protect the people of Havensky from the Scandinavians? What recourse do we have, we people of Gholghant, but to stand up and say 'not us?' To have the courage to fight...to fight for justice, for freedom, for security? Rest assured, the Scandinavians and their likes think us weak, think us easy prey, think us vulnerable. Let us show them that we are anything but! Let's stand with our Skyan brothers, and our Macabean and Imbrinian allies in reminding the Scandinavians that those who break the sacred Pact are at the mercy of swift and fiery vengeance. The Emperor of Ghanter would have you appeal to their better nature...the Steward would have you cower behind alliances and treaties, and the she-dragon would have you believe that they can be bartered with. I say that the Sons of Erid and their ilk only understand one thing, and that's violence. It's only a matter of who will strike first...us, or them. And I say let it be us. May God give us the strength to prevail against the wicked, against the evil and against the unjust. I say let us go on to war, and if we die, let us be with weapons in our hands and smiles upon our faces!"

The multitude of Ghanterish soldiers shouted in unison, the noise of it deafening as it filled the air. They all seemed to raise their fists, though Eloi remained still. *May the Gods have mercy on our souls.* The commanders came forward and began to usher the soldiers forward onto the ships, thousands of eager young men with their blood up, emboldened by Cygnus Salamana's words of honor and glory. Though there were some men like Eloi that were just as hesitant, clearly dreading what was to come. *Smart men.*

Eloi's orders were simple. He was to board the flagship from which Cygnus delivered his speech, known as the *Pretor*, bearing the seal of the Steward and the Emperor, and to merely serve as the eyes and ears of imperial authority. As such as maneuvered his way through the embarking soldiers

towards the flagship, until he arrived at the entrance ramp that was guarded by some elite soldiers. Cygnus presented his seal, and was granted access to the vessel.

He made his way straight to the command center on the ship's bridge, though it took him some time to navigate through the passages within the bowel of the ship. Upon arriving at the bridge, he once again presented his seal to some more elite guards, who let him inside. It was a beautiful, state of the art room full of computers, radar, and detailed maps. Upon the carved wooden table, Eloi noticed great map of Gholgoth, with markings and pieces indicating various forces and routes. Beside it was a letter.

By the time Eloi arrived on the bridge, the last of the Gbantish soldiers boarded the myriad number of ships. It was long after that that they began to depart the port, their course set for the northeast. As the bells of the town rang and people waved flags and towels, Eloi pursed his lips and looked out at the port. *Could be the last time I ever see friendly lands again*, he thought with a heavy sigh. Then he picked up the letter that was laying on the table, and began to read what it said.

Message to Commanders of the Vismer Campaign from Cy



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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** » Tue Apr 25, 2017 6:31 pm



The tropical Nicaroan jungle as it approaches the western coastline, just southeast of Masaya.

[...continues from here.](#)

Matagalpa, Firmador
9 September, 2027

The fight for the city's airport had left walls pockmarked and runways cratered, but its fall to Macabean special forces was perhaps inevitable. That the Macabeans could hold on to it while waiting for reinforcements was not, and in was on the morning of the eighth of September that contra forces launched a counter-attack from the southeast. The seven hundred *koro kirim* had taken the field without much resistance, which allowed them to entrench themselves and prepare defensive positions during the night, but FCG forces by were no means timid and were in fact emboldened by the drop-off in airstrikes around the area of Matagalpa since the previous day.

Between the airport and the rim of the city lay a stretch of empty land occupied only by unrestrained, wild weeds, and at first the only sign of an attack was the irritable droning hum of the enemy's engines and the unnerving clink of their steel tracks. Skies were still red as daylight mixed with the night, the day being only in its early morning, but few of the men positioned within the airfield were yawning.

Some of the men had not slept in anticipation of today. No man had come to Nicaro without expecting this kind of day. Seven hundred *koro kirim* is many *koro kirim*, it is true, but the Contra government's military was disciplined

enough and well supplied to boot, at least for an army of their nature. The Ordenites had given them arms enough to dominate their neighbors, even tanks and missiles. Gathered intelligence suggested that Ordenite officers were still embedded among FCG units, in a training and advising role. The contras would not be their most dangerous foe, but certainly, an enemy to prepare for. They slept, or not, behind barricades, sometimes camouflaged into the buildings, inside alleys and niches, waiting to ambush the unwary attackers that would soon creep onto the airport's grounds. They waited with an already chambered round and with gritted teeth.

Before the assault was launched, an artillery barrage raked and combed the airfield with brutal intensity. Shells crashed through already-decrepit terminals or struck hangars. One sliced through the middle of the radio control tower, launching a plume of smoke that swept over, and obscured, the area like a stormcloud. They knew the layout of the field and used that knowledge with incredible precision.

It was a ten-minute barrage and, all of a sudden, the battlefield fell silent again, except for that winding moan of distant engines revving.

First to show themselves were the light tanks, which traversed the open ground with some caution. Behind them piled platoon-sized units of FCG infantry, trying to use the thick steel armor of the tanks to protect themselves too. It wouldn't work, because just as one of the tanks got to about the halfway point between the edge of the city and the airfield a massive explosion literally plunged through its belly armor, charring it like a piece of meat on the grill. The men hiding behind it either died where they stood, or fell to the ground with missing limbs or perhaps a missing eye, while those that survived the blast scattered and retreated.

Firing from the rooftops, Macabean snipers opened fire, picking off FCG infantrymen where they could. These huddled even closer behind the tanks, but they'd soon find out that there were plenty of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines to force them to scatter again. By the time the first of them reached the actual perimeter of the airport, there was a trail of dead and mangled behind them, laying next to burnt out and abandoned hulls.

Reinforcements were already pouring in to fill the gaps, and a second counter-attack was originating nearly simultaneously from a northern direction. The enemy was very serious about taking the airfield back and the Contra government did not care how many men it lost doing it. Unfortunately for them, the *Koro Kirim* — some of the most elite soldiers in the *Ejermacht* — had positioned themselves well and prepared the battlefield for exactly this kind of assault, and it bears reminding that there were seven hundred of them. It was not a small defending force by any means, especially considering their training and experience. Although the fighting carried on towards noon, and it got quite desperate at times, FCG units were, for the most part, kept to the margins of the area and any penetrations were cut off where they came. Finally, it was around noon that they were repelled and remaining counter-attacks withdrew back from whence they came.

Two hours later, they counter-attacked again, with similar results. This time, though, they brought with them more armor and even armored personnel carriers to carry their infantry, rather than let them be picked off from a distance. Of course, the mines were less effective this time too, since most of them had been set-off in the preceding attack. Still, contra forces were funneled into kill zones, while enemy armor was subjected to fire from TA-80 NIR-S anti-tank teams. For another three hours, missiles and rockets struck back and forth as infantrymen killed each other inside buildings, or sewage lines, or dumpsters and fuel drums — wherever the Macabean special forces could set up their ambush points.

Kriermada jets flying in from the aircraft carriers provided limited air support, bombing enemy mustering and jump-off positions in the city. They helped where they cut, and they certainly terrified the enemy, but none of the airfields in the country had been captured yet, and none had been prepared inside of GNLFF territory since this kind of war hadn't been expected. So air cover remained sparse.

Finally, the area fell silent again and the dust settled. The dead littered the ground in the north and in the south, gruesomely marking the path of the two counter-attacks. There were dead Macabeans too. Even special forces soldiers

can die, after all. And many did, some all by their lonesome, surrounded only by the dozen or so corpses of enemy combatants that had isolated them and worn them down. Some APCs and tanks were all black and gray now, except for remnants of their original paint along the turret roof or the glacis plate. Smoke rose in the air as a token of their sacrifice, it too soon slowly disappeared like a dying flame.

The fight had only temporarily ceased, though. They'd be back in greater numbers if given the time, so the *koro kirim* holding the field sprung into action. Like with many special forces units, each individual specialized. Some were weapons specialists, others demolition experts, and some engineers, and so these latter were the ones in charge of getting at least one of the runways back in working condition. There was no time to re-pave, so they simply leveled the ground where they could. Craters were filled and packed, and explosives were removed with great care. Without the heavy equipment they really needed, it was something of a struggle, although they used local machinery found in the hangars and in outlying warehouses where they could. It was a long and tedious process, especially for just a handful of men to complete, but one of the medium-length runways was finally opened for business by early evening.

By then, a flight of heavy transports had already left their *cúev* out of Arras. These, fully laden with troops and a handful of heavy vehicles, rocketed their way up into the clouds and finally lower earth orbit, 'bouncing' their way to Nicaro and Firmador. What should have taken them almost half of a day took was only a few hours and, as night fell once again upon the tropical jungles of the war-torn country, the first imperial reinforcements arrived at Matagalpa.

More would come the next day, on the ninth. In fact, over the next five days, an entire division's worth of *regulares* was airlifted into the area, sans perhaps three-fourths of their heavier equipment. This was already onboard ships off the coastline, but a land corridor would have to be opened and secured before any of it could be supplied. Along with these men, the *Laerihans* also began to deploy air assets to provide local air support, namely in the shape of the two squadrons of four GLI-76 multi-role fighters apiece that arrived on the morning of the ninth. These joined the fray almost immediately, striking GFC bases and positions around the Matagalpa and Sandino areas.

All the while, with their mechanization or not, the *regulares* and *koro kirim* were already infiltrating the northwestern suburbs of the city, grimly fighting to free the city of the contra forces holding it.

Batis, Firmador *12 September, 2027*

FCG forces trying to counterattack around the area of Batis found themselves thwarted almost at every level. Macabean special forces in the shape of the *koro kirim* that had come out of GNLFF territory on the seventh had been running interdiction missions against FCG supply lines, logistics bases, and in-the-rear units, while making it tough for combat FCG units to move from one area to another. Similarly, Contra forces coming in from the north ran into infantry forces deployed to slow them down. This, coupled with air and offshore naval support from the fleet, was enough to spoil whatever plans the Contra government had to push the invaders out back into the ocean.

While fighting ensued all around the port city, Macabean forces continued to land at the secured beachheads south of Batis. What started out as a few battalions turned into two division's worth of men by the end of the seventh and into an entire corps by the ninth. By the twelfth, two corps of infantry — or, just about two hundred and forty thousand men — were in the area. Most were still without their heavier equipment, and the force lacked heavy tank support, but they were nevertheless quickly pitted in an effort to take Batis as early as possible. Fighting in the city's suburbs had already started by the eighth and by the twelfth the city had all but fallen. Remaining FCG and other local security forces holed themselves up in government buildings or police stations, as the Macabean *regulares* steeled themselves for the last series of attacks to fully eliminate the enemy from Batis.

It happened in pockets, as Contra soldiers holding out put up determined and rugged resistance. Sometimes the fighting was room to room, where it came

down to systematic and often deadly clearing procedures against soldiers who waited in dark corners or sat behind explosive booby-traps. No quarter was given by either side, but better equipped — not, however, power armored (it would have doubled the necessary space for overseas troop transportation) — and better trained, the *regulares* slowly overcame their opponents as they 'liberated' more and more of the city.

Here there *were* tanks. Two companies of BSI-120s provided fire support with three companies of Nakíl 1A4s. the latter of which had been brought onshore during the days subsequent to the landing.

In one case, a Nakíl parked itself at the mouth of an alley that ended at another one which crossed it perpendicularly. On the left-hand side, towards the end, there was a door that led to the inside of a small post office that had been garrisoned by a platoon-sized group of FCG infantrymen. The tank waited there and waited, and all-in-all continued to wait until about thirty-five minutes passed by. Suddenly, the remnants of the enemy platoon fled through the back and into the alley. Its cannon shuddering with violence, the Nakíl opened fire and was immediately enshrouded in the fumes, smoke, and dust that lifted as a result. The explosion rocked the alley and lifted the retreating enemy off their feet, if it didn't just shred through their limbs, open their stomachs, or viciously melt their faces. Any survivors quickly inched back into the building, even if the gunfire from the *regulares* clearing them out was getting louder behind them.

The Nakíl fired another shell. Fat whiskers of smoke rose once again and by now the entire narrow alleyway looked like it had been struck by a thick, dark, and dirty spontaneous fog. It sat there for perhaps another minute and seemingly satisfied proceeded to slowly turn its turret forward, whereupon it continued to move down the street.

Armor suffered from its own fair share of heavy fighting. Contra light tanks provided fire support for their own troops and, more dangerously, waited behind cover to ambush incautious Macabean forces. But these were lightly protected and were, overall, no match for the much heavier Nakíls. Rather, the real risk were the rocket-propelled grenades and anti-tank missiles that were too often fired at short range. Most of the RPGs bounced off or were shot of the sky by vehicles' active protection systems, but the missiles were the real danger. Active protection systems protected against these two, and to watch the series of explosions caused by sensor-guided grenades and darts was truly spectacular, but no system was one hundred percent effective. One BSI-120 lost three of its crew members to a missile that struck and penetrated through the turret. Only the driver survived.

Retaining a third of their strength to break down Batis — along with two battalions of *terkos* —, the *Ejermacht* resolved to maintain their momentum by launching Operation Wicked Horseman. On the twelfth, about forty-five thousand infantrymen were sent west in three prongs, one following the main highway to Sandino and the other taking two narrower, more dangerous routes. Most of the available mechanization had been reserved for this operation, allowing the spearheads to consist of infantrymen carried in the heavy Shalmaneser armored personnel carrier (equipped with the nasty 45mm mk. 30 Swift Kill) escorted by two companies worth of Nakíls.

Squadrons of GLI-44s screamed overhead as they raced towards their targets. They struck enemy formations moving along the roads and highways, or through the jungle, with impunity. Two Blackjesters circled over two overlapping areas, with one focusing on the battle developing around the lands east of Matagalpa and the other on Batis, right up to the edge of Sandino. They directed the operation like mad orchestra directors, highlighting targets for jets and offshore cannons alike.

FCG forces responded like they could, staying in small clumps and opting for ambushes over open battle. They slowed the advance down, as they were meant to, but with heavy air and naval support, most of these skirmishes ended quickly and usually badly for the defenders. Discipline amongst the enemy was falling as well, for some units began to surrender outright and this trend would accelerate as the invasion continued. Still, there was fighting and some of it was quite heavy. There were counter-attacks too, although these were mostly broken up and driven back.

Firmador was unfolding into a hodge-podge of clashes and explosions that

were quickly expanding around Batis, Sandino, and Matagalpa, making the collapse of the Contra government a matter of time.

Amidst the chaos flew three columns of low-flying transport helicopters. Two GLI-76s escorted each column and lit up the jungle below with selective missile fire (although their support was hamstrung by their lack of cannons, a notorious and well-known problem). The choppers swept in from the east, heading in the direction of Sandino. They overflew the three ground columns fighting their way towards Firmador's capital. Behind enemy lines they continued to fly, until they were just east of the big, sprawling city. There, finally, they deposited the soldiers within them and started their trek back to a *Dienstad*-class strategic projection vessel that had ventured close to the coastline. The six companies of *asaltos* they left behind fanned out south rapidly, striking at the rear of the Contra government's military and interdicting against its supply lines.

Little mercy was shown. Isolated from territorial supply routes and working by themselves on the company level, these soldiers took no prisoners and would not risk a captured enemy returning to his unit. So they killed them all instead. Their role was simply to strike and destroy, to wreak havoc in the rear and accelerate progress towards the capture of Sandino.

As word of their presence spread, Contra soldiers began to surrender to the main column in growing numbers. The Macabeans were known to take prisoners and treat them well — relatively speaking (being shackled and forced to march back to the coast) —, and with the chaos in the rear continuing the fight seemed only to invite certain death. It was a terrible choice, but given their relative indiscipline and the losses they were taking it should be no surprise that so many of them were raising the white flag. Slowly, but surely, the egg was cracking and the blood red yoke began to flow through the dense Firmadoran jungle.

Sandino, with its old colonial style architecture and extended shanty suburbs, would be the Contra government's last stand.

León, Firmador 14 September, 2027

León was a no man's town. Pure anarchy. But anarchy wasn't as 'anarchic' as most people thought. It wasn't a place without rules; no, it just had few rules, but the few it had were enforced by sentence of death — all of them. Here it was a matter of survival and in León this was done in two ways. Either you were an entrepreneur or you were an addict, a have or a have not. In between were the security forces which kept the peace (often with atrocious violence) and defended the city with a sharp efficiency that had staved off dominance by either the GNLf or the DRFN for long years, defeating the Sandinistas in the streets during weeks of siege.

It was a city where a man could get high and sleep with as many hookers as wanted. It was also a city where stealing a better man's shit could get you popped. There was certainly an order to it all and if it wasn't enforced on the street it was the thugs who did. Some called it extortion and others called it privatized defense.

Remarkably, León was a town of commerce and the largely peaceful coexistence of the various Nicaroan and Firmadoran factions. There were Tsarina cartel jefes and dual republic agents alike, all peddling to each other or the poor, wretched helots that wasted away enriching the kingpin bourgeoisie. With this came the residencies where hot shots could stay without worrying about an assassination attempt; León was an asylum of sorts, and this particular kind of asylum had strip clubs, night clubs, and casinos to entertain the high rollers. Young girls pleased sugar daddies in search of that golden ticket, instead usually finding themselves pregnant and abandoned. Girls in underwear served drinks to gamblers, and if you were a man you were either a dirt poor, gap-toothed, soiled loser working a janitorial job to pay for your meth addiction. If you were good lucky you bartended or stripped until you too got old and discarded just like the rest of 'em. The poor made the city run and spent their hard earned money to buy pills and dime bags off the very people they entertained.

It was one long, non-stop party, even when the bombs started falling. Hell, this is Firmador, aren't the bombs always falling? It was the fourteenth of September and it was business as usual.

Somewhere to the near west and east of the city were the vague and fluid borders with the GNLf. They teemed with thousands of rebel militants that slowly crept through the thick, dark brush. Down narrow dirt and mud paths went convoys of heavy-machinegun-sporting pickup trucks intermixed with armored personnel carriers, traveling to the edge of their territory and showing no signs of slowing down.

León's streets were bustling with activity as merchants sold their wares, both wholesome and sinful. Crowds thronged the narrow central city streets like a long, winding snake, and even the suburbs and the outlying towns were busy this day. War sounded off in the distance, but most paid it no mind. This was a mercantile, entrepreneurial place, after all. Their attention was on their business until the sounds of war began to boom nearer than they usually did. The wind swept in the noise of engines, the kind of noise you'd hear when security forces deployed heavily for battle or when the enemy was coming. Some then started to lift their heads and look around, wondering what that was all about.

A whining sound emerged from a distance, like those mosquitos that zip around in your room at night and you begin to wonder when, just when those mosquitos are going to zoom right past your ear. The sound slowly got louder and more frenetic, as if its sources were growing and multiplying.

Little did they know that a flight of eighteen long-range cruise missiles had been launched by a *Grospék*-class battlecruiser. Five minutes later, another flight of eighteen was fired. Five minutes after that, another one. This continued until some two hundred and fifty missiles were raised in all, with seven salvos shot in fiery passion. They traveled like sharks homing-in on blood, like swift-cutting knives flying towards their targets. And their rockets shrieked as they sped well above Firmador, but still letting all who lived below know the missiles had come, and could one day come again and next time for *them*. After a voyage of just under an hour, the first wave broke off and dashed closer to the canopies of the tall jungles that gave the country its renown. They struck their targets in quick succession — bases, outposts, suspected political installations in the city, police stations, and countless other targets within and outside of the León were hit. The bombardment lasted just over an hour, as all fourteen waves played their game.

Some of these missiles missed their targets, but most did not. Like flowers in the midst of blooming, explosions rocked that narrow space of earth between the two main GNLf territories, and people died. In the markets, the attack sparked a rampage as tens of thousands scattered in fear and at full flight. It was a tragedy. A child tripped and was trampled to death by people too concerned with their own safety to hardly even notice the horror that they were committing. An old man was swept aside by an automobile that had grown anxious in waiting for space to open, instead quickly restoring to serial homicide by ramming into those unfortunate enough to be on foot and in his way. Only a few paused to sniff at the smoke.

Of course, many of the security outposts were out on the marginal ends of León. They were shanty towns and tent camps housing millions of refugees that had come to escape the violence elsewhere, hoping for the city's security forces to protect them. More often than not, 'protecting them' was more a matter of squelching their sporadic revolts. No matter, more pressing was their feeble construction and propensity to burn.

And indeed, they burned. The flames of the bombings were throttling and growing, quickly spreading across the squalid slums like a wave of orange and red fire.

León was thrown into frantic chaos, sometimes of the darkest kind. In those hours, the city lost its rule of law. Gangsters assassinated their rivals where they stood, firefights broke out, and the poor did not emerge only because they were too scared to venture outside their homes, in anticipation of what was to come. Mothers struggled to contain tears as they hugged and huddled with their weeping children. Security forces seemed to be pulled from every seam, trying to combat the fire and maintain order simultaneously, which gave them little leeway to prepare for an attack that was sure to come.

It did come. The mechanized columns had by now penetrated into uncontrolled territory just east of the city. Behind it rapidly advanced an army of some five thousand fighters equipped with old Macabean weapons, including five hundred embedded *koro kirim* operatives who acted as the spine and nervous system of the operation. But this was not the Macabean army and it did not have the same discipline. Not even the operatives held back, true as they were to their cover and the identity they were playing. What transpired would hardly receive a peep around the world, as international news continued to focus on the Macabean invasion. But it deserved condemnation. As the first towns were overrun, men were beheaded at random and in numbers. Women were raped, and girls too. Some children were killed for no reason at all. Security forces were shown no mercy and were shot on sight, even if they surrendered. Most were lucky to not be tortured first. Most, but not all, some did not have the fortune.

León's thug armies did resist, or they tried. But decapitated and dazed by the opening bombardment, and then the coming of the fire and street violence, they were overwhelmed and ineffective. It often came down to scattered turkey shoots, as dumps of defenders were killed on the spot. When they came out with their arms above their heads they were made to kneel in a life and then were executed. Their bodies were left there to rot.

By noon they were had already started to infiltrate the suburbs, like a disease spreading itself through its host. Many of those that barricaded themselves in their homes and stayed out of the fight survived. But those who had the misfortune of finding themselves in the middle of a battle were killed or worse. Some were beaten then killed. The fate of so many of the women is best left unsaid, but some suffered many times over. It was a slaughter. Later, it would be said that the conquerors trudged through an ankle-deep river of blood as they marched up the streets to seize the city's heart. The sacking León would go down as perhaps the worst atrocity of the Nicaraoan civil war, but it was certainly not the only one.

Masaya, Nicaro *17 September, 2027*

GNLF forces met heavy resistance as they advanced south towards Masaya, but by the twelfth they had gotten to the outskirts of the city and by the next the siege had begun. By the fifteenth, Masaya had been surrounded and GNLf forces were already engaging pirate-backed Chinadenga militias in southern DRFN territory. It was an alphabet soup with a broth made of blood.

If the siege of Masaya was not a worse tragedy than that of León it was because the fighting was protracted and so tiring that neither side had much time to worry about the civilians. Many died, to be sure. They were caught in the crossfire of a blazing firefight, or killed by a mortar or artillery shell, or crushed by the weight of a collapsing building. There was no medical attention if you bled to death. No policeman to save you from a soldier storming through your door and riddling your body with bullets. But civilians that holed themselves up in their homes and hid when someone burst through that door had a decent chance of surviving, even if a decent chance wasn't necessarily a good one.

DRFN forces were feeble but, other than the *koro kirim* embedded among them, neither was the GNLf army much to balk at. The two sides clashed heavily along narrow mud paths flanked by dense tropical foliage. Smoke obscured the battlefields to such an extent that one could barely see past twenty feet ahead of him. Men stumbled upon one another and the first man to react was typically the survivor; it was so hectic that blue-on-blue fire was too frequent to excuse.

A man emerged from the fog, his face wide and in mid-scream, to impale another at the end of his bayonet. Another fired wildly at shadows, his bullets striking flesh and bone on the other end. The chaos was perpetual.

When GNLf forces entered Masaya on the thirteenth, the fighting went house-to-house at first. Streets were turned into gauntlets, with barricades and ambush points galore. Windows were blown out and homes lost walls, sometimes second stories, and many simply ceased to exist when the fighting

was finally done. Many bodies would be found trapped in the rubble in the years to come as the city slowly rebuilt itself, like dogs left to asphyxiate and die. Prisoners were not taken here either. They were simply shot. Sometimes innocent male men were lined up against walls and interrogated. They were asked if they were DRFN soldiers or sympathizers. When they denied the accusations they were beaten and told to shut up, and they were called liars and agents. Then they were simply shot dead where they knelt, as they sobbed, knowing that they would never see their wives or children ever again.

For days, combat in the city went back-and-forth. Intersections were taken and lost. Buildings were occupied, driven out of, and leveled. Both sides participated in the tyranny. Civilians who were caught cooperating with GNLFF soldiers were later murdered. Many people used this as an excuse to murder just about anyone, manipulating the fear to commit their twisted acts. Sometimes the fighting would come to places where a group of civilians had been killed and dumped, and the soldiers would cover their mouths and noses with a bandana or mask as they continued to kill each other in the slums of Masaya.

As combat in the city slowed down and the siege stalled, the GNLFF began to resort to the unconventional. They fired sarin shells into crowded and heavily defended city streets. Sarin was an elite agent of death. It is difficult to describe how truly terrible it is to die to it. Imagine losing control of your body and falling to the ground, spasming as you drool all over yourself and shitting your pants all the while. Warm pee is running down one of your legs.

The air quickly leaves your lungs. The next moments feel like an eternity, and pain takes new meaning.

Officially, the Golden Throne condemned the use of the gas. But there were *koro kirim* amongst the fighters, pushing through thick defenses to spread chaos and allow the GNLFF follow like a flood in their wake. These *koro kirim* certainly did very little to stop the gas attacks. All the while, Macabean-supplied Nakil tanks shattered fragile clay-brick buildings like a flimsy house-of-card. And it was Macabean missiles that hit DRFN forces, camps, and defensive positions as the battle unfolded. Neither did they lift a muscle to punish anyone about the attacks, nor did the sarin stop being used until the last gunshot was heard ring across an empty, dead, and devastated urban landscape.

Macabean missiles were also flying into DRFF (Dual Republic territory in Firmador) positions, which were concentrated around the city of San Tomás. The Liberation Front didn't have the men to invade Nicadoran territory, fight the Contra governments, and defeat the Dual Republic in Firmador, so they relied heavily on Macabean fire support. The Golden Throne did so willingly, using both aircraft and its ships to hit enemy formations concentrating in preparation to attack.

The war south of Masaya continued. The bulk of the GNLFF — that which wasn't caught up in Masaya — was now engaging Chinadenga fighters that were raiding into southern Dual Republic territory during the latter's moment of weakness, which was something all good raiders did. They knew these jungles well and some of them were equipped with heavier weapons provided to them by the Scandinavians. Technically, the weapons were meant to go to Theohuanacu, but Blue-Eyed Nolan had done well to divert some of it to his own uses in Nicaro and Firmador. Well armed and experienced in killing, many of them having served here-and-there as crewmembers on the pirate ships that docked at Chinadenga and the other nearby harbors, the Chinadenga militias did well in resisting the GNLFF's southward advance. Well enough to stall it and, in fact, break through in small streams into central DRFN lands, where they pillaged, raided, and raped.

To make matters worse, the conflict between the Tsarina and the Jiyu was intensifying and moving eastward. Within a small triangular area just south of Masaya and north of Chinadenga, five different armies became embroiled in what would be one of the most confusing battles of the war. The GNLFF advance stalled as it pushed through this quagmire and it petered out almost completely by the end of the seventeenth.

Knowing that the attack had slowed down to a crawl that even an infant could outpace, the *Fuermak* took the news of the Alemannian offensive quite bitterly. They had hoped to race down to the southern border in an effort to

outpace the Alemanni, but the syndicalists had sprung their trap first and were already pouring over the border in an effort to take Managüa in southern Nicaro and Libera in northwestern Firmador. Once the Sandinista government fell, the Alemanni would have almost unrestricted access to Samoza cartel lands — especially after reports and rumors of the assassination of big man Samoza himself in Medellín, something which would surely throw the cartel into chaos.

In a bold decision, *Fuermak* command in Firmador (by now firmly established in Batis) decided to airlift an *asalto* division and drop them just north of Medellín. Another one would parachute into the area of Colón. At one fell swoop, the two large islands directly off the coast of Nicaro would be seized. The theory was beautiful, and it would limit Alemannian expansion by pre-empting any of their own machinations.

Theory is hardly ever reality, though.

Eighteen thousand men would be at it alone on each island, cut off from their allies in Firmador for at least another week, fighting headless and aggressive cartel guerillas (or '*gorilas*', as they were called here) in two large cities. Even if they took the two urban hubs, there they would hunker down in while the rest of the islands remained essentially lawless. It was a risk, and a cost, the Golden Throne was willing to accept, it appeared, for the two *asalto* divisions were flown to their landing zones on the morning of the twentieth, three days after the start of the Alemannian invasion.

They were preceded by a colossal missile bombardment that rocked Colón, Medellín, and their surrounding areas like a meteor shower that was pummeling the earth to death. Then came the aerial bombardment, which included brutal close-in runs made by parts of two wings of GLI-76 Falcons flying out of newly established airfields around Batis and Matagalpa. Finally, the airlift. It was like this that forty-thousand men were dropped onto Nicaro's hellraising southeastern islands.

Medellín and Colón were captured quickly, but the difficult things are the ones you don't predict — it would be the longest week in those men's lives...

Last edited by [The Macabees](#) on Sun Jan 07, 2018 7:53 pm, edited 2 times in total.

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Emperor Pudu
Spokesperson

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

by [Emperor Pudu](#) » Mon May 01, 2017 3:54 pm



In Citadel City ahead of the summit of Gothic Lords

The Citadel at the heart of the new Skyan capital was crowded with diplomats, bureaucrats, military attaches and other assorted envoys from across Gholgoth and beyond, not to mention the full staff of Skyan government workers who packed this building on a daily basis. It was all Ambassador Lucius Salvias Otho could do to find a quiet corner for himself. The suites the Skyans had provided for their diplomatic guests were accommodating but stifling. The presence of the Emperor outweighed all other concerns and that space and all in it served at his pleasure. Otho had his own pleasures to worry about right now.

In the on site cafe Otho had found a table in a corner with a view of the sprawling city below the Citadel. It was a different sort of city than Otho had become accustomed to. In his home in Daram the streets of the oldest parts of the city were ancient and narrow winding alleys. Automobiles in the densest parts of the metropolis of more than four-hundred million were unheard of. Dotted throughout the dense urbanity were the green fields and meticulously groomed gardens that in another city would be mistaken for parks. These were the estates of the old nobility, so old they built them before the city swallowed these pastoral estates whole. The Otho estate was no exception.

Then, in his most recent diplomatic assignment he had resided in Mazaraan, a younger city to be sure and one which had grown rapidly in the last decades but one whose growth was not meticulously planned and executed by civil engineers the way Citadel City had been. It was a living, pulsating thing, expanding and contracting according to its own inscrutable whims. It was a city of desperation and air so thick with malcontent it could strangle a person as easily as a stray dog was strangled for food. There was a tremendous energy in the Almaran capital, and one that was not wholly given over to baser things.

In both of those places Otho felt comfortable; he felt as if he could lose himself to the city and be swallowed up. Here, he was confined by the neat and orderly streets. The shining new buildings conveyed a sense of purpose and clear-eyed determination. Everyone had a place here in this presciently conceived city. None here could be left out, lost or forgotten. He thought about those lost people from his past that he had not yet forgotten as he sipped a cup of hot coffee, waiting

for his aides to finally track him down.

It was Korinna who found him first. "Of course," Otho whispered to his coffee, stifling a grin. She was his public relations officer and press liaison, she was also focused, intelligent and stubborn. "Ambassador!" she called out from across the cafe, no doubt turning more heads than just Otho's given the current climate in the Citadel. Otho looked up at her and smiled, but did not get up. Instead, she joined him at the small table and deposited a stack of folders she had been carrying in order to pull out her phone. As she was typing something she reprimanded her boss, "The summit begins this afternoon, the Emperor's people say you left the offices two hours ago! What are you doing?"

Otho saw his other two staff round a corner a few moments later and he waved them over. Filaret and Olifer. As they picked their way through the crowded eatery Otho answered Korinna abruptly, "What, you can't spin this for me? Ambassador plays hooky, takes coffee break during major summit?" The other two arrived at the table, Captain Filaret who was Otho's military advisor and Olifer who was an intelligence analyst specializing in Gothic affairs. Korinna continued undeterred by their presence, "Well whether or not you feel the need to prepare for this, your staff has been running all over the Citadel trying to find you - time we could have spent preparing ourselves."

"That sounds like your hang-up," Otho replied flippantly. "Anyway, as long as we're all here, and once I've finished my coffee of course, why don't we have a little sit down. You can do your jobs and I'll do my best not to interrupt." Korinna looked away to roll her eyes. "There's more than the summit, sir," she responded. Otho responded by raising an eyebrow, "our newly minted Skyan ambassador is in a meeting with Chancellor Zhao."

Immediately disregarding his previous assurance, Otho interrupted, "So? The Chancellor of State is his direct superior." Olifer and Korinna exchanged a glance which seemed to say 'which one of us is fielding this'. "No, no," said Otho again, "It doesn't count, I haven't finished my coffee!" Otho drained the last of his cup and tossed it into a wastebin nearby. "Their house coffee isn't an Ashlak blend? I think I just thought of some business for our new Skyan ambassador."

It was Korinna who pressed on about the Chancellor of State meeting. "You've been out of the capital for a long time, sir. Did you know Zhao Chen before you left for Shen Almaru?" Otho shook his head no. She nodded. "No, you wouldn't have. He's had a pretty meteoric rise in the last four years. He would still have been a NatCom district chief back then, in Karal I think."

"NatCom?" Otho said, referencing the National Communications Bureau, an agency that dealt with government telecommunications infrastructure. "He wasn't a diplomat?" Olifer and Korinna both shook their heads and Olifer took over the briefing, "We theorize that Zhao earned his current position as a reward." Otho understood immediately. NatCom handled nearly all secure communication between Imperial offices and officials around the world. Even a minor district chief who leaked the right information at the right time could be a valuable ally in the factional infighting that characterized the Pudite imperial government.

"It was Yin's party who championed his appointment in the Shizheng. The Chancellor and the Chief Amban have worked closely ever since. If Chancellor Zhao is meeting with Yuan right now, his purpose is to feel out his allegiance." Olifer was talking about the Chief Amban Yin Zhong, whose nearest equivalent office would be of Prime Minister. Yin's block of loyal Ambans opposed the wide ranging platform of reforms proposed by Emperor Dengmu. In the years when Dengmu's father still reigned and his elder sister and brother still lived Dengmu served in the Shizheng and played the loyal servant to Yin Zhong the elder statesman. Now the powers had shifted and it was Yin's turn to answer the beck and call. Only, some dogs were too old to learn new tricks.

Otho turned it all over in his head, thinking about Yuan Xiu his studious and professional young deputy who had sometimes bucked at Otho's unconventional attitudes and leadership. Still, he assured himself, Yuan was the Emperor's man. Otho told his staff that he thought as much. "Good," replied Korinna simply, "I can't understate the importance of Dengmu's reforms on keeping the Skyans on our side over the islands." Korinna had lowered her voice somewhat after casting a furtive glance around. "The Emperor will need you just as much as you need him if he hopes to retain his place at the table here."

"That's probably why he's ordered the mobilization." Captain Filaret interjected. "It's more a show of force than anything practical. It's simply not possible to move six hundred million Imperial Army this far from home and fight a war. Dengmu might be planning something, but the Grand Mobilization is just just a cover for whatever that is."

"Has Dengmu been getting personally involved with Khudoi and Task Force Hell?" Otho looked at Filaret expecting him to elaborate. Instead, Olifer took over. "And whatever he's planning, he's got the assistance of our own Admiral Khudoi,"

Of course Otho and Khudoi had met earlier in the day as the Pudite Imperial delegation was arriving but the admiral had made his excuses shortly afterward and Otho had been looking for his own reason to escape and hadn't questioned it. He assumed the admiral had side meetings to take or official duties to attend to. Perhaps he was right.

Olifer continued, "Khudoi and Prefect Nadej have been talking in the last few days, and as we speak Khudoi is meeting with some of Dengmu's people off campus somewhere, the local embassy geeks lost track of him and his security team is all private contractors and we can't even raise them to say as much as hello. We can assume Chancellor Zhao knows at least that much as well if he still has any connections over at NatCom."

"So the question isn't what does Dengmu think of the operation already ongoing," Otho turned again to Captain Filaret, "but what else is he planning? And why is he going outside the chain of command."

This time Filaret had an answer for the ambassador. "If Dengmu wants to scale up operations in Gholgoth then Khudoi is his obvious point-man. We know that there

have been large numbers of Imperial Air Force transports landing throughout Mille Mortifere. There's no word what units are being offloaded but if I had to guess it's an elite formation. Something that can punch above its weight. Khudoi will be back in Mille in a matter of days for Operation Urgent Typhoon. By then whatever Dengmu is airlifting in will be in position. What happens after that is anyone's guess."

The Grand Mobilization

The order had come down from the top; the very top, originating with Emperor Dengmu himself and implemented immediately through the Armed Forces General Staff and their subordinate Home and Expeditionary Headquarters. The scope of the order was the entire Imperial Armed Forces. Although it was issued as Imperial Directive 15 the order quickly came to be known both among military personnel and in the news as 'the Grand Mobilization'.

There was almost no planning time given to the senior staff under Directive 15, the order was to be implemented immediately. This, intentionally, forced the senior staff to rely on plans and platforms already in place. Most of these contingencies for mobilization, however, were never intended to be simultaneously enacted across the breadth of the military. Directive 15 called for, quite simply, 'All IAF personnel, units and formations be made ready for wartime operations including expeditionary deployment without delay'. The Pudite armed forces were no stranger to large scale operations, though the delivery, abruptness and ambiguity as to objective was not something the General Staff and those senior officers at the head of the various Commands and Headquarters were accustomed to.

There are four geographic Commands under Home Headquarters and three mission oriented Commands under Expeditionary Headquarters. Each of the seven provided administration for around a dozen high-level strategic formations encompassing the four branches of the armed forces. These component armies, fleets and air divisions all received the mobilization order superseding routine operations, reactivating ready-reserve personnel and organizing their soon-to-be full strength formations for expeditionary combat.

The largest component force by the numbers was the Rodinia Command of the Home Headquarters. This was Shulim, the homeland, and where the majority of the Imperial Army, Navy and Air Force were based. In Shulim the armed forces were housed and operated from a series of commanderies and sub-commanderies across seven geographic regions. Following the Abolitionist War there are twenty-three such commanderies and ninety-one sub-commanderies under the auspices of Rodinia Command. That most recent war had much altered the traditional thinking in the Pudite armed forces and presently the military was in the midst of a reorganization that meant that a large portion of the standing army was in fact made up of demobilized reserves. They were the first change to come from the Grand Mobilization.

Every Rodinian commandery, which were base complexes upwards of fifty-thousand square kilometers in size, accommodated more than eleven million military personnel. The reserves were pouring into the commanderies via the ubiquitous rail networks that knit together the vast distances and open country that was the nation outside the ten Autonomous Cities. In the five southern prefectures, those little touched by the war, the mobilization of the armies progressed smoothly. Kalium, Numium, Athas, Inner Khottium and Kurtar met their projections over the first few days, snapping their soldiers right back in to place. Many reservists still lived in their home commanderies, and the rail networks in these prefectures was unscathed by war. Nearly two hundred million soldiers were accounted for in the first week.

The northern prefectures, Kursarum and Corras, encountered more than the expected difficulties however. The rail networks here had been badly eroded by warfare, and indeed some places were simply inaccessible by rail, and furthermore multiple commanderies and sub-commanderies in these prefectures had been all but totally annihilated by oncoming armies and had yet to be rebuilt in any meaningful way. Commanders in Corras quickly found out that the limited rail networks available to them could only trickle soldiers out of the prefecture at the most deliberate of paces, creating a large backup in men, material and in regular rail maintenance. In the first week of mobilization, although nearly ten million soldiers had been accounted for only three full divisions had arrived by rail in the expeditionary staging areas around the Shagal-Hollarum capital metropolis. Airlift was a possibility, though there was not enough to stage the Corras formations around Hollarum and simultaneously transport the ready formations abroad.

In Kursarum, the prefecture hardest hit by the invasion, inter-city infrastructure was basically non-existent. What troops were available were those whose commanderies and associated bases had been located outside the path of the war and those formations based in and around the Autonomous Cities of Shagal, Nunkid and Hollarum. The Imperial Navy Strategic Sealift forces had been enlisted to transport soldiers and supplies out of Nunkid, whose rail links to Shagal and Hollarum had been severed, while the preponderance of the sealift force concentrated in the Yourang Sea off the coast of Shagal.

The strategic sealift capacity of the Imperial Navy is, on paper, one full army group or just over five hundred maneuver divisions. These assets were assembling in the Shagal area while other elements of the sealift fleet were already embarking full expeditionary supply cargos to be pre-positioned at sea to await the mission order. Stockpiling enough material to support five hundred plus divisions for even a month was an immense task. Tens of millions of tons of munitions passed through the major sea ports of Shagal, Nisi and Athuk. Half a million tons of food were slowly accumulating in the warehouses and on the docksides. More than thirty-seven million tons of fuel were allocated for immediate use and tanker ships had already begun to take that aboard. Millions of tons of additional war materials were also being assembled, from spare parts to specialized equipment to comfort products and anything else that might be required of a force tens of millions strong operating thousands of miles from home bases.[□]

Although the mobilization was ongoing and full-spectrum in nature, some formations had been more ready for the order than others. The four air-mobile divisions and two armored brigades of the First Vanguard Cadre 'Deadbolt' were a high-readiness force prepared to deploy at the least possible notice. It was for this reason that the commanding officer of the Expeditionary Headquarters' Operations

Command was given some additional insight into the purpose of the Grand Mobilization. Within an hour of receiving Imperial Directive 15 the first planes carrying Deadbolt combat units were in the air and headed for Mille Mortifere.

Drakonian Mille Mortifere, in Gholgoth

The first Pudite soldiers to arrive in Drakonian territory after the implementation of the Grand Mobilization were those of the elite 'Deadbolt' Vanguard Cadre. Throughout central-eastern Mille Mortifere military and civilian airfields alike had been taken over by the incoming armada of Pudite strategic airlifters. The big planes came in from the north, flying over the pole from Rodinia. More than five hundred sorties would be required, even considering the heavy payloads of the largest Pudite transports, to move the entire cadre and the thousands of tons of supplies they required.

The planes would be landing around the clock for more than twenty four hours because, although the Imperial Air Force had the airframes necessary to lift the whole cadre at once, the facilities in Mille Mortifere to accommodate such a massive simultaneous operation were simply not present. Nevertheless the cadre would be broken up into many smaller components across dozens of landing and offloading sites throughout the archipelago. The first troops to disembark would be elements of the cadre material support regiment, select engineer assets and some medical and traffic control units along with necessary command and signals elements to facilitate the smooth continuation of operations as more subunits arrived.

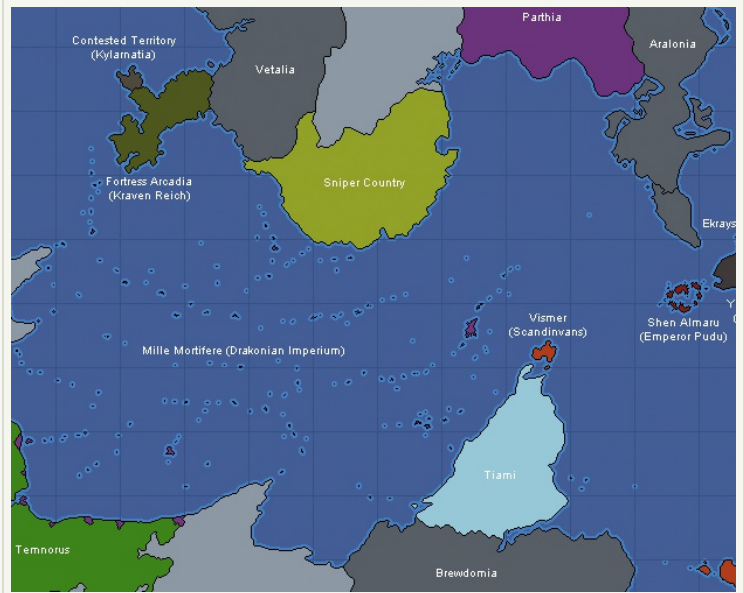
A cadre typically consisted of four infantry divisions, two armored brigades, an armored cavalry (reconnaissance) brigade and around thirty supporting formations ranging from artillery and air defense regiments to repair, medical and signals battalions and special forces units. In the Deadbolt cadre the units were distinct in being lighter and more streamlined for airlift and tactical air mobility operations. The armored units of Deadbolt utilized lighter tanks, a proportion of the infantry formations were outfitted with light, air-droppable fighting vehicles and the artillery subunits were significantly changed from those of a standard Imperial Army cadre. This formation, any reasonable military intelligence officer would assume, would serve as the tip of the spear of any Pudite action in the areas of Visrner and Shen Almaru.

The 'Deadbolt' Vanguard Cadre was not the only formation capable of rapid redeployment to the archipelago, however, and further distinct forces followed them in making the journey. Elsewhere than the Deadbolt landing areas would be staged the first division of another Imperial Army mobile cadre assigned as a supporting formation to a full field army which was mobilizing back in Rodinia. This was the 131st Light/Mobile Division commanded by Colonel Nestor Prozimir that would be participating on the OPFOR side in Operation Urgent Typhoon.

Two further formations from the same field army as Prozimir's division also arrived in Mille Mortifere. The first was a parachute infantry division which was based along with around seventy large strategic airlifters and many operational and tactical level transport aircraft and supporting squadrons to allow for immediate action if required. The second was an Independent Combat Intelligence Brigade of the Reconnaissance Agency, a military intelligence department separate from the Warfighting Agency that administered the armed forces. Such formations were seconded to the Imperial Army at the corps level and above in progressively larger numbers. They supplied electronic intelligence gathering capabilities, analysis and human intelligence assets including long-range special forces teams and interrogation units to handle captured prisoners. Portions of the intelligence brigade would be integrated into Operation Urgent Typhoon's observation and analysis force while other elements turned their attention immediately to Visrner and the battle that was surely soon to come.

The last independent unit to be deployed was a battalion from the 616th Celeres 'Azure Hydra' Brigade. These elite naval commandos were part of what would be called the Pudite tier-one special forces community. Hydra Teams typically comprised ten operators and specialized in direct action, special reconnaissance and raids, often deployed from specialized submarine squadrons onto hostile shores. They would immediately begin to immerse themselves in preparations for operations in Visrner.

Once all the planned troops had arrived in full and a supply regime had been established the entire force comprising Deadbolt cadre, two army divisions, the intelligence brigade and the Hydra battalion, would be supplied by a combined forty-one supply sorties a day. War material would begin to build up quickly, though to begin concentrated offensive operations would require larger still airlifts to maintain both a material reserve and necessary front-line supply totals. Additional cargo would begin to arrive in the days and weeks to come via the Imperial Navy's strategic sealift platforms that were now being embarked. The smallest and fastest trimaran and cavity catamaran high speed sealifters could carry more than a day's worth of supplies for an expeditionary division at speeds between 55 and 75 knots. Hundreds of these intra-theater sealifters would be based in Mille Mortifere very soon.



The echelonment of Task Force Hell

Of course, there already were many thousands of Pudite soldiers, sailors and airmen among the islands of Mille Mortifere. They were the Imperial Navy component of the international fleet that had been dubbed Task Force Hell. Having sailed from Citadel City some time ago, the task force had arrived in eastern Mille and the leading elements of the fleet were in contact with Scandin defenses and reconnaissance and target planning had already begun as the intelligence shared by the Skyans had made clear.

Among Task Force Hell, however, the Imperial Navy itself designated four task groups within its component force. Now, as combat operations began, these four distinct units would begin to separate out into their assigned roles as per established Pudite naval doctrine. The first stage in any naval campaign according to this doctrine was to deter and contain enemy naval forces. This was the mission of the Shattered Gods Task Group, made up wholly of submarine forces. The group's three hundred attack and guided missile submarines would inhabit the seas surrounding Vismer as well as those stretches of open ocean between Shen Almaru and the Vismer-Mille island group.

Deployed largely as reconnaissance forces, the submarines would operate sonar-equipped drones and patrol likely sea lanes of communication between the Scandin homeland and her outlying deployments. Intelligence from these submarines, combined with that gained by other means, would help to create as wide a field of vision over the Gholgothic seas as possible and enable widespread targeting of Scandin forces. When the time came to strike these targets the submarines would be the first to receive the order.

The second Pudite component group was the Five Winds Task Group which would be operating throughout the easternmost islands of Mille Mortifere. The nearly three hundred ships, including sixty light carriers, of the Five Winds group would be divided into small squadrons and spread out in a defensive configuration throughout these most vulnerable islands, those closest to Vismer and hostile Scandin forces. The component squadrons of the task group would have either anti-submarine warfare missions or anti-air warfare missions, flying either combat air patrols or ASW helicopter patrols from each unit's carrier flagship.

Further to the west and far from Vismer and, presumably, danger, was the Thousand Mile Dragon Task Group. The heart of this group were one hundred Torrent-class arsenal ships. The Torrent-class provided the firepower required for the Imperial Navy's second doctrinal precedent: Seize the lines of communication and destroy enemy fleet concentrations. With each arsenal ship capable of fitting more than twelve hundred VLS tubes, the Thousand Mile Dragon Task Group carried with it undeniably formidable destructive power.

The largest individual task group was also the furthest from the action. Based primarily around the area of operations for Urgent Typhoon, the Triumphant Return Task Group sailed with more than five hundred surface warships including some of the largest in the Imperial Navy: the Vengeance-class supercarrier, the Roydia-class battleship and the Helina-class battlecruiser. The greatest of the capital ships was the *INS Emperor Pudu Xiang Wu*, a Dreadfire-class dreadnought and the pride of the Pudite navy in Gholgoth. These ships, along with the extensive amphibious warfare component of the task group, made up the final piece in the navy's doctrine: Dominate the sea space with carrier and surface warfare groups and project power over the shore with amphibious forces. They would come in to play in the final stages of the battle at sea, when the submarines and arsenal ships that go before them have done their work.

Sailing aboard the Triumphant Return Task Group's amphibious and transport ships came ten naval infantry divisions, nineteen regiments and thirty-seven independent landing battalions, one of which would be participating on the side of BLUFOR in Operation Urgent Typhoon. The combat support task group also sailed with Triumphant Return, numbering seventy-three replenishment, logistics and other auxiliary ships. Additional underway replenishment ships sailed with the forward-deployed task groups.

Finally, Task Force Khudoi's hundred and thirty ships which had broken away from Task Force Hell some days ago had left Mille Mortifere to the north-east and their mission was as yet undisclosed even to them.

Reconnaissance of the Eastern Gholgothic Seas

Ahead of all the fleets were the long range naval reconnaissance patrols flying out of bases throughout the archipelago and some from even further afield. The fleet of nuclear-powered strategic reconnaissance aircraft supplemented the much more numerous conventional planes in the theater. Both the Imperial Air Force and the Imperial Navy operated land-based squadrons out of bases in Mille Mortifere, supplemented by long range planes from Kylarnatia bases and with a small force still in reserve based in Citadel City.

The Imperial Navy was operating around four hundred naval patrol aircraft ranging from the large missile-hauling attack planes to light utility aircraft who dropped sonobuoys or laid minefields. The Air Force had fewer airframes in action so far, only one hundred and seventeen, divided between a fleet of AWACS on rotation throughout the region and one of SEAD/EW strike bombers who were assembling in Mille and would soon set their sights on Vismer. Additional Air Force units would soon be redeploying to the Drakonian archipelago as well, once supply and basing concerns were fully worked out with their hosts.

The centerpiece of the air forces currently operating in the theater were the NE-3 Sky Palace nuclear powered reconnaissance aircraft. Twenty-four of these planes had been deployed to bases in Kylarnatia from where they operated in shifts over the seas between Vismer and Shen Almaru, maintaining sixteen airframes in flight at all times flying eight day missions. A day and a night crew flew aboard each plane and changed shifts every twelve hours. Some of these crew members were the team responsible for monitoring the drone assets deployed by each Sky Palace platform while on station.

Four solar powered autonomous drones could be released and retrieved by each NE-3; it was these drones that would be the active signal emitters of the plane, providing both electronic jamming and signal spoofing to foul detection attempts and active search radars to maintain full situational awareness. Passive reconnaissance was conducted by the Sky Palace itself, collecting intercepted radioelectric signals and receiving up-to-the-minute data from its drones. With the four drones deployed to achieve maximum coverage an area of around eight hundred and forty six thousand square miles can be covered by their onboard radars, though a typical search area would be greatly compressed to allow for the systems to overlap and avoid potential dead zones.

One thing that would appear ubiquitously in the Pudite reconnaissance efforts would be the dense commercial trade and fishing traffic in these seas that were a crossroads of eastern Gholgoth, even now in times of conflict and uncertainty. More than three hundred thousand large scale fishing ships were registered in Shen Almaru and operated throughout the region along with nearly four thousand bulk carriers, barges, container ships, commercial RO/RO ships and all kinds of tanker and passenger vessels. These, plus the ships of all the other Gholgothic powers, would choke the seas and make positively identifying naval contacts difficult for both friend and foe. The Pudite commanders hoped to gain the reconnaissance advantage early by occupying as much of the battlespace as possible with aircraft and submarine reconnaissance platforms and developing as complete a picture as they could before the real shooting started.

One thing that had been picked up in the immense dragnet thrown over the eastern Gholgothic seas was a series of transmissions originating from one of the north-eastern islands of the Shen Almaru archipelago. The island of Eseka was the origin point of the unidentified transmissions, which were being broadcast in an unusual band and transmitter configuration and had been earmarked for analysis. The hypothesis going soon after was that these were attempts at clandestine communication from inside Shen Almaru organized by anti-Scand dissident forces on the islands. This theory would soon be tested.

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Havensky
Diplomat

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

by **Havensky** » Fri May 05, 2017 6:10 pm



HRS Tyrant's Bane

“Enter”

Supreme Allied Commander Richard Bexar sat at his desk inside the Captain's Quarters of the HRS Tyrant's Bane. The Tyrant's Bane was a Windigo-Class aircraft carrier that served the needs of the 501st “Queen's Guard” Legion and performed double-duty as the flagship of the Assault Group.

The Captain's Quarter's were about the size of a nice hotel room with a large desk and a number of chairs for meetings. It's decor was spartan with most of the wall space being taken over by maps of Vismer and Shen Almaru. Paper cutouts of ship groupings and land units were pinned to the maps. Across the desk, stacks of paper notes about personnel files, dossiers on foreign military unit structure, political briefings, as well as books about the histories of various Gothic nations and biographies of their military leaders. It was a much smaller space for the military leader of the allied forces that what was given to him on the HRS *Unity*. However, he had decided that the *Unity's* talents were better used in the bombardment of Vismer than in the training exercise. Sea Marshal Titan, who had more personal experience with naval bombardment, was in command there now. The *Unity* was an MTD luxury item and no expense was spared in her construction or retrofit. In contrast, the Skyan modifications to the *Tyrant's Bane's* have left the quarters much more rough. The stone floor of the vessel remained, but the wood paneling had been removed to

make way for video screens. The Marquesans had a custom of always keeping a workbench in one's house as a way to show that you could fix what you owned. The Shipmaster had taken it out to make more room for meetings, but Bexar Bexar, being from a farming family, had appreciated the idea and asked the Shipmaster to return it. However, the workbench had ended up being more of a ouija board for his land forces. He had outlined the islands where his objectives were on the bench and had small totems representing each unit. Sure, the screen on the wall could easily generate a map with detailed information - but Bexar liked the physical feel of things in his hand. The heft of the iron knight piece in his hand as he moved the "Hotshots" of 5th Cav Legion to a forward position was more visceral to Bexar than simply flicking something across a screen.

Bexar was much older now than he was when he first led the his mechanized Legion in the liberation of Agryz. His brown hair had turned sharp silver and years of working in the sun had given his skin a leathery look. His voice had maintained its husky baritone. He was wearing the island camouflage cloak over his command power armor. The power armor had been made to be lighter and rigged up with additional long range secure communications equipment. There were pinned six black stars on the front of his helmet. The rank was so rare that the regulations hadn't been updated to account for how they would look on power armor.

The man he had just instructed to enter was taller than Bexar standing six foot two and looked even taller in his full power armor. He was broad shouldered even without the armor and the cloak that he wore only enhanced the effect. The four stripes, two left and two right, on his cloak designated as holding the rank of Lieutenant Commander. The black shield on his back showed the red motif of a slingshot with a cracked stone heart. He entered the room and gave a sharp salute.

"At ease Commander Squall.", Bexar asked not looking up from jotting down further notes or returning the salute.

"Sir, I have a number of communiques for your review.", said Squall placing two tablets on his already crowded desk.

Bexar turned a few pages in his green notebook.

"Give me a rundown."

Squall rattled off the first and the most potentially problematic message first.

"The Golden Throne has sent a Kriergrup towards Vismer. One carrier and several marine transports carrying around 10 million personnel. They've not been entirely forthcoming with their intentions."

Bexar slammed his fist on the desk.

"Gods damn it all, I thought we had told them to keep to the south. Has Atticus sent any response?"

"No sir, he thought it best to-"

"Good, write a memo to the other allied military leaders stating that their presence is at my request due to a need to temporarily secure certain command bunkers in Vismer. Issue an apology that due to a miscommunication on my end there was not further warning."

"But sir, it's not your fault! They didn't tell us any-"

"Son, it doesn't matter who is at fault. The Gothic Lords tolerate our the Golden Throne being in our waters for exactly two reasons - the first is that the slavers kicked the hornet's nest and there is some satisfaction in seeing them get stung, but the second - and most important - is because they believe that we can keep the Golden Throne in check. If the Lords think for a moment that we can't do that - this whole thing goes to pieces.... But I think you know that. You're smart and you've been tagging along with Atticus for a while now. You don't like it out of principal."

"Sir, the political branches and the media is going to tear you apart over this and none of it's your fault!"

"I am not a maiden in need of defending."

"I wasn't implying-"

"I know you weren't, but keeping the Lords and all their generals getting from fighting with one another is going to be hard enough without worrying about our own egos. Keep it in check... What's next?"

Squall sighed and flipped his fingers across the digital notebook.

"The Ghantish are onboard and have committed their forces. They've gathered their forces in the islands of Hegosu and our heading towards Vismer."

"Excellent news, send word back asking them to split their forces between land and sea - inviting the land elements to participate in the exercises and the sea forces to help relieve our forces at Vismer. I imagine by the time they arrive we'll have done enough damage to start laying down mines and start our withdraw. Let them know that we can house military planning officers aboard the Unity. "

"Yes sir. I'll send a reply to Lord Commander Salamana right away."

"Anything else?"

Squall stood up a little straighter.

"Permission to speak freely."

"Proceed."

"I would like to be reassigned to a combat unit. While I appreciate the opportunity, I feel I'd be of more use to you on the line."

"No."

"But sir, you haven't even heard me out! I feel like I'm some sorta prop at a dog and pony show! I should be on the line!"

"Son, don't you have a wedding coming up? Shouldn't you thank your lucky stars you might not get shot before that? Look, I acknowledge your skill as a soldier and you're absolutely fearless, but I have other soldiers. What I don't have is a ton of veterans who are instantly recognized and respected by military leadership of half a dozen nations. They see Atticus there and they see a pushover - they'll never respect a pasifict. They see you though standing right behind you and they remember that even though Atticus has high ideals they're backed up by the goddamn Legion."

Squall looked resigned.

"I know you got a bad case of survivor's guilt and not being in action only makes that worse, but this job is about politics. We've got a war to win and if putting you on permanent dog and pony show duty keeps us in good graces with our allies than that's what I'm gonna do. We're outnumbered 10 to 1 and we need all the help we can get. Is there anything else Commander?"

"No sir, thank you sir."

Last edited by [Havensky](#) on Tue May 16, 2017 8:03 am, edited 2 times in total.

The Skybound Republic of Havensky
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☐ by [Mokastana](#) » Mon May 08, 2017 2:27 pm

THEATRE: NICARO AND FIRMADOR



Mokastana
Ambassador

Posts: 1554
Founded: Feb 20, 2007
Democratic Socialists

QUOTE

Unnamed fishing village, 102 Kilometers North of Medellin

Jules Somoza didn't believe it at first, the Tsarina calling for a meeting. Ever since she brutally murdered his asshole cousin Avery with cruise missiles and hit squads, the family and their soldiers had been waiting for her to strike again, but she had stayed silent. Days passed, and finally the family leaders met to decide their next move, officially anyways. In reality, they only argued about who should now lead the family. Avery Somoza had been a ruthless leader, but he had commanded the respect of everyone in the family. His younger brother, Leo, was twice as sadistic, but was as stupid as Avery was clever. So naturally his mother wanted him to take control of the family. She assumed it was a done deal and Leo was Patriarch before they even got to the meeting, but with her husband, and now Avery, dead, her words carried far less weight than they used to. Good thing too, the old crow and her spoiled asshole son Leo were living like royalty compared to the rest of the family. While the rest of the family could only agree on one thing, it was that without Avery protecting them, the old crow and sadistic son would become mere wards of the family, nothing more. They didn't like that.

In the negotiations, Uncle Tito, the old bastard, said he should take over the Family. Stephan, Jules' older brother, countered, mocking the old man's age, suggesting himself to lead the family. They argued, as families do, and as they fought no one noticed that Leo, being quiet for the first time in his life, went into a backroom. When he came back with a folded kalashnikov, however, he made up for that moment of silence with the loud thunder of gunfire. Turns out the Tsarina didn't need to strike, the Family would kill itself for her.

The survivors fled to Colon, to Medellin, to their private homes away from the city. The family accounts were emptied as everyone hoarded their own supply of cash. Then the Imperialists sacked the cities and froze the Family wealth. A few days later, and the most unexpected phone call of his life came through. Jules found himself on the phone speaking with a man with a thick Slavic accent and bad Spanish. The Tsarina wanted to talk peace, if he met her in a small fishing village some hundred Kilometers north of Medellin. It had to be a trap.

Jules' army and the branch of the family loyal to him, was on the same island as Colon, and he didn't trust the small army outside of Medellin. The Medellin faction was loyal to the old crow with two dead sons, but if anyone wanted the Tsarina dead, it was that old hag for killing her golden child. The old crow also wanted Jules dead, something about ending her other boy Leo's power grab/massacre up by putting a few bullets into his chest. It wasn't quick enough to save Uncle Tito or Stephan, but it had gained him support. As such, it made the Old Crow's turf neutral ground, as far as things could be. Against his better judgement, Jules agreed to the meet.

The fishing village itself was nothing special, other than the large number of yellow skinned foreigners, all well armed and scattered around the marketplace. They stood out even more than Jules' own security staff. Strangely enough, the locals paid them no mind to either, probably paid off by the Tsarina to ensure none ratted them out. The chosen meeting location was a cafe, the largest shack in the village. Corrugated steel made up the walls, with bits of timber acting as the frame, if not just hammered into place haphazardly. Jules attempted to dress down for this trip, but he still stood out with his clean blue jeans and unstained shirt. He was searched as he entered, the entire cafe was empty, minus a few guards disguised as patrons. His own guards waited outside. Guns ready in case of trouble.

And there she was, the *punta* that brought all this down upon him. A poncho hid her thin frame while a large hat covered her grey and auburn hair. Her bright pink and red skin, no doubt sunburned from the hot Nicaroian sun, only highlighted the still pale white scar tissue across her face. Long scars starting at her collarbone followed the left side of her face all the way past the hairline and under the hat. Jules wondered how much hair had been lost under that hat. It looked like shrapnel wounds, but Jules was only familiar with bullet wounds, which these were clearly not.

Being watched carefully by other bright pink *Colorados*, he sat across the table

from her. She poured a shot of liquor and took it, before pouring one for him. Jules refused.

"Is tequila, you like Tequila, no?"

Her accent was atrocious, but that voice... he'd known smokers who lived to their 70s with smoother voices, poor Uncle Tito. She might have been attractive once, but those scars and deep grinding voice only made Jules cringe, something she seemed to catch into.

"No? Not important to me. Look, my Spanish is bad, but I learn, I practice. I am going to use translation."

She motioned to a German girl at her side, the German was beautiful, and rather healthy looking compared to her mistress. A few words of gibberish shared through her gravelly voice were then translated by the Firmadorian girl.

"You are Jules Somoza, I am Sasha, leader of the Tsarina Cartel. I killed your cousin Avery. I am here to ask for a truce and your loyalty, in exchange, you will get to live passed this current conflict as a partner of the Tsarina Cartel."

Jules looked from the translator to Sasha, before breaking out laughing.

"No, no no no. I heard you were crazy, but this? You take me for a fool? I'm loyal to my family, you and I, we are at war, the rest of the family will not bow to you. I figured you knew that. Have you gotten so desperate that you think I'll surrender just like that? I knew losing Liberia hurt you, but didn't think you were that bad that you needed to end the war with us. No, no peace. You can burn in hell *cabra*."

The translator looked nervous, and started to speak, getting a few sentences before Sasha cut her off. They exchanged a few more words, before the translator spoke up again:

"The Tsarina says....Look around, the Contra government is under siege by Maccabees, We've both lost contact with our people in Leon, no doubt it is under attack as well. Your family's door to the world market, Rivas, was taken by the Mokans. The Maccabeans have taken Colon and Medellin, no doubt killing more of your family's soldiers than I have.

More importantly, your family's pirate allies in Chinadenga pissed off a lot of people, including the Maccabeans. Do you think they will be forgiving when they find out how much Somoza drug money supplied the pirate rebellion?"

Jules listened, this ugly hag and her pretty pet were right, the what damage she had done had been nothing compared to the foreigner's aggression. A distant cousin, Felix, was holding the wilderness around Rivas, but they had lost contact days ago. With the banks in Colon and Medellin seized, militias formerly owned by Somozas were going rogue. They would not be able to fight off the imperialist powers and fight the Tsarina, yet she was the one offering peace.

"Yeah, the situation sucks, what's your point? Still doesn't explain why I should abandon my family and work for you."

"We much accept the situation. The Maccabeans will conquer Nicaro and Firmador, and like all good conquerors, they will be looking for locals who can make that job easier on them. My people are already in negotiations. The Jiyu Front and the Duel Republic Front of Firmador rely on my money to supply their armies and governments, they will bow to my demands or be crushed. They also own land the Maccabeans want.

I would just let the Maccabean troops wipe you out and dance on the ashes, but the Communists took my port city. The less resources the Maccabeans have to divert to pacifying your islands, the more land they can take on the Mainland. "

"So the Communists threaten to take your fields, and you think you have a better chance with the Maccabeans? Why don't I go make a deal with the Macabeans, sell out the Old Hag, and then divert my resources to taking you out? "

"You could, but then I'll just burn everything down on your islands. I already have guerillas here, fighting your Aunt. We have more on your home island. If I'm forced to fight, I'll win, but you will lose. What value will you be to the Imperialist when you cannot control your own islands? When I have armies ready to help them take the Mainland and you are a former ally of the pirates?

If I ask for your head in exchange for my armies, why would they say no? Join me, and none of the evidence of you backing the Pirates will make it to Maccabean hands. We will survive the war, and get back to what's important, making money."

"So, that's it? Join with you, or you'll ask the foreign Devil's for my head in exchange for your service?"

"You will remain in control of the Colon Island, your fields and factories will remain yours. I'll take Medellin and its fields. My fleets will continue to smuggle out product for both of us, for a small fee of 10% from you. I negotiate with the imperialist on behalf of both of us, and get the bombs to stop dropping on our business, deal?"

Jules thought for a moment, bidding his time, the bitch had him by the *huevos*, but chose to fondle instead of tearing. Perhaps after a few shots of tequila, this wouldn't be the worst deal he'd ever made. Pouring himself a shot he sipped it slow, before setting the glass down.

"You kill my bitch Aunt, my men and family stay on our island, left alone. We don't fight for your cause or the Imperials, but we work with them, and you. This... trade agreement... 5%, but I will be getting my own fleet back in operation soon. Until then, I'll be in favor of peace with you."

"15% if you want your own fleets, otherwise good luck getting your product out."

"Do you want peace or not? Fine, 10%."

"Deal, we can decide how to split the markets later, for now, we both need to leave before your Aunt wises up."

"Good, we can negotiate the post war economy after you kill my Aunt and get the Macabees to stop bombing us. Until then, I will assume nothing. "

"That's fine, see you soon in Medellin. "

ZCS Sovenly Civilian cargo ship Approaching Batis Harbor

When you're a spook, everything you do is to blend in. Learn the local dialect, culture, fashion. Find out how to pronounce words like 'bathroom,' 'taxi,' and, if allowed, 'bourbon'. Learn how the locals walk, if they haggle, difference between the rich and the poor, and which is better to be at the current moment. To pull it off, you need to be a part of the local population. If everyone in the marketplace is yelling over each other to be heard, trying to be quiet stands out just as much as the one person not praying in a church. The goal is to blend in just enough so people will ignore you, especially the people carrying guns and setting up checkpoints. Anything as simple as holding up the wrong fingers while ordering more than two beers might give you away.

However, sometimes you need to bring the spotlight onto yourself. In those cases, you don't want to be found out just to be locked up and interrogated later. Usually when you're going to force a meeting with the local political power, you need to negotiate. To negotiate, you need a position of power, something to bring to the table. It doesn't have to be much, just enough to show them that you're more valuable to them alive and well, versus rotting in a dungeon. It can be threats of terrorism if something happens to you, or it could be something only you can access. Thumb print and reticle scanners offer that promise, but a smart warlord might just take your hand, or drag you along in a cage long enough to get to the prize. Whenever planning your negotiation, ask yourself, if a foreign agent came to me with this, would I lock them up and just cut off their hands? If the answer is yes, come up with a better plan.

With that in mind, the man known as Fetch had a plan. His freighter, the last ship to make it out of Liberia before the Communist takeover, was now the last ship in northern Firmador loyal to the Tsarina. Most of the cash and goods the freighter had been carrying had been dropped off by speed boat along the northern coast, as insurance. Not like it started with much to begin with. Fetch left the Tsarina's other associates to hide the bulk of her assets back in Liberia.

"Señor Fetch, we are approaching the Port. "

"Good, go ahead and start broadcasting."

Batis was only a few Kilometers ahead, and with that, the Maccabean military. All those lessons about avoiding the guys with guns and checkpoints was about to go out the window. The radio antenna attached to the superstructure of the freighter sprang to life, shooting nearly a dozen meters into the air before locking into place. The transmitter on top flopped in the wind as bursts of radio waves bounced in every direction. The radio was nothing special, but what was on it, would get some attention.

First off, known military codes from the Duel Republic Front of Firmador, basic messages with no real military significance other than they were coded using DRFF encryption methods. Mostly saying, "Hello there," and "Don't Shoot". If that wasn't enough, they were followed by military transmissions used in Red Star Union by UESS and Kashubian forces. Messages picked to signify identification as a friend. No doubt a vessel mere Kilometers from the coast broadcasting non friendly military codes would get someone's attention, and it did.

Macabean helicopters wasted no time before flying towards the slow moving cargo ship. Someone sent a rather terse message demanding identification and surrender while Loud speakers from the helicopters warned of boarding parties. Fetch told the crew to lay down their arms and respond that the vessel is willing to surrender and will comply with orders. Messages were exchanged as the engines were killed, and Macabean soldiers rappelled down to board. Within a minute, Fetch was looking down the barrel of a machine gun, an angry man yelling at them in Spanish to get down. They complied.

Fetch waited for what felt like an eternity as the ship was searched and secured. He and his crew remained handcuffed to each other on the bridge as technical documents and equipment was moved to a staging area for pick up. In the distance, Fetch could see the ships of the Golden Throne had arrived to provide support. Eventually, an officer arrived to talk with the prisoners. He made a snarky comment about the stupidity of broadcasting signals off the coast of occupied territory, but Fetch just kept smiling. Finally the officer asked what him so damn happy in handcuffs.

"I am Fetch, one of the top ranking members in the Tsarina Cartel. I was sent by the Tsarina herself to negotiate a deal with your leadership. Tell your superiors, that I have the ability to get the Jiyu Front and the Duel Republic Front of Firmador to declare loyalty to whatever puppet government they wish to instate. See if they want an easy way to access the Alemnianian Sea. If so, I'll need to meet with them. "

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[QUOTES](#)



The Macabees
Senator

Posts: 3870
Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by **The Macabees** » Mon Jul 03, 2017 6:43 pm

QUOTE

The wealthy Carlton Castle neighborhood of Tlaloc.

[The story of the incessant persecution of Tlaloc's pirate population.](#)
[The story of Three-Legged Carot's desperate defense in the northern suburbs of Palenque.](#)
[The story of the capture of Palkovian chemical weapons in Tiwanaku.](#)

Tlaloc, Theohuanacu

A vine-wrapped colonnade traveled through the center of a garden strip that separated the two sides of the *Kapes Teotlyecatl*. Intricate carvings decorated the capitals and the ceramic slab that lay atop them, mostly of rural scenes and farm fields with olive groves, vineyards, and wheat. Even in times like these, couples — young and old, alike — strolled up and down the stone-paved walkways, enjoying the day's sun and taking in the beauty of the city around them. Birds sang from the air, their melody mixing in with the chaos of the flow of cars below. On either side of the boulevard stood stunning buildings with elaborate façades, some originals, but most of them rebuilt in the post-occupation.

The ground began to shake, as individual pieces of gravel jumped around in anticipation. Heads turned to look at what approached, eyes narrowing and eyebrows furrowing.

From behind a curve in the boulevard, one that one's eye could not bend around, emerged a column of three GRX.40s. Low, bulky, and not especially attractive vehicles, they rumbled up the *Kapes Teotlyecatl* at a slow pace. Commanders sat atop in their weapon stations, protected by glass-panes and with eyes hidden behind the dark black frames of their sunglasses. Around them, traffic only flowed for an instant and then all but disappeared, either staying well ahead of the armored vehicles or far behind. Their menacing 155mm howitzers were pointed forward, but anyone who had lived in Tlaloc in the pre-occupation knew these vehicles and the destruction they were capable of all too well. Too many of the buildings flanking this very street had been constructed to hide what those *steel monsters* had done to this city, and that too served as too fresh of a reminder every time one saw them on patrol.

Even though on this day their intention was benign, the memory was still very much alive. Those that did not stop to stare in contempt merely continued with their lives, doing their best to ignore the patrol. A hard task, mind you, as their treads noisily ground over the boulevard's pavement like behemoths whose every next step down caused a tremor.

The column continued moving west along the *Kapes Teotlyecatl* like a slow-moving caterpillar. Heavy, with slow, high-torque engines, they could not go very fast even if they wanted to and that only at the risk of the pavement itself, steel teeth tearing into the road's gravel-made flesh with every churn of the sprocket. Still, for as long as it took them, traffic around them had all for all intents and purposes ceased. Those on the sidewalks and strolling in the center gardens quickened their step. They were like islands floating in a sea that parted before and closed behind them. There were some in the crowd, though, that seemed entirely unperturbed.

Abruptly, the column stopped.

One of the commanders was pointing towards a group of men hastily making their way through a crowded throng more interested in minding their own business than on what was going on around them. Only from afar did onlookers start to gather, wondering at what was going on. Just as suddenly, a hat-trick of rear hatches opened with a loud, hasty creak and from each of the GRX.40s emerged four soldiers in full battle rattle.

Wearing not power armor, but traditional helmets instead, along with armored vests and cloth packs, they remained in three groups as the lead one rushed toward a peculiar-looking group of six men that had been walking on the right-most sidewalk in the same direction. They had been the ones that had quickened their step but in the most suspicious of ways. As if they were the ones trying the hardest to look normal. Four other men took up position on a nearby intersection to help direct the flow of traffic around the obstruction. The final four stood guard near the vehicles themselves, tense and with eyes moving from one point to the next along their perimeter.

The soldiers that approached the six men cut them off and directed them to lean against the wall, facing forward and with their hands interlocked behind their heads. Dressed in clothing almost no better than rags, each man in the group was heavily tattooed with black and blue ink, as if painted by woad. Their hair was long, tangled, and filthy. Braids came down in intervals, tied together with beads, coins, and bones that clacked together as they pressed up against the wall.

Pirates.

"Hurry up," hassled one of the soldiers.

They moved lethargically, with the tense relaxation of protest. One man smugly scoffed at an infantryman who was cradling a rifle in his arms and looking at him, before turning and placing his forehead on the stone façade. The soldier smiled mischievously in response, his fingers wrapping just a little tighter over the grip of his Hali-53. "We didna do anythin' amiss, gent'men. We be neutrals," slurred one of them.

"Ain't no such thing," said one of the Macabeans.

There *wasn't* such thing since the [Tlaloc attacks](#). Not to the empire. Not any longer. Evidence suggested a foreign perpetrator, but that they were in alliance with the pirates was doubtless. And thus, whether foreign or island-bred, all the wild, uncivilized, and violent brutes of this ilk were condemned to being *persona non grata* in Tlaloc. Even the locals had begun to see them all with skepticism, to say nothing of the colonist population. By now, seeing a buccaneer or even a man who might appear as one, or one of those new zealots that had begun to crop up from every irradiated dune on the *Tonancinchil Blight*, was a rare thing. Most had gone into hiding or left, and a few converted — or, so they had claimed in the oath they had sworn to the local *Alkad Prefekter*, at least. Any who were misguidingly courageous enough to walk the streets were caught and rounded up, much like these six men.

One of the four soldiers thoroughly patted each of the corsairs down individually. They murmured insults throughout, but none managed up the guts to do much more. Not with the infantryman who had decided to point his assault rifle at them, with menacing flames of hatred dancing in his eyes. "You fidget, I shoot, dogs," he barked.

A group of onlookers had started to gather around the scene. The other fire teams had moved to contain the encroachment, but the crowd was growing and they were pressing closer millimeter by millimeter. Murmurs traveled between them as they looked on in acquiescent approval. The terror bombing had come as quite the shock for them. It was the first the time the city's civilians had been targeted and with their motive quite clear, the pirates had done themselves no favors by aligning themselves with whatever tribe of vicious miscreants had come to infest Theohuanacu with their evil. It could very well lose the rebellion any chance that this once-pirate city would turn back to their side.

Of course, there were many jeers as well, and it bared reminding that many people were just as suspicious of the occupiers as they were of the buccaneers being rounded up and arrested. They were still outliers, but they were all locals, sympathizers with the 'old ways' and wary of the foreigners who were slowly diluting the city of its old morals.

Then someone threw a rock.

One of the GRX.40s moved to cover the position and shield the men on the ground. The third fire team that had stuck around in reserve deployed along with it in an effort to intimidate the bolstering line of curious civilians into moving back. Another rock came from over the heads of the gathering audience to crash down on a corner of the vehicle's hood. Then another. This seemed to startle the crowd more than the AFV had, and it was as if they all took one collective step back. Tense and nervously, the infantrymen stood with their weapons on the shoulders and at the ready, exchanging anxious looks between each other.

All the while, pressed up against the wall the pirates were howling every type of slur in the corsair handbook. "If we ever catch ye in our side o' town, we'll hang ye by the gibbet ye powder wetting harbor hog," slobbered one. Another chimed in, "We'll give ye twenty lashings o' the cat and then hoist ye over the yardarm, ye yellow-bellied landlubbers!"

A soldier dlobbered the latter one with the butt of his rifle, with some gasps from the onlookers. In the background, an officer standing at the open gates of one of the assault vehicles was speaking into a microphone embedded into the sensor suite of his helmet. There was a strain in his eyes, as they darted

from the row of pirates to the crowd. Some civilians were using their phones to take photos, others were outright videotaping the encounter, and most were most likely sharing the struggle on the web the very same instant they were capturing it.

'MARTIAL LAW IN TLALOC,' the newspapers would read tomorrow. This day in age, nothing could be hidden, not in an open society like the Golden Throne. And the people were softening. This was an empire and long-gone were days of a cold, hard, war-lusting nation that could withstand the brutal truths of battle. Few these days could accept the fact that war is violent and that to deny it of its essence was to embark on a fruitless path. Indeed, how many long, interminable occupations had been lost to armies that erroneously believed in such thing as "just war." How could anything that comes from Force be Just? The Golden Throne could accept interminable occupations, but it could not do so without exacting a price from the conquered. And if martial law was required for the protection of the people of Tlaloc, so be it. Bollocks to the increasing number of people in the provinces who were no longer looking at it that way.

The terror attacks had given them the justification they needed. But for how long?

Tensions were rising. Young students with pent up frustrations protested on their campuses against the war in Gholgoth, as well as against the growing number of annexations of territories and establishment of protectorates. The independence movement in Cerfonlande was re-emerging, insisting that they were not cattle to be sold by Stevid to the Golden Throne. It was all unrest that the Senatorial Government was looking to leverage to renegotiate the imperial tax.

But the agitation was also rising in the city, slowly, gradually, like a steaming pot. Especially here, on the *Kapes Teotlyecatl*, where the arrest of six pirates was being live-fed to the world.

From around the far corner, a convoy of small wheeled-AFVs turned into sight. A six-wheeled armored car was surrounded on all four sides by squat, black, and bulky four-wheeled armored vehicles sporting 20mm cannons mounted on hefty weapon systems. The only color came from the silver barrel tips of the cannons and from the chrome thunderbolt logo on each of the car's sides. Private security, they were on contract to pick up the prisoners that had been handcuffed and lined up on the street. They came up and stopped with a screech, and two men emerged from the front of the six-wheeled armored car.

The rear hatch popped up before the two security officers made it there. Hardly waiting either, the soldiers, anxious to get the patrol moving once more, started loading the prisoners into the vehicle almost as soon. The seats had been ripped out, as had any other internal components to the rear cabin, stripped as it was for the bare essentials of transporting criminal flesh from one point to another. It looked as far from comfort as the iron chairs of old torture.

But, that featureless space within the armored car was heaven compared to where they were taken: *Rolota XIV*.

Siege of Palenque, Theohuanacu

April 2028; continues from [here](#).

'Three-Legged' Carol wiped some of the dirt off his face. Vision still blurry, he tried to stand only to fall again. The shell that had struck less than a hundred meters away was still smoking.

The building that was a minute earlier his command post was little more than flattened rubble now. Crossbeams had collapsed onto the floor, joined by pieces of ceiling and glass. Men lay strewn across the floor, some dead, others wailing. Any that had survived the blast must have had just a hard time returning to their senses as Cap'n Carol was now. There weren't many survivors anyways, as far as he could see.

Outside, the barrage was still at full breath. But it seemed distant and not just because Carol's ears had been blown out. The Macabeans were tactical, using

their superiority in sheer firepower to overwhelm Palenque's defenses with precision. If one looked at the city now one might assume it had been the empire that had destroyed it, tall, hollow, and half-torn down apartment buildings rising like a dense forest of steel and concrete skeletons. But it had been the *defenders* who had done all of this, determined to sacrifice the city in order to protect it. With explosives and a strategic use of fire they had turned Palenque, its suburbs, and the outlying towns into an urban jungle fortress that simply refused to break down and surrender. It made the battlefield a maze through which the enemy would have to crawl, bleeding along the way like a wounded wolf eating its way to the center, only for the shepherd to catch him tired and defenseless.

It was hard to believe that any civilians still remained in this wasteland at all any longer, but the truth was that beyond the hundreds of thousands of pirates who manned their ever-changing positions there were still millions of women, children, and fathers who were trapped in that inferno, like a grazing herd caught between two battling predators. How they lived, sleeping in those half-tumbled apartment buildings, was a mystery.

Like all in Palenque, they focused on survival.

"Sink me! Mov'ment at two hundred 'n fifty meters" The voice came suddenly and with an anxious authority underscored by alarmed shrillness. "Looks crew sized."

Carol grunted and pushed himself up slowly. Two men had come to help him up but he shook them off, "I can loot care o' meself, ye worm-riddled ballast pigs. Put yer rifles t' good use and dig in." He pushed himself up as smoothly as he could and started barking orders to organize the defense — whatever defense he had left, anyways.

A black, smoky haze was too thick to see beyond at three meters or more. Whatever the lookout had 'seen' it had been through sensors placed around their position. They had bunkered there since two nights before expecting a major imperial push to take back the sector, which Carol's and a 'gang's' worth of other crews had taken in a surprise assault on a light imperial garrison. Over the next few days whatever hadn't already been destroyed was pulverized by intensive house-to-house fighting, and then came the lull when the enemy finally withdrew back toward the northern edge of the suburb. But Carol knew they would come back.

And so they did, in force. Sometimes it was hard to hear the treads of a Nakil before it was right up on you, especially against the stupidly noisy backdrop of yelling, gunfire, and perpetual surgical bombardment. 'Three-Legged' Carol wasn't aware of the one creeping up to his position until the ground shook like a tectonic shift and the tank went up in a spectacular explosion that flared when its ammunition cooked off.

"Th' mines worked, eh lads," he shouted as the men cheered.

Another Nakil roared in mourning some distance away, returning the loss of its brethren with its great, fiery cannon. Gunfire erupted along a discontinuous line of trenches and fortifications that ran diagonally through the suburb. A flight of artillery shells struck too close to comfort, no doubt clearing a nest of young corsairs who had been patiently waiting to ambush a prey that turned out to be smarter than them. His own men began to fire as they saw enemy infantrymen slowly circumvent or climb over the rubble that blocked the street in front of 'Three-Legged' Carol's command post. Most of his crew were arrayed in nearby apartment blocks, and across the street, poised to catch weary Macabean imperials as they trudged through the sector. They'd face the same tireless and stubborn resistance wherever they attacked. Of course, the enemy was often just as tireless and just as stubborn.

Outside, there was a shrill whining shriek that signaled the passage of a rocket launched by a defender onto an unsuspecting foe below. The deep metallic *clink* of warhead hitting metal, and the subsequent explosion, confirmed what it was. And it also betrayed the presence of more vehicles. The sudden cacophony of a shell being lobbed into a nearby apartment confirmed that one of them was either a tank or a dreaded GRX.40.

The sky howled and an artillery round struck one of the apartment buildings across the street, propelling a thick blanket of soot into the street and through

the windows to mix in with the fog of ash, dust, and dead flesh which already permanently permeated the city.

One wondered how many civilians were still huddling there, teeth clenched as they simply waited out the fighting.

Carol popped his head over one of his men to take a peek out the window. Visibility was minimal and, in fact, anything he saw at all was always an outline against the incessant flashes of fire following the crack of a rifle or the thunder of a cannon. He couldn't have ducked his head back inside sooner, as a stray bullet knocked a chunk out of the already chipped and cracked wall behind him. "Son of a biscuit eater!" he yelled.

Rifle fire was coming from the other end of the street, as well. Perhaps it was an allied crew, perhaps more enemies. It was hard to tell in these conditions and communication was on-and-off after that blast that had knocked the captain and his men off their feet. Whoever it was, it was of no concern to Carol, who could only worry about his own men — many of whom who had also been isolated at their posts by the strike. The fighting was getting closer, and it was becoming more three-dimensional. They could faint hear gun shot only several walls away even, as the Macabeans cleared occupied rooms one-by-one. Sometimes they'd come across apartments still used by their original tenants, and sometimes they'd kill them too as to not risk having their rear cut off. It was a brutal war and the life of a civilian held little purchase in these quarters, not where desperate men did what they needed to do to make it through one more day.

But Carol and his people were equally as vicious. Enemy infantry would run into booby traps, sometimes as simple as a grenade hanging from a wire behind a closed door, other times something more lethal, like a 14kg mortar hidden away and ready to explode when triggered by some poor sod who couldn't have known better. These traps sapped their strength and stunned them, softening them as they slowly ate through the tediously organized and doggedly resistant buccaneer defense like an excavating machine slowly breaking down a solid rock wall that refused to fall.

The whole world shook again as whatever vehicle was down there thundered once more. A sudden, eye-blindingly piercing flash of light cut through the windows and it was as if all the air had been sucked out of his lungs, but this was incomparable to the sheer violence of the shockwaves that rippled through the city block, sending pieces of rubble tumbling down onto the broken sidewalk and pockmarked road below.

Thermobaric warheads are a bitch.

Carol hacked and coughed as he struggled to get back up. That was the second time he had been knocked down and he was getting tired of it. His radio was crackling and words were coming through here and there, but few that he could understand. It sounded frantic, anxious as if the defense was already panting as it buckled beneath the heavy firepower of the energetic Macabean offensive. They had all planned for this moment, of course. After all, this was no one here's first rodeo. No, there were fallback positions where additional men eagerly awaited the battle that crept toward them like the slow peel of a burning cigarette's paper.

"All hands hoay, scallywags! Afore we all turn into shark bait," Carol barked, as soon as he was standing...and stable. He turned to one of his men crouching by one of the windows. "Dead-leg, warn th' others."

"Aye, aye, cap'n." Judas 'Dead-Leg' Stevens was a good sailor and a hardy warrior, but he was a drinker at heart and he had the belly to show for it. The man was surprisingly agile all the same and he hadn't proved a burden yet, being one of 'Three-Legged' Carol's original crewmen. He pulled out a pistol tucked into a holster further back on his belt and aimed it out of the window and down the street, firing to reveal a bright flare that burned as loudly as a small sun.

Before getting up to follow the captain and the other men, he snickered and with two fingers plucked out a cellphone that had been hidden in the front pocket of his military jacket. He opened it up and dialed a five-digit code. Seconds later, it was as if the earth itself had shifted, as a series of bombs went off below, blowing out from within the abandoned storefronts and lobbies

that flanked the already half-destroyed street.

On the other side, further down toward the end of the block, one building that had finally simply had enough collapsed into a heap as it fell vertically like a body gone limp. As a plume of debris swept out in all directions it pounded into the adjacent buildings, causing them to creak and tip, bringing them one day closer toward the fate their fallen comrade had just suffered. Whoever had died beneath the newly formed mountains of rubble, who could be suffocating that very moment, struggling for a breath of air, would be forever forgotten and condemned to being a number in some future history book.

A baby's cry could be heard from deeper inside their building. A baby, in these times? A mad woman! In these parts, most children were born to rape. Why bring something like that into *this* world?

Carol and what remained of the team that had been with him at the impromptu HQ started down the stairs towards the building's lobby. They stepped quickly, their footsteps loud against the wood steps but still inaudible in the grand scheme of things, such was the nature of the ongoing battle. About two flights down, Dornier 'Bird-Nosed' Reynolds — a fresh seadog who had come to replace cold bodies — had point...

...and was first to encounter the Macabean squad moving up the same set of stairs.

The Macabean managed to fire first, his shotgun firing a single cartridge of buckshot. The pellets struck Reynolds square in the face, shredding the skin and tearing the muscle apart. There was no surviving that and his body hit the floor with a solemn thud. As fresh as they tended to be, the Macabeans were well-trained, well-disciplined, and well-armed, which made them dangerous foes. Still, most of the pirates had years of combat under their belt, and Theohuanacu had been relegated to being a mere filter for incoming recruits. After all, what better way to weed out the weak before sending them to Gholgoth than to cull them in the meat grinders of Palenque and Tiwanaku? No surprise that the Macabean failed to pump the shotgun in time to avoid being hit by a rifle round fired by Captain Carol himself. The soldier, who had been as young as Reynolds had been, fell back and was quickly pulled back down the stairs by his squad mates who had wisely withdrawn out of view.

Rather than risk being pinned down in a firefight within the narrow confines of that stairwell, 'Three-Legged' Carol moved his men through one of the apartment doors there. They snaked through the rooms quickly, bypassing people huddled, holding themselves while they shook with their backs to the wall or hiding beneath their beds. More civilians died from the artillery, naval, and aerial bombardment than from the reconquests and subsequent counter-attacks, yet there they bundled up, some rolling up into the fetal position, holding on to that belief that if they laid low they'd survive the war.

The civilians were more afraid of the Macabeans than they were of the pirates, of course. That was why most would not accept evacuation, even when the sector had been cleared by imperial soldiers. There had been many colonists before the war, but now they had mostly been butchered or had been extracted by enemy soldiers, and so those who were left were largely sympathetic to the rebellion, even if it was they who paid the greatest price for it.

Palenque was still a pirate city at heart, after all.

One of the rear bedrooms had a hole in the wall that led to another apartment next door. Here, one of the windows was connected to an adjacent building via makeshift bridge made from long planks of wood. They took these carefully, crossing to the other apartment block and moving down this one's stairwell in a bid to avoid enemy forces which had overrun the area.

They made it down to the lobby without much event and then immediately turned to exit through a rear door that took them to a patio which a checkered tile floor. At one end, against a wall, was the rusted frame of a goal box where young boys had at one time played football. Those days were now over, signaled by the bullet holes in the wall behind it. Through this patio they moved, and quickly, until they reached a smaller set of double doors built into what looked like the entrance to a cellar. The man who had replaced Reynolds up front swung the gates open, and Carol followed his men down into the deep

confines of the basement.

It was a relatively small room, but there were three tunnels that had been excavated into the wall. Carol, though, arrayed his men to defend the doors. "We'll wait fer th' others here," he said. "Keep a sharp eye on that entrance, lads."

Dirt and dust shook and floated down to the ground with every cannon burst overhead. At points they could hear the voices of enemies passing through the patio, going from one building to the other. Carol's men began to trickle in little by little, and it became apparent rather quickly just how many had died or had been too wounded to return. When he was convinced that he had as many as his crewmen he was going to get — thirty-six total —, the captain and his men took flight down one of the tunnels, collapsing the very end of it to avoid being followed.

The other two were decoys. They extended deep and far underground, entrapping their host. Sooner or later they'd set off a trigger and the earth would collapse around them, burying them alive. This was the kind of war the rebellion was. Compassion? What room is there for compassion? One day a suburb or a neighborhood of a city could be controlled by the Macabears, the next by the pirates. It was a game of tug-of-war, a game where failure meant death. How many had died already in those twenty months of siege? However many it was, the ghastly toll that the siege had taken on the city would be a permanent scar.

Captain Carol was all for Palenque burning down, if it meant freedom.

Siege of Tiwanaku, Theohuanacu

Late-April 2028; continues from [here](#).

Kula'Kuladin was an ancient fortress, with tall external walls, that sat at the tip of a small peninsula which jutted out to give Tiwanaku's harbor its natural shape. It sat on a narrow stretch of rock that rose like sheer cliff on all sides but one. A thousand years ago this castle would have guarded the port's entrance, but it had long since been abandoned, as the keep slowly wasted away and the walls around it collapsed into a pile.

With war in southern Theohuanacu raging anew, it had found a new use as a base of operations for a growing number of special forces soldiers tasked with interdicting smugglers and their wares. With the [war in Holy Panooly](#), the demands of the Gothic War, and the rising threat of Ralkovian expansion in the western edges of the region, the blockade of the southern Theohuanacu coast had fallen in priority. The result? An onslaught of corsairs braving the high seas to smuggle weapons, food, and other supplies to their beleaguered allies desperately resisting the imperial advance through the city. Thanks to them, and the empire's minimal presence there, the sieges of the last pirate enclaves had dragged on, slowly draining the lifeblood of the cities, the opposing armies, and the people caught in the middle. Slowly, with time and by scavenging from the almost-dead, the empire had finally assembled a force that could work towards blocking the sieve.

But with the high demand for special forces in other theaters and wars, they could not rely on an ample enough supply of already-trained operatives. They would have to culture their own. And from where did they get their men? From the dead;...soldiers who had fallen in battle and were but a hair's breath away from transcending. They were pulled into the shadows, cleaned-up just enough to survive, and then taken to the castle. Once there, their recovery went quickly, aided as it was by technology — which the empire had in abundance —, and they were just as suddenly informed of their new role in the war effort. Training was done on the battlefield, for there was no time for a more traditional course and, after all, there was no better education than experience.

Even with all the experience one could have, it was not an easy job. To know one could simply ask Ern Dardel.

It felt like yesterday that he touched her soft black hair. It was not long ago he was a wee lad at the fringes of the central desert that sprawled across that great expanse that was irradiated Theohuanacu. He had first met her there, at

Barbakán 'Matic', both of them fresh recruits. Mariel's first death had come suddenly, its pain delayed and numbed by the realities of the siege. Her second death had been transforming. A permanent pain had set in Ern's bones and, had it not been for but the one cause that now fueled him, the young soldier may have only yearned to follow her into the afterlife. In a way, he still did, but now he knew that he first had a task to complete: her vengeance. He would kill every last one of them, the pirates that had brought on this war, the ones that had killed Mariel. They all had to die, if they didn't kill him first.

The training had been arduous. They didn't pit you against the most difficult objectives at first, but there was no such thing as an easy mission. It started with raids against enemy positions in the southern neighborhoods of the city, striking command headquarters, weapon caches, and training centers. These had to be found, staked, and cleared, all three of which were challenges in and of themselves — fatal challenges, sometimes.

Ultimately, it was here that those who didn't really have the heart to be warriors were filtered out. They died, usually. Some of them were recaptured, some were abandoned, and a few even broke off and attempted to make it back to a friendly unit alone. Those who survived the initial operations were promoted into new teams that focused on more critical missions, and here experience and talent weighed heavily on exactly which unit you were in and what missions you were tasked with. Everyone fantasized about the high profile assassinations, but few men got them. The surveillance and interdiction objectives were the most common.

Ern found himself on one that very night, in fact.

Not a sliver of skin showed through his pitch black clothing. He blended into the dark, long shadow of the carved-out building that looked to once have been a bank or some institution of high repute, one that could at least afford such a fancy façade. All the same, what one could see of the men next to him was restricted to a light silhouette that surrounded the like a broken halo every time one of the moon's reflected rays poured through a break in the clouds overhead.

They were looking at a small ship that had just moored into port. She had come in with her lights off, towed by a smaller vessel that had been constructed to minimize noise. It was almost impossible to see in the night as well, but they had done their homework and had found where it was based from, tracing its path as it went out to sea in search of the smuggler ship it had just brought in. Heavy netting covered ad hoc walls and roofing which had been damaged by shrapnel or the like, and had they not been sitting at the window of one of the buildings along this stretch of the port they probably could not have seen the corsairs' activity at all. The bastards had perfected the art of slipping their wares through imperial lines.

In Ern, though, the pirates had found an enemy committed to their destruction. He used his days to learn and analyze their behavior, how they fought, and how they were easiest to kill. Ern now thought like them. He could guess as to where they were hiding or how they were moving about the ruins of Palenque, and nowadays his suspicions were usually correct. They had found the stealthy tug boat by as much of an educated whim as some of his other feats, and it had led them to what looked to be the jackpot.

"You reckon this is the package?" asked the man beside Ern, his voice stark and raspy.

Looking at the unfolding scene through a green-lit optical piece, Ern nodded. "I reckon it is."

Not much more than a month ago, intelligence reports had come in warning of the possibility of chemical weapons being transported to the pirates in Theohuanacu via their allies in Nicaro. How anyone had known they were on their way to Nicaro Ern had no idea, but the shipment was confirmed to have moved through San Pecc by *Agén Enkubier* informants that had infiltrated the ranks of the local Chinadenga pirates. Big artillery shells are what they said they had handled, each one armed with a dangerous VX agent warhead. The kind of weapon to send a chill down any God-fearing man's spine. An interception operation up there had gone bust and the ship had been lost until it was picked back up swinging around the southernmost islands of Tir. Rather than send a ship to trail and board it, a maneuver that the *Kriemada*

preferred to avoid after the [Dvorshkar incident](#), they waited for it to come to them. Right into the arms of Ern and the Knights of *Kula'Kuladin*, as they called themselves.

The vessel was about the size of a small light frigate and had two small turrets armed with autocannons, along with missile and mine launchers. It was being crawled by workmen unloading large wooden crates worth of material. It must have been more than just the chemical warheads, but the rest of the cache could rot as far as the Macabeans were concerned.

Protecting that secluded sector of the dock area was a company-sized retinue of gunmen armed with automatic weapons. A few were manning lookout positions, either at towers lining the pier or at other posts built into rooftops. The rest were skillfully scattered throughout the impenetrable shadows of the many buildings, cranes, and crate deposits that towered around them. Without a doubt, they were ready for what was about to hit them. It wasn't the first time the pirate docks would be raided. It wasn't the first time the Knights of *Kula'Kuladin* had struck. Retrieving the warheads would be a bigger challenge than the less experienced eye would perceive.

From somewhere high up in another building the wind whistled like a bird. Ern stood from his crouch, as did the men around him.

The sound of sniper fire came in wisps, as silenced marksmen took out the watchmen one by one with deadly efficiency. A fist of some twenty-two operatives descended from where they had been lurking just moments before, approaching the dock where the smuggler ship lay moored. They moved with a bone-chilling silence, agilely overcoming obstacles along the way, like the remnants of a shelled-out warehouse or the crippled and collapsed wall of a locked drydock. In their hands they carried rifles with long silencers attached to the muzzle. It may have reduced their range, but the Knights had no issues closing with the enemy. No, they relished the opportunity. Especially Ern Dardel.

He had swung his rifle to lay diagonally across his back, silencer pointed towards the floor. Creeping through a graveyard of brick, concrete, and steel, coming in and out of the light, he pounced upon an unsuspecting guard standing along with a group of another two men and a butch-looking woman.

The sharp, cold steel of his knife's sharp edge cut through his first victim's skin like a kitchen knife through a watermelon, the juice running out from the chasm like a waterfall of red.

Dardel, with the sharpness of a well-groomed killer, threw his knife into a second man before any of the pirates around had time to react. As the man put his hands up to protect his face, the blade cut his palms like a loose whip before it continued traveling straight through to his eye, becoming lodged there even as the man fell backward. Before the back of the second dead man's head hit the floor and cracked open, splattering blood everywhere, Ern had already begun moving towards his third target, a guard who had managed to by now at least bring his weapon up toward his shoulder.

Twisting his body and using his left shoulder as leverage, he trapped the guard's arm and snapped it. The man let out an inhuman howl that pierced down into the soul. Wrapping his finger over the wounded pirate's, Dardel almost squeezed the trigger. But at the last moment, he hesitated — making noise was counterproductive. The woman, the only one in any fighting condition, noticed his brief lull and levelled her own rifle.

Had she had a heartbeat more to fire, Ern may have finally fulfilled his cause and earned his reunion with Mariel, but as it stood today would not be his day. Another masked operative came down from heights above to run up behind her and run her through with his sword double-edged sword. Its blood-stained steel tip revealed itself on the other side and the woman's eyes rolled back into her head as she spasmed, and then finally fell quiet one last time.

Ern nodded at the man who had helped him, a big, muscular Theohuanacan named Kaxatá. Then he promptly turned around and darted back into battle.

It did not take long for him to come upon his next group of prey. Some of the guards had noticed the commotion that was now rippling along their perimeter and were rushing toward prepared defensive positions. The Knights were too

fast. Em opened fire with his assault rifle from their flank, using the cover of a heavily damaged warehouse to cut them down without much effort. As the last man fell, smoke still trailing from out the bullet holes in the body, Dardel had already dropped the mag and was putting a fresh one in the well. And just as quickly he had moved on, deeper toward the enemy ship.

The enemy had organized snipers in the surrounding heights, as they usually did. They hassled the advancing operatives where they could. In response, Macabean snipers sought them out like one magnet to another and eliminated them. Sometimes the kill went the other way, albeit exceedingly rarely. It was a game of cat and mouse that the Macabeans, with better training and better equipment, typically won.

Dardel picked up his pace, heading down a narrow corridor between two walls that led directly to the pier that was servicing the frigate-sized ship. As he was about to get to the edge of the shadow, before slipping into a spotlight that illuminated the pathways directly around the vessel, a bear-sized arm came seemingly from out of nowhere and knocked Em back onto his back. He landed with a thud and with a groan, trying to grapple his way back up until a big foot planted itself in the middle of his chest to force him back down. He looked up to see an ogre of a buccaneer with a fresh scar that ran down his left eye like a crevice, and the man looked angry.

His enemy came down with his knees to trap Em beneath his weight, surely to pummel him to death with those great fists of his. But the Macabean managed to squirm out from under him, rolling to get back into a crouching position. He rose quickly and reached for his rifle, only to realize that it was not there and had in fact fallen to the floor after he had first been struck.

"Come on, scumbag!" he yelled.

The pirate grinned, then roared, and finally charged toward him with a harrowing intensity in his eyes. Em returned the corsair's guttural scream with equal vigor and charged on as well.

Right as the monster of a pirate pulled his arm back in readiness to strike, a bullet struck through his forehead and exited from the back of his skull. The corpse collapsed before Em had reached him, smacking against the concrete like a ripe tomato. "**Nooooo!**" he screamed as he fell to his knees, panting with his hands over his face.

Adrenaline raced through him like the best Moka pearl. He shook with the fury of a man in a rage. They had taken his target from him. They had *stolen* it from him. He growled, took the dead man's head and pulled it back, smacking it back into the floor. The nose broke, sending another broad splatter of blood in a wide arch.

Suddenly, his eyes widened as he remembered where he was.

Em's head swiveled side to side as if he expected the enemy to swarm from all quarters. But the fighting had already ended and the others had gathered around the ship, where its crew and the workmen had either been slaughtered or died down in a line, seated with their backs to the cold, dirty water of the harbor. A few of the prisoners were crying. One of the Macabean soldiers pulled out his sidearm and, from one end of the line to the other, began to execute them in quick succession. Two other men joined in quickly, using their rifles to riddle their rope-tied bodies with bullets. When they were done, they pushed the bodies into the harbor.

Off to the side, a small team was using a crowbar to lift the nailed lid off one of the big, unmarked wooden crates. "These are it!" one of them exclaimed...

...in a lab in North Point, a week later, Garutt Gardó inspected the dissected innards of one of the chemical artillery shells retrieved from the Tiwanaku harbor by special forces.

There was no bigger expert in chemical weapons in all the Golden Throne than him, so he had been called into North Point by request of the Imperial Bureaucracy, away from his post at the Chemical & Biological Development Department at the Arras Proving Grounds. It was an emergency, they said. Tens of thousands of troops crawling through those wicked, vicious streets of

Palenque and Tiwanaku were at risk. And so he took a flight that very night and had arrived at North Point the very next morning. And now he found himself in the lab, facing the pieces of one of the captured shells.

On his face, as he studied these pieces, was an expression of shock and terror. Of memories that most men prefer to forget. Of nightmares crisscrossing his mind like flashes of horror. His hands reached up to touch his face, as he felt as the scars that traveled his neck and up his cheeks, and around the eyes. His fingers scanned over the burned texture of his skin. Garutt gritted his teeth.

[These were Ralkovian shells.](#)

Edit on 3/12/18: Added link to short story around Garutt Gardó.

Last edited by [The Macabees](#) on Mon Mar 12, 2018 6:01 am, edited 4 times in total.

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Ghant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

by [Ghant](#) » Sat Jul 22, 2017 11:51 am

QUOTE

Course Correction

"A man who has been through bitter experiences and traveled far enjoys even his sufferings after a time" — Homer, The Odyssey

The Ghantish Flagship Predator
Southern Seas of Gholgoth
South of the Empire of the Scandinavians
May 2028

Eloi Xurio found his accommodations most suitable for a man of his needs. A sturdy bed with an inviting mattress, a small shelf barren aside from a pair of books and an assortment of small weapons, an old wooden desk with a calendar upon it and a nightstand where a half-empty bottle of hard tea sat like a tower casting a long shadow across the wooden surface.

Indeed, Eloi needed little, and had fewer still. A man who traveled light was a man who could move faster. He clothes were no different. Some Imperial emissaries wore elaborate, gaudy imperial garb, ranging from long black satin robes to neatly-pressed military uniforms. Eloi preferred a simple dark, smoky grey tunic with black buttons and pauldrons that he could keep together with a black leather belt and matching shoes. In his mind, he didn't need the fancy garments to convince anyone of who he was. *All I need is the badge in my pocket.*

The emissary from Dienghant sat on the edge of his bed, peering at the wall. He had hoped that he might be able to discern some profound wisdom from the blank surface across the room, but alas, all that occupied the man's mind was the sea, forboding as it were. By now they had rounded the continent to Gholghant's east, and were now heading north, in the direction of the strait between the Scandinavian Empire and Brewdomia. The island of Vismer laid at the northern end of the continent, off the coast of Tiami. *Another nation that serves as a den of treacherous serpents*, Eloi thought as he picked up his bottle of hard tea from the nightstand.

Tea was something cultivated in Gholghant where the weather and clime permitted such plants to grow, and other parts of the country produced the alcohol with which the tea was combined to make hard tea. It lacked the overbearingly strong taste of other Gbantish drinks, which was why Eloi preferred it. Like tea, it could be smooth and sweet, refreshing on a warm day. Though the climate grew colder as they sailed north, Eloi found the drink appealing all the same.

As it were, Eloi gulped down the remaining half of the hard tea in short order, feeling the cold liquid cascade down his gullet. *A sad thing, that the bottle should be empty*, he frowned as he set it back on the nightstand, and took a deep breath. His gaze went from the wall to the shelf where his two books dwelt in their dark crevices. Content to merely kill time until the next bridge meeting, Eloi pushed himself up from the bed and languidly approached the shelf.

The two books were quite the contrast. One was a book on military tactics, the sort of eloquent writing and taxing reading that would put most men to sleep from sheer boredom. The second book though...that one was a tantalizing read. It featured a collection of epic poems and short stories concerning the ancient world written by Gbantish literary craftsmen of old. After just a few moments of thought, Eloi bent over and plucked that one from the darkness of the shelf and pulled it to his side, tucking it against his shirt.

Sitting carefully on the worn wooden chair at his desk, Eloi sat the tome down on the surface with a gentle thud. The book was old, writ in ink from the time before printing press or typewriters, the liquid dried unto the seasoned pages. He obtained it from the Great Library of Gaztelua in Gholghant, only being able to convince the Magisters of that great institution to allow him to take it because of his imperial badge. His logic was simple. *If I am to die, then let me at least bring with me something of value to enjoy before the reaper takes me away*. Thus, Eloi opened the book, and began to read one of its many stories.

Brave Odysseus and the Leviathan Brood

A rasp of knuckles came upon the door behind him, and Eloi closed the book and turned his head. "Who is it?"

The voice that responded stammered. "...It is me... Gorri..."

Of course it is. "...Just a minute." With a labored sigh, Eloi stood up from his desk and turned to approach the door. He slowly unlocked it, and opened it just enough to see the fair face of the young lordling. "I'm assuming your Uncle wants me for something?" Cygnus usually dispatched Gorri as his errand boy, especially when it concerned Eloi.

The young man laughed. "How'd you guess?"

Do I even need to answer that? "We should be going to the meeting room on the bridge then," Eloi nodded his head. "Your uncle isn't want to wait." Indeed, not even an imperial badge could stay the great Salamana's impatience, and Eloi was loathe to linger too long when the lord bid him summons. "Feel

free to lead the way, milord,” he spoke casually to Gorri, who inclined his head in turn and began walking back down the hall, but not before noticing the tome on Eloi’s desk.

As the two walked down the halls in the bowels of the ship, Gorri asked the Dienghantar, “that tome...it looks old...where did you get it?”

“It is old,” Eloi replied. *Very observant, this one.* “I rented it from the Great Library of Gaztelua.”

“Oh...what’s it about?”

Eloi pursed his lips as he scratched at the short stubble underneath his chin. “Tales of the ancient world, like of the adventures of Odysseus.” Eloi chuckled for a mere moment, before catching himself and stopping. “When I was a boy, I used to dream of adventures like that...traveling the seas, seeing far away lands and encountering terrible creatures and fantastic people.”

“...and now you don’t?” Gorri asked, curiously.

The Dienghantar regarded him carefully with a sad expression. “As I got older, I learned the true wisdom of the journey of Odysseus. That men are totally at the mercy of fate, and the whims of the Gods. A man can struggle for years, in a vain, futile effort, against his fate. So what is a man to do? Struggle forever, or accept it and submit oneself to it? That’s the question every man must face, as Odysseus did.”

“That’s quite sage,” the young lordling nodded, as he presumably contemplated the older man’s words. “We shall have to see what the Gods have in store for us, then.”

Aye, that we shall. After some time walking, the pair arrived at some sturdy stairs that wound up to the higher levels of the ship, and then onto the bridge, where a cadre of guards were doing their rounds. Others stood near doors leading to sensitive areas, some containing officers and VIPs, others intelligence rooms and armories. Then there was another room with a pair of doors, and two guards standing on either side. They had firearms and traditional weapons on their persons, and stood like statues in some ancient keep in the heart of Ghant.

Upon the approach of Gorri and Eloi, they pushed the doors open, and into the meeting room the two men walked. It was a small room for a Ghantish meeting chamber, rectangular with a low ceiling and a square table in the center spartanly decorated with dossiers and a pitcher of water with small, squat glasses for drinking it with. Gathered around the table were some high-ranking officers, with Cygnus Salamana seated among them, dressed in his usually gaudy uniform, and his hands concealed under the table.

“Eloi Xurio,” Lord Salamana said dryly and without any sort of expression on his face, “so nice of you to have joined us on such short notice.” He gestured towards a pair of empty seats around the table.

Eloi bowed his head and strode towards one of the open seats, lowering himself on it carefully, and noticing the eyes of those gathered around the table upon him. He knew what they thought. To them, he

was a lesser man than they, yet another creature of the wayward Emperor who acted on whims and flights of fancy rather than upon the needs of the Empire, so the criticisms went. *Yet, I have the imperial badge all the same.*

"What's this about?" Eloi asked then, after Gorri took up a seat beside him. "Recent developments, I suppose?"

"Yes," Cygnus said gruffly. "Forces of the Golden Throne have been engaging pirates in Dienstad to great effect, though not without some difficulty. Their operations in Vismer continue as planned."

If Feodor wants to do away with piracy in Dienstad, he ought to take a look at Dienghant itself. Dienghant was a woefully neglected part of the Empire, and a den of smugglers, brigands and pirates that lacked any sort of accountability. The lords of that land, corrupt as they were, would rather accept bribes and tributes from the pirates than exert any kind of effort to rein them in, and Ghish regarded the issue as a trivial matter altogether. "...And?"

"The Pudites are on the move. They are amongst the Mille Mortifere as we speak, having gathered and departed from Citadel City and moved north and east from there. They've supposedly been engaging Scadin forces in the eastern Mille. Task Force Hell, they call it...and the Shattered Gods Task Group is focusing on controlling the stretch of sea between Vismer and Shen Almaru," Cygnus explained, without even needing to glance at the intel papers on the table before him.

Good luck with that. Eloi didn't envy any man that found himself in the Mille Mortifere, let alone any man between Vismer and Shen Almaru. Those were treacherous waters full of slavers and potentially hostile peoples, Eloi had heard said. "It's good to see Dengmu doing something to restore himself in proper fashion. I'm sure his Gothic throne misses him dearly."

Cygnus was not known for being polite of speech. "Make no mistake, Xurio. It matters not to me whether Dengmu, or whoever his rival daimant is that the Scandinvans have propped up in Shen Almaru, controls that Gothic seat. To me that's all a distraction from the real war. The one against the Scandinvans."

Eloi couldn't help but chuckle and shake his head at that. "You still think a conventional war against the Scandinvans can be won, when it's never been successful before?"

"With enough help, I believe it can be," Cygnus pointed out sharply. "But..."

"Oh, but let me guess...now we don't enough, do we?" *Why am I not surprised?*

Cygnus grinded his teeth as he glared at the Dienghantar, and then he sighed as his officers looked on. "Not in the sense that I had initially thought. The other Gothic lords are loathe to commit themselves to a conventional war against the Scandinvans to the extent that I was originally convinced of. There's been a lot of smoke and mirrors."

That's for damn sure. "I recall trying to explain to you that the other Gothic Lords were loathe to commit themselves to an all out offensive, not while the Golden Throne enters Gholgoth en masse and not while the Kravenites plan their next move. Make no mistake, not only would a war against the Scandinavians be futile, but even if such a war could be won, it would plunge Gholgoth into chaos. I know you know this."

"...The Kraven Reich is no true threat to us, not with the so-called Southern Wall," Cygnus explained impatiently. "And the Golden Throne happens to be our friends..."

Eloi cut him off. "That's what you think, but you don't know them the way I do. I'm actually from Dienstad, I know their kind. They'll be your friends for as long as they can use you to get what they want, and I know what they want, because they're good at getting it. Land...they're like locusts. They consume, and take what they can get and then they bleed it dry all in the name of dominion. Once they're embedded they're rather difficult to remove. They'll plant their flags deep in the heart of Gholgoth if they can, and then they will spread."

"That's preposterous," Cygnus said with a fist against the table, causing it to shake. "You don't know shit, Dienghantar, and you speak with a forked tongue unbecomingly of that badge you like to flaunt about."

"Oh, but of course," Eloi agreed with a pensive look. "And that may be true, but I know what I need to know. That's why the other Gothic Lords haven't flocked to the Golden Throne's banners...because they all mistrust them as much as I do. Perhaps you haven't figured this out yet, but the plan is to let the Golden Throne and the Scandinavians beat each other to death, until the Golden Throne has no choice to accept terms with the Scandinavians, and then we can impose our collective will upon the Scandinavians after they've been diminished in the war. Then the Golden Throne will leave, and trouble Gholgoth no more. Then we might be able to return to some semblance of normalcy, which is what the Gothic Lords desire most. The status quo."

The Dienghantar leaned forward over the table, and stared Lord Salamana down. "That's what this meeting is about, isn't it? You've got some intel, some communiqué from only the Gods know where, informing you of this very reality. You see? Maybe I'm not as stupid as you think...milord." Eloi leaned back in his chair, while the assembled officers had a look of collective bewilderment upon their faces.

Cygnus, now looking rather flushed about the face, exhaled deeply and slouched back into his chair, bringing his arms up to rest limply across the table in front of him. "You're right about that, Xurio. The Skyans contacted me and informed me of their plans and with a recommended course of action that concerns Shen Almaru. According to our sources, there have been clandestine communication from inside Shen Almaru organized by anti-Scandinavian dissident forces. The Skyans, and perhaps Dengmu, appear convinced that they can be liberated from Scandinavian occupation, which would break their control of the eastern Gothic Sea passage."

At this, Eloi grinned, and rubbed his chin as he recalled what he knew about that. "Tis true. Not too long ago, a Pudite official, of sorts, by the name of Drusus Salvias Otho met with Lady Consul Cyrenna Beltxarga at the Gbantish Consulate in Mazaraan, in the Shen Almaru Archipelago. From what I've gathered, Otho had intelligence and plans that he disseminated to Dengmu from the Consulate by way of a Gbantish diplomatic cable. This allowed the intelligence to pass without the Scandinavians even noticing. Based on this, I'm sure the Pudites and the Skyans both believe we'd be better served with a course correction...to Shen Almaru."

Cygnus stared blankly at Eloi for a few seconds, before finally saying, "let me get this straight. You want me to completely change my military offensive based upon the word of some Pudite renegade and the whims of Lady Beltxarga, who rather recently divorced her husband Lord Gabriel Burra, by all accounts a good man and true, for no other reason than a midlife crisis. Is that what you're telling me?"

He certainly has a way with words. "That's exactly what I'm telling you, milord. We cannot sustain an operation against the Scandinavians without any other Gothic power by our side. We might as well be painting a giant target on our backs if we do that, because whatever fate we suffer we shall suffer alone. Shen Almaru though is another matter entirely. It's a disputed territory that not all of the Gothic Lords have recognized the legitimacy of Scandinavian rule over. Dengmu is by all accounts a Gothic Lord who rules those lands by rights, same as Nathan rules all of Gbant. We are within our capabilities to aid greatly in the liberation of Shen Almaru and restore it to Dengmu's rule, and the time to strike is now, there is no better time. That, and Dengmu will remember our efforts to restore him, and he will be grateful and indebted to us as a result."

"You seem convinced that such an offensive against Shen Almaru would be successful," Lord Salamana spoke acerbically. "How confident are you that the resistance in the archipelago would be strong enough to constitute a significant uprising?"

"Quite confident, since Dengmu, the Skyans and the Empress of Gbant all seemed convinced of it," the Dienghantar countered enthusiastically. "That's what I'm here to do, to make sure this operation conforms to the Imperial policy. The Imperial policy is twofold... to weaken the Scandinavians from being able to support piracy, slavery operations in Gholgoth and Dienstad, and to liberate Shen Almaru and return it to Dengmu's rightful rule. As far as I'm concerned this course correction would accomplish all of those things. It might not be the glorious campaign you've dreamt of, milord, but it is the one most likely to succeed, and the one that will have the biggest, and most longstanding impact."

Cygnus brooded as he rubbed his chin. "You speak truth, Xurio. The Emperor is a bumbling fool, this much I know, but the Empress...she's a cunning beast, and even I would be loathe to cross her. By all accounts, the Crown Prince is her pet, and I intend to be in his good graces once he comes into the throne, and the best way to achieve that is to not undermine his mother."

...That has to be the smartest thing I've heard you say all day. "Well, I'm glad you're convinced, milord. Is that all?"

"No, it's not." Cygnus slid an envelope across the table, only stopping when it hit Eloi in the chest. He picked it up, and opened it in order to read the contents. As he did so, Cygnus added that "this is what I received from the Skyans. There's an invitation to send military planning officers to the *Unity* in order to provide a closer degree of collaboration between ourselves and allied forces. To this end, I will be sending my nephew Gorri, and yourself."

Sending me? Eloi thought incredulously. *That's rich.* "You forget yourself, milord. I am not a man who is merely 'sent'. I will go if it pleases me...and if I go, who will watch over you to make sure you're in compliance with Imperial policy?"

For the first time that meeting, Cygnus smirked. "I doubt the Emperor, or the Empress for that matter, would approve of you denying a Skyan invitation to stay aboard the *Unity* for the purpose of military cooperation, and since you're so keen on this Shen Almaru operation and being the Skyan's toady," Cygnus grinned wide, "you'll be the one to go in order to represent the Imperial office, as you're so quick to remind me. I think that's a much nicer way of putting it then 'get the fuck off my ship,' don't you?"

Fuck you, Cygnus. "It would seem as though you have me at a disadvantage," Eloi told him in a resigned tone. "I'll gather my things and await the transport aircraft."

"Good. That is all," Cygnus said as he waved his hand at Eloi and Gorri. The two men rose from their seats, bowed their heads, and showed themselves out of the meeting room. "An adventure, just like Odysseus," Gorri commented as they left the room. "Aboard the *Unity*, of all places! How exciting!"

How exciting indeed. Cygnus was sending the two of them for different reasons. For Gorri, it would be a safer place than the *Predator*, and by all means Cygnus wanted to keep his older brother's eldest son and heir safe and removed from harm, which he would be aboard the *Unity*. As for Eloi, well...it was a convenient way to get rid of him and remove the watchful eyes of the Imperial seat, which the Salamanas chafed under, especially Cygnus.

"Take great care to pack your things and be prompt to the departure zone," Eloi instructed Gorri plainly. "The sooner we're gone the better, and I intend to break bread with Richard Bexar and Squall, provided he's around. There's much to discuss, after all." As the two of them kept quarters in different parts of the flagship, Eloi parted ways with Gorri and headed back down to his room to gather his things and relax, if only for a time. The *Course Correction* was coming, but for Eloi, it was but another detour in his long journey of imperial service, the end of which was now more uncertain than ever before.

Message to Commanders of the Vismer Campaign from Cyg



The Macabees

Senator

Posts: 3870

Founded: Antiquity
Anarchy

by The Macabees » Sat Jul 29, 2017 1:24 pm



The Indoán River valley, east of León.

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Sandino, Firmador

15 September, 2027

Leutnant Tobruk Kartilis hadn't seen war before. He didn't want to see it again. It came as a surprise, his change of assignment orders, as he had spent the first two years of his commission sitting in air conditioned supply rooms back province-side. In fact, he didn't have a drop of combat experience on him. The *leutnant*, *aftleutnant* at the time, always did a good job of course. XO to a *Kapitán*, he kept order and the men were always disciplined. Still, the man had never fired a shot in anger. That's why it surprised him when he was given command of a rifle *pielotón*, as part of *Kango bandag* ('Kango' company) of the 2113th *tabor* (regiment), belonging in turn to the 415th mechanized infantry *terch* (division). All the experienced officers were in Holy Panooly or Gholgoth, they said. Combat leadership was the fastest track for *kapitán*, they said. Who ever said he wanted to be a captain?

The kicker was getting deployed to the war-torn jungle back-end of Nicaro, where he'd lead his platoon for a year-and-a-half tour — or 'til he died.

So far the war had come in ebbs and flows. When it hit, it hit hard. Otherwise, the war boiled down to long distance driving day-after-day, as they moved along highways to all the major cities. Batis came first, and the fighting was toughest there. Tobruk remembered being pinned down by a machine gunner hidden in a temple spiral with a wide angle of fire, allowing whoever was manning that death gun to command the intersection between the Macabean *pieloton* and their target. The *leutnant*, promoted into but a few weeks prior, was tasked with flanking an energy plant the *bandag* was ordered to take. That machine gun had stopped him square, killing three of his men with an opening spurt and wounding twice as many. It was a goddamned folly.

In training, they had urged them to be creative in their exercises. He showed creativity in Batis. Pinned down along either side of the street, their shoulders hard against the wall, they were taking fire like motherfuckers. Four brave *regulares* sprinted and stuck to the walls to avoid fire until one of them got caught in the leg by the gunner in the spiral. The other three pulled him into a building, and that was the end of their daring dash. That's when a light bulb went off in the *leutnant's* head.

The rest of the *bandag* was pinned down in house-to-house fighting too, as their enemy was just as well entrenched and placed as the machine gunner chewing into Tobruk's *pielotón*. He could hear wounded men cry out in pain in the open. One soldier's leg had been torn open, the right one being nothing more than shredded ligaments and the scattered, smoking remnants of tissue. Another one was bleeding from the neck, his arms and legs flapping wildly as he hopelessly and desperately struggled to breathe. The *sektón* (squad) leaders were pulling their men to cover and they were losing the initiative. Neither did any of them look willing to charge down that street like their brothers had, and the chances of an inexperienced officer who they barely knew rallying them to that cause were slim to none. The *leutnant* decided to work with the current,

not against it.

He followed behind a *sektón* into a narrow apartment building that sat just behind the right corner into the intersection. Had the door been a couple inches further up the street the machine gunner would have surely clipped one of them as they rushed into the lobby of the building. "Rikords, get your *sektón* in order," he snarled just as one of them noticed he had followed in with them.

"Yes, sir," replied the *primsargént* in haste. His men had already gotten the point and were poising themselves for orders. The machine gun had quieted down outside, firing in short spurts at long intervals.

"Rikords, I want a hole through this wall," ordered the *leutnant*, who was pointing towards his target. It was a wall opposite the entrance to an elevator that traveled the height of the apartment structure. The *primsargént* sounded off a quick 'yes, sir' and quickly went about business. One of the men carried a rocket launcher and used it to break down the wall and severely damage the next one behind it. As they moved through the opening they saw the wide space filled with the machinery of a metal shop. It was abandoned now as they moved through, tearing down the next wall and then the one after that.

Leutnant Kartilis collected men as they slowly advanced through the row of buildings toward the very last one. It took time and it was not without violence, as they fought defenders who had been occupying some of the rooms on the block, catching them as they fired out the windows to catch the Macabean *regulares* on the streets below unaware.

The fighting was tough. There were booby traps deployed everywhere. Men fell wounded. Men died. *Primsargént* Rikords was almost one of the casualties. A bullet wizzed by his head, as a gunman propped against the inside corner of a staircase that connected with the bottom floor of a structure freshly breached fired from close range. Two other men crumpled and hit the floor. One of them was shaking, pretending to be dead and doing a bad job of it. He was bleeding from his arm, praying under his breath. The enemy soldier on the staircase would have killed him as another Macabean stepped into the room and peppered him with bullets. One of the men who had been hit died quickly, bleeding out like a gutted pig.

Finally, they broke their way through one of the buildings that faced the intersection, a hotel that was half-empty after most of its clientele had fled the city at the start of the war. Tobruk had assembled almost a third of his *pielotón* by then, the rest still waiting behind cover along the side of the street. He arrayed most of them in two lines at the lobby. Two men, a sniper team, climbed up to a room on the fourth floor.

They eliminated the machine gunner with precision.

On cue, the *leutnant* led his men from out the lobby and through the intersection to the other side. Miraculously, they made it across in one piece. Gunfire was raging throughout the adjacent streets. He had left men behind, many of them wounded, but he needed to keep moving or else they were going to get picked off like ducks on a lake. They'd have to find their own way to him, or else stay put until reinforcements came and picked them up. They moved towards a steel door that led into the plant. His men breached the opening with explosives, but not before Tobruk caught an urban Nakíl let loose with its canon with a mighty roar. It was pointing right at him.

He felt fear overwhelm him. If it wasn't for *Primsargént* Rikords pulling him through the doorway and into the building by the collar. The NCO was panting, sweat pouring down his bloodied, scuffed face. The *leutnant* hadn't noticed the wounded until then. They had all made it through the door, but some had been hit. Three men had been left behind on the street, lying cold and motionlessly. He hadn't noticed them die.

"Sitrep, Rikords," he asked through the gritted teeth of a man whose heart had almost jumped through and out of his chest.

"Them, I can't tell their status," the NCO started, as he grimly looked out the door. "I think Rodrig is playing dead. The fucker has always been a rat." He turned to the group of soldiers inside with them. The emotion had been drained from their face. "In here, we got nine wounded and sixty-two combat-

ready riflemen. Enough to take the building or raise hell, if not. We still have men out there too, including dead and wounded."

Tobruk was uncertain and still shaken. This was quite the introduction to combat and it was all overwhelming him. If it wasn't for the mortifying fear, deep rooted in his bones, he'd be screaming. Slowly, he managed to recompose himself and his thoughts. It took a few minutes of precious time, but as he ultimately saw it he had two options. One was to take the building with the force at hand, clearing it of enemy forces that were picking off friendly forces still moving up the street, through homes and storefronts, gaining ground at the cost of men. But what if the rest of his company was surrounded and reduced in the meantime? The second one was to help guide the rest of his men to his position.

It took a sharp tug of his arm from the *primsargént* to bring Tobruk to his senses. His senior NCO pulled him aside, away from the men. "Our boys out there can hold their own. Trust me, *leutnant*, I know them well," he whispered, harshly. "I've been fighting with most of 'em before. We need to sweep the building. There are men counting on us."

He eyed Tobruk up and down, not with contempt but with empathy. "Get your shit together, sir. Let me handle the men for now," he finished.

The sarge took over from there and, for all intents and purposes, Tobruk simply kept up with him. He didn't mind. Rikords was a good man and an experienced veteran. He had fought in Theohuanacu, Zarbia, and Indras. It was a miracle he was here at all and not in Gholgoth, where men were gathering for the impending great invasion of the Scandivan Empire. A good thing too, as Tobruk still had a lot to learn from him.

That's why he was glad the *primsargént* was by his side as their convoy entered the southeastern suburbs of Sandino. Tall apartment blocks towered on either side as they slowly rumbled through a highway that led into the city proper. There was a dead silence that churned the stomach. No civilians walked the sidewalks outside. The enemy was nowhere to be seen. It was a ghost town it seemed, and that made Tobruk nervous. Rikords was tense too, and Rikords was rarely tense. Riding in Shalmanesers, large armored personnel carriers, they made their way deeper and deeper into an eerie city. A fool may have felt safe there, as they rode escorted by a *pielotón* of Nakís and two SPAAGs. But the *leutnant* was less of a fool than he had been less than a week before. Batis had sobered him up like a bucket of cold water. He lost eight *regulares* that day, and another thirty-two wounded, that day.

As they drove through an intersection and past a corner building a window opened on an upper floor. A woman, old and hunched, draped the old flag of Firmador from the ledge. She slipped and disappeared back into the shadows of her room, just as other windows began to open and flags were draped elsewhere and everywhere. Sandino slowly came to life, as civilians emerged to look and wave at the Macabean column passing them by. Children ran out into the streets to follow the Imperial vehicles that rolled at a steady pace, shouting and yelling behind them all the way. And still no sight of the enemy.

Tobruk and his men would soon learn that the enemy had dissolved, melting into the surrounding jungle...where they were much more dangerous.

Batis, Firmador

18 September, 2027

Dominic Argüel was no warrior. No sirree, when he had joined the *Kríermada* in search of a paying job, he deliberately sought out a position that would take him as far away from war as possible. He wasn't the most intelligent man, nor the most motivated, and ultimately he chose the role of master-at-arms. And for the first two years of his enlistment, the plan had worked as he wanted. Whereas other men were dying in wars of occupation and pacification, he was providing security on military bases far, far away from the action. Alas, all good stories must come to an end and his dream of a war-less enlistment came in Batis.

He had been in more gunfights in these past weeks than in his previous two years combined, and Argüel did not like it. Four days ago, he had almost died. Together with his battle buddy and best friend, *Aftkorpai* Manu Indurain, he

had been manning a machine gun atop a guard tower that sat on the edge of the *krierstatón's* outer walls. If they hadn't been reading a porn mag behind the steel walls of their tower, the rocket that struck them would have surely killed them both. Instead, it just rained a shower of shrapnel upon them. Indurain suffered heavy wounds to the face and was transferred out of theater back to the provinces the very next day. Argüel, for his part, had received just some scratches, and although they bled profusely they were apparently not enough to be his ticket home. He wasn't sure whether to count himself lucky or unlucky. When he learned that his friend's face had been scarred permanently, he finally settled on the former.

That was as close of a call as Argüel ever wanted to have, but he had experienced many these past few days. On the 11th of September, he had been ordered to join a convoy of military officers on a tour of the southern city. They were ambushed by Contra defenders who had moved into position the night before. It was coincidence, but a violent one. Several experiences like this had already persuaded him of the wisdom of turning down reenlistment when his time was up.

So when he was offered the job of guarding the nearby civilian docks, he took it gladly. The base's walls and the fighting in the city were far away, and all he had to do here was drive up and down the piers with a little four-door sedan with blue lights up top.

His new partner was something of a bummer, though. *Aftkorpai* Hagohst Vederle, Guffingfordi by birth and Macabean by citizenship, was a lot like how Indurain had been: tough and motivated. But, whereas Indurain hadn't minded Argüel's lackadaisical attitude, Vederle detested it. They hadn't worked together for more than two days and already the Guffingfordi was lecturing him on duty and that nationalistic nonsense. "How did a Guffingfordi come to believe this imperialist bullshit," Argüel would ask the man, only to anger Vederle more. Sometimes, he wished he was back on watchtower duty. At least then people left him alone.

But, no. Life could never be that easy. Instead, he was stuck on godawfully boring guard duty with a man who knew not how to shut his mouth. The arguing had gotten so bad that Argüel felt compelled to pull the car beside a stack of black and green crates that were organized into neat rows just a few hundred meters away from the edge of the dock.

The venom was boiling. "How did a Guffingfordi come to join the *regulares*, anyway? I thought you folk were restricted to the auxiliaries?"

To a foreigner, it may have seemed like an innocent question, if not for the tone. But since the very beginning of the acquisition of the first territory – Guffingford – in 2017, there was a very clear sense of cultural, ethnic, and moral superiority among the provincials who enjoyed the more privileged status of citizenship. Guffingford, although an ally and wealthy, was still a territory, and therefore of a second class. This was a dynamic that would settle and institutionalize, and now as more and more Guffingfordis came home from ten-year enlistments in the auxiliaries they found themselves in another war. This time, the enemy was the racism and pretentiousness of their provincial overlords.

Vederle narrowed his hazel eyes and gave Argüel a level look. "I am a citizen, you fool."

Argüel laughed loudly. "How did you score that?" he said, more than asked. "You look a little too young to an auxiliary vet. Plus, your rank is a little low," he taunted, and he reached over to flick the other man's rank insignia on his uniform collar. "It makes sense. I see it now. They brainwashed you to think joining the *regulares* is a good thing! And you call me the fool!"

"You are quite the fool," said the Guffingfordi, coldly. "My father served as an auxiliary. He fought in Theohuanacu for seven years, my friend." He paused for emphasis. "How many years of war have you fought? A few days? And you are already tired of it? Because a few days of combat is enough for one man? You are a fool *and* a coward. My father is a brave man and thanks to him I am now a citizen. But, to find that a man like you, a Macabean, has no taste for war and that, despite that, they determine that I am inadequate for combat because of my status as a *foreigner*? That is crazy to me. Are you sure you are full-bred Macabean? Are you sure your mother wasn't a Zarbian whore? I heard

they are a most craven people. And I'm sure your father had a blast fucking Zarbian *putas* during The War. He's probably in Zarbia right now, reliving past memories, while his son disparages the name he earned as a legacy."

"You know, you are a real asshole, Vederle. Here I am, enjoying my fucking night, trying to do my job without getting hassled, and here you are, riding me about some bullshit that is, frankly, none of your business. I'm not a coward, I'm just not an idiot. Why would I want to die in this humid, stinky dump? Just so that Fedor, His Imperial Assface, can add it to his trophy cabinet?" He turned to the Guffingfordi and pointed at his mouth. "Read. my. lips. F that."

Vederle opened his mouth as if about to respond, but a long, wailing siren caused the Guffingfordi to whip his head around and look out at the water. They had been arguing so loudly that they hadn't noticed the helicopters circling overhead, with two of them loaded with troops. Out in the water, they could see the glimmering shadow of ships against the blackness of the sky. A fast cutter which sported two big, brilliant spotlights was closing in quickly, the silhouette of its 80mm cannon just barely visible under the moonlight. There was quite a bit of commotion and men were yelling through loudspeakers, as the ship's two spotlights shined upon the inbound vessel's hull with blinding intensity.

The seas were not violent, but neither were they calm. To be a helicopter pilot in that moment must have been harrowing, to have to battle the elements as you hovered over an area of the vessel with men sliding down on either side onto the deck. They did it with excellence, though. *Better men than me*, thought Argüel.

Minutes went by. The cutter was now circling the cargo ship like a shark and the men who had jumped on board had all disappeared from sight, too small to be seen across that far of a distance. Neither of them had noticed their silence, they were just staring at the unfolding scene mouth agape. The cargo ship was coming closer, under escort of the relentlessly aggressive cutter. Neither Argüel nor the Guffingfordi were sure just how much time had passed, but soon enough it seemed as if the vessel was right upon them. A few more minutes, in fact, and it would be right upon them, as if were being led to dock right there only a few hundred meters away from them.

Before they knew it, the area around them was suddenly swarmed by three HIM-TECs that stopped right in front of the two marshal-at-arms. Whether they came to a screeching halt first or the soldiers had started to disembark even before the vehicles had come to a stop was hard to tell, but the movements were almost seamless. Argüel was impressed.

"Hey, you two idiots! What the hell are you doing here?" One of the soldiers was pointing at them and yelling, his hand pulling back to signal them to come to him.

Argüel's mouth was moving, but nothing was coming out. So it was the Guffingfordi who spoke, "Um, o-on g-guard duty...umm..." He peered hard to see if he could see the rank of the man yelling at him. "...uh, *sargént*...I think." He said those last words under his breath. The Guffingfordi looked over to his partner in confusion, and the Macabean offered a look that lacked any sense of reassurance. In that moment there was perhaps more chemistry between the two than there had been in the previous two days combined. In fact, a little telepathic conversation took place between them. With facial expressions included, Vederle said, 'Play it cool, man.' And Argüel quickly shot back with, 'I'm *trying*, trust me.' And then a look of disappointment on the Guffingfordi's face. It all happened so fast that the soldier shouting at them didn't even notice.

The soldier, who as he walked into closer range was seen to indeed be a *primsargént* — a close call that, imagine if it had been an officer and he had been referred to as a NCO! —, looked at them with a blank, unpleasant face that "Well, shit, looks like you two ought to get back to it." He looked at them a few seconds, waiting for them to leave, only to suddenly say, "Wait. You soldier, yea you right there" — he was pointing at Argüel now — "you come with me. You, Guffingfordi, *piss off*!" There was a nasty bite in his tone, almost a tinge of dislike or repugnance. It took Vederle aback, but the Guffingfordi ultimately said nothing. The *primsargént* was strangely satisfied with that.

"Uh, w-w-what do you m-mean?" stammered Argüel, whose only thoughts in his

head were in a whirlwind of hopeless confusion. "W-what am I-I supposed to d-d-o with you?"

The NCO smiled. Two others were joining him now, and they seemed no less unfriendly than this particular one. "It's your lucky day, soldier. I'm a man short. One of 'em is going to get an ass beating tomorrow. For now, I need a replacement and you're the chosen one. So shut the fugg up and fall out, line up with my men back there."

The Guffingfordi gave him a strange look before the man hopped into the driver's seat of their sedan and slowly drove off to continue the nightly patrol. And it was at *that* moment that Argüel finally realized what Vederle had been telling him earlier, and the *hate* that filled his body was so great that it was all he could do to control the tantrum that was arising. There was a man, driving away, that was *looking forward* to the gruesome responsibilities of combat, and what did this *primsargént* — that word felt sour in Argüel's mind — do? He enlisted the help of the opposite kind of man! And all, it seemed, based on nationality. After *finally* finding a job in this incessantly terrible military that he could actually do without worrying his mind into a craze, racism had just cost him the damn peace he had been seeking ever since being sent to this godawful tropical hell hole.

Too stirred up to put up much of a fight, he solemnly slipped alongside his new comrades and waited in at ease position while staring at the freighter come nearer and neared. The closer it got the slower it seemed to move, until finally it came to a shuddering halt just off the concrete wall of the pier. For a moment there was no sound, until the screech of an opening hatch introduced a column of armored soldiers escorting a small crew of what looked to be locals. They said not a word, as they loaded only one of the captured sailors into the HIM-TEC. The others were lined up and brought to their knees, with the sparkling water line right behind them at a 15-foot drop.

Argüel piled into one of the vehicles right as it started to take off and he was soon pushed up to a position in the center. One of the men with him pointed up at the ceiling, signalling him to man the top gun. *Shit*. The rest of the ride was one of those horrific experiences in his damned life. Half knocked-down buildings could house snipers or rocket launchers, and one well placed shot could take his life.

Luckily, the trip was not too long, as the *krierstatón* was practical adjacent to the civilian port (which Macabean warships used regularly). Still, the young Macabean felt as if his heart was going to pound right up his throat and out his mouth, and every local who rounded a corner caused his finger to budge just a millimeter down on the trigger. The sounds of battle that came from the outskirts of the city did not help, and neither did the one or two explosions that lit up the night sky beneath the moon. That he didn't shoot a single person was a damned miracle. But he, and the rest of the convoy, eventually made it back without a scratch and they drove through, at this hour, mostly empty streets until they arrived at the command HQ.

But the night was not quite over yet, because before he knew it, *Admiránt* Jonn Noram was before him. The admiral was looking at the captured sailor, who had been introduced as Fetch, up and down. "I hear the Tsarina sent you...Fetch. Tell me, what offer does she bring to the empire?" he asked, the sarcasm subtle, but razor-like.

Matagalpa, Firmador

19 September, 2027

Sargént Lothar Bruhn arrived at Matagalpa's airport in a mid-sized transport aircraft with only the pack on his back and the clothes he wore. Already armed, and with plenty of ammo, he and the rest of his *terch* (division) were quickly ordered to move out and reconvene at *Barbakán* Guadaluía, which sat on the eastern edge of the city and had recently been captured by Macabean forces.

Truth to God, he didn't actually know why he was here, in this hot, humid, and god-forbidden jungle-infested hell. Nobody seemed to want him or his division here. None of the *regulares* here had been even close to Holy Panooly, but everyone knew the fighting there was vicious. There was no love for the Ordenites in a Macabean camp. Especially an unproven Ordenite division, despite their status as *réguliés*. That didn't worry Bruhn so much. He'd see

combat soon enough, and he'd either prove himself or he'd die. As simple as that. He had found that the most successful soldier was the stoic soldier. Stoics overcome the odds.

"Zey call 'zis a war. Hah!" bellowed one of the riflemen in the truck with him. "Zey might as 'vell pass the champagne now. Ze enemy has already fled!"

Bruhn eyed him and when the soldier caught him, the other man darted his eyes down quickly. Bruhn had a head on him and was experienced enough to know better. Four hard years in the 702nd *Waffen SS Panzergrenadier* division were a testament to that. He had fought in Krasnova, in the first war. There, the summers burned as if lit on fire and the winters bit with frigid, frosty teeth. The enemy was efficient and tenacious. Communists were rats and they knew how to survive like one, so they made the Wehrmacht bleed. They were good marksmen too, like the man who had put a bullet through Bruhn's helmet.

In the second quarter of his deployment, his company was on a patrol which took them on a route that led them to the village of Kolosk, where no more than two hundred peasant farmers toiled their sorry lives away on small plots of land that ran the constant risk of being overrun and damaged in spontaneous firefights. They were traveling in a *schwerer panzerspähwagen*, six-wheeled armored vehicles, forming a convoy along with another three of their kind. Local human intelligence sources confirmed the presence of a fist-sized unit of enemy combatants in the vicinity of the town and it was Bruhn's company that was sent out to find them. The road winded, dipped, and rose with the contours of the earth. Patches of land had become fallow and the fields were empty of workers, and the dirt ancillary paths were becoming overgrown with weeds. The silence, in retrospect, should have arisen their suspicions.

Alas, it was not until their lead vehicle struck an IED on the road that they became aware of the danger around them. A later investigation would conclude that they had been struck by a buried explosive encased in a 120mm artillery shell, most likely left for them by the very insurgents they were chasing. The convoy came to a stop.

The rear ramp on Bruhn's car came down and out he led his squad, sprinting the distance between them and the lead vehicle while the other two *schwerer panzerspähwagen* maneuvered into covering positions. They weren't fast enough, apparently. The overturned wheeled vehicle smoldered as men slowly crawled from out of it. They were bleeding from cuts and scrapes, bruised up and jolted, and the last two that came running out were pulling a wounded *kamerad* behind them. He cried, the soldier being pulled, as weak, shaky hands — guided by stiff arms — felt around the bottom of his bloody, shredded torso. His legs were no longer there, leaving behind gory stumps that left a trail of blood on the pavement.

That man did not take much longer to die. He was *SS-Sturmmann* Jochen Feistel, father of two small girls, husband to a beautiful wife. He had been the victim of overconfidence.

The man who went to attend him in his final moments was *SS-Schütze* Alfons Klemme, a medic who was fresh out of training. He was another victim of overconfidence. As he bent down over dying Feistel, injecting a cartridge of pain killer into the dying man, a bullet went through his forehead. It was the same bullet that had gone through Bruhn's helmet, but in the the *SS-rottenführer's* case it had passed through the outside rim. Klemme had not been so lucky.

They swept the village, searching it almost house-by-house by angry *Waffen-SS*. The truth was the sniper was acting alone. He knew there were IEDs on the roads and he was waiting for his opportunity to ambush a hapless convoy. But they all looked guilty. They all had the same Slavic faces, the same disdain for the Ordenites. Rumors said *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Dieter Henzler had made the order, but the truth was that the massacre happened almost spontaneously. Indeed, in his rage, Bruhn had not needed orders when he gunned down a room full of six young brothers and their father. He left the mother alive, so that they should could shake there as she looked at the mangled, blood-covered bodies of the men she loved the most. By nightfall, Kolosk was a ghost town that stunk of death and the bodies had already been buried. Kolosk would be forever imprinted in his mind.

Bruhn knew most of all the price of disrespect for the opponent. Their arrogance had cost them two good men in Kolosk, but their loss had been much more than that. They had lost themselves too. It wouldn't be his last murder, but it was the open wound that continued to bleed until it slowly and agonizingly sucked all life out of him. When his four years were up, it was what drove him to leave.

Their convoy was passing into a mostly rural outer suburb of Matagalpa, with dumps of high-rises surrounded by the vast expanse of cleared rainforest. Here lay Guadaluía, the former headquarters of the Contra military. For a time, it had housed Ordenites as well, but most had tried to brave their way through invading forces toward the Reich's embassy. Whether they had died or simply died in the streets Bruhn did not know. None of that was made privy to him, anyway. He *had* heard — rumors, mind you — that a handful had been captured, but whether they had been shot to death, interrogated, or simply quarantined varied by who you asked.

Guard towers, bunkers, and barracks lay along the road in ruin, where the urban area broke into open land. It had been under siege until only four days earlier, when the last of the Contra forces were finally cornered and put down. He heard it had been a vicious fight that had required two battalions of Macabean troops to clear. Thirty-two friendly dead, seventy-six wounded, they said. And the earned peace was only sporadic.

In the city, snipers still took their toll. A well-placed machine gunner would pin down a platoon-sized patrol for hours until reinforcements arrived. After most of the Contra government's forces had dispersed there was a strict no fire-support order for combat actions in the city proper, making clearing every last enemy nest a tedious and bloody ordeal. Worse still, the enemy had no orders to avoid damage and they used clever, and destructive, ways of escaping before the Macabeans had a chance to eliminate them. Bruhn knew how tiring the tactic could be, he had faced the same in Krasnova many times. He had steeled himself to face the same here. And as their convoy snaked through that narrow paved road, he knew that with every passing second the risk grew larger and the likelihood of battle bigger. The knuckles around his rifle were glowing white.

"Vere are ve," he barked, unintentionally, through to the crew cabin.

Whether it was the driver or the commander who shouted back Bruhn did not know, but the crack in their voice was as sharp as a whip. "Entering ze suburb of Castaseñor, dear *sargént*." That word dripped thickly of the Ordenite accent under the strong influence of irritation. "Troubling zat ze platoon leader is not keeping track of ze distance he has traveled."

Bruhn brooded in silence as they drove deeper into the suburb. Most of its population were tied in some way to the base, whether they were soldiers, their partners, or those who worked civilian posts. Until days ago, most of Castaseñor was made up of loyal supporters of the Contra government. Despite its proximity to what was now the principal base of operations for the ongoing pacification of the area, it was known to be a dangerous area. The fighting there was still near constant and Bruhn's division was headed straight for the chaos. The tension that pulled at his fingers even more than it already had, as they bleed around his weapon's grip, was thrilling and fear-inducing all the same.

When the car bomb went off aside the second APC in the pack, it almost didn't come as a surprise to him. Almost. Being thrown head first into the opposite wall definitely came as a surprise.

The vehicle was still moving at a limp as he came back to his senses a few seconds later. His head was now bleeding and he was struggling to get back in his seat. The men around him were equally out of place. Whatever had hit them had obviously been a big explosion. Big enough to throw a track and more, as the APC finally creaked to a halt. Outside, the sound of war had already begun. Small arms fire ricocheted off the hulls, as did the *thud* of rockets and missiles. The gunner manning the remote weapon station was already going crazy with the 45mm cannon, pouring lead into flesh and brick alike.

As much fire as they were taking, it was the vehicle that had had point that was taking the most damage. Even from within the hull of his own ride, he

could hear the hell that the others must have going through. Most of the rocket fire was going to them, he realized. And they were cut off from the other two APCs by their own!

Foolish, indeed, to think of the enemy as anything but a clever bastard.

Their rear ramp went down and they poured out under intense covering fire. There were four APCs in all, each with a powerful 35mm weapon that was devastating whatever it struck. If an enemy tried to rain fire down on the *réguliés* on the street, they'd be peppered by rounds the size of a large man's forearm. The Macabeans knew this type of war well, he saw. The *Shalmaneser* was a beast of an armored vehicle, with heavy armor that was meant to survive precisely this sort of situation. One may have been immobilized, but it was still a fortress that their foes would find a tough nut to crack.

Bruhn moved his squad into a nearby building. He had seen the eruption of muzzle flash out the windows and sought to clear the upper floors in an effort to relieve some of the pressure on the convoy. They moved quickly as two fire squads, their movements almost rote. Most of them had seen combat before and all were efficient. Up the stairs they went, one team taking the second floor and the other the third. Apartment by apartment, they started clearing rooms. Families were huddled together in the corner, much like the one he had killed at Kolosk. They looked up at him and his men in a fear that had struck their faces in such a way that it drove a dagger through the *sargént's* gut, and if it were not for the adrenaline he would have broken down right there and cried. Something in him screamed to kill them, to erase them and the pain they brought him.

But before he could do anything the shooting suddenly died down. Men on the street were shouting and yelling at each other, trying to assess the confusing situation. They'd find about twenty enemy bodies at the cost of two dead *réguliés* and six wounded. The rest of the ambushing force had already ran to the hills...and they got away with it.

Ah yes, Bruhn knew this war all too well. In fact, that is why 'Umstellung Kreiger' had been brought to this damp inferno — to make full use of their expertise.

Southern Chinadenga Territory, Nicaro

22 September, 2027

"Pssst," a heavily armored soldier whispered harshly. His hands were a flurry of movements, from placing it over his brow to signal that he saw the enemy, to holding up a fist to signal that they were company-sized. Another soldier, wearing similar armor, nodded. The third one just watched. His garb looked more local and far less protective, with any armoring amounting to a jacket with ceramic inserts.

The one seemingly in command was *Gi'Sargént* Duglas Kameni, a Frommian by birth. Next to him was fellow *Koro Kirim Gi'Sargént* Joris Kaval, a man proud of his "pure" *Dienstadi* lineage. The third one, the one who didn't seem to belong, was Álvaro Dominguez, a local GNFL-sympathizer who had been hired to track the jungle for enemy fighters. He knew the terrain well and he was a skilled tracker, as well as a decent warrior — good enough to have won the respect of the two Macabean operatives. And certainly more competent than the GNFL itself, which was tripping over its shoes in its efforts to clear fractured DRNF forces in the countryside.

Clever and economizing, the enemy — whether DRFN, DRFF, or pirate — had learned to keep out of the way of Macabean air superiority. Aerial bombardment had proven to be devastating in the first two weeks, and even now no local insurgency could match the Macabeans or the GNFL (when they were properly backed by Imperial aircraft). But all smart foes know to use your strengths against you, so they retreated to the dark depths of the rainforest and began to lay ambushes. There was rarely a large force of enemy anymore; they had learned to split up, less they be zeroed-in by artillery or fighter-bombers. And they knew their local areas as well as Dominguez, the tracker, did. Dangerous and deadly, GNLF forces were struggling to cope with what had turned into an insurgency. As Macabean trained as they were, the Liberation Front was still far from an effective fighting force. Thus, the *Koro Kirim* were instructed to do what their allies couldn't — search and destroy hidden

insurgents and insurgent camps.

In that vein, Kameni and the other two men were scouting a trail that Dominguez had picked up the day prior. They had moved south in that time and Kameni estimated that they had already reached northern Chinadenga territory. Here, the recent fighting had been the worst. The Macabean presence, outside special forces and military advisers with the GNLF, was still light and it was focused more so on holding a line that cut along the Samoza Cartel's northern border.

And they had finally found their prey. Through large, tear-dropped shaped palm leaves Kameni could see an encampment of perhaps one hundred and fifty enemy fighters.

Tracking them down hadn't been easy. They first picked up their trail at the village of Corazamuelas, in southern DRFN territory, where this same enemy had ambushed a a GNLF truck convoy. Despite the convoy having been escorted by a platoon of GNLF Nakil 1A1s, the Chinadenga raid had rattled them up and inflicted heavy casualties. Kameni had seen the burning wreck of one of the Nakils himself. In any case, they followed the pirates south, on thick, muddy roads and through unforgiving terrain, losing their scent several times along the way. But just like this moment, they always managed to stumble back to them. Rare was it to find so many enemy fighters in one place, but apparently, they felt strong enough in their home territory to reconvene — most likely to plan their next raid. It was a prize Kameni would not let escape. He signaled with his hands some more and then fell onto his belly, after which he began to climb over a short a berm that crawled with large, ugly insects and slithering snakes.

More foolish men may have tried to take the insurgent force by fire on their lonesome. Kameni knew better. Even *Koro Kirim* bled, even *Koro Kirim* died. Besides, all the better if the enemy didn't know he was here. Instead, he'd call in the big guns. To do that, he slowly and quietly took off his pack and slipped out from within what looked like a hardened laptop.

Before he could open it, a bird cawed right behind him and he froze. Kaval was signaling him. He could see some of the heads in the camp lift up at the noise; this late at night few birds sang.

Although he couldn't see where they were coming from, he suddenly began to hear footsteps moving through the area. It had rained recently and the floors were wet, thus one's boots had a tendency of being sucked in and making a 'pluck' sound every time they were lifted from the mud. As he waited there, wondering if they had been busted, the noise of footsteps got closer. Just then, as it always did in the most inopportune moments, his nose began to itch and it took everything he had not to scratch it. Even with all the training and experience under his belt, even with all the dangerous and difficult firefights he had been in, bad itches at bad times were still the toughest thing about the *Ejermacht*.

The footsteps continued to come closer and closer until there was a movement that Kameni saw from the corner of his eye and a subsequent grunt. Then there was the sound of bodies hitting the floor, but no gunfire — thank goodness. After a minute or so, the noises stopped and the night fell to calmness again.

"Enemy patrol. Four of 'em." Kameni almost jumped out of his skin. He hadn't even noticed Kaval creeping up to him until the man had spoken. A *very good* soldier, Kaval. In his right hand was his knife, dripping with flesh blood, with more on his arms and hands. His rifle was still on his back. Rifles were overrated, anyways. "Got 'em before they knew we was here. Poor fuggers didn't see it coming." He stopped to look at the enemy that lay less than two hundred meters away, then continued, "We've been scoutin' them for the past three hours, this is the third patrol we've seen so far. My guess is that we have about thirty minutes to do what we need to do. Otherwise, I reckon they'll be missing that patrol and best we take care of 'em before they start asking questions. Anyways, I'll leave you to it. Dominguez almost shit his pants back there, so I should check up on him."

Kameni grunted and flipped open the laptop. Its screen was so dim that barely any light was emitted. The *Gi'Sargént* was wearing eyewear that allowed him to read the computer, without needing the light that would give away his

position. Soon enough, a barely visible red laser shot through the brush to land directly on the trunk of a tree around which sat four insurgents sleeping.

Some of the pirates were more awake than others and some had started to wander closer to Kameni's position in an attempt to discover what had made the noises they had heard. They moved forward cautiously. Perhaps they didn't know there were Macabean soldiers staring at them, but this forest housed dangerous animals and poisonous snakes. One wrong step and you could be twitching on the floor as the venom of a *Taramaná* seeped into your blood stream and moved up to your lungs and brain. Still, the enemy was approaching. Kameni silently prayed for the cavalry to arrive soon.

Kaval had apparently seen the same thing, for he finally whipped his rifle off his back and into his arms. He pointed it down range, taking one of the militants in his sights. "I fire at 50 meters," he said in a tone that made a whisper seem loud.

"You fire when I give the order," Kameni whispered back.

The situation persisted like this for a long moment. At times, the approaching gunfighters would stop to look at each other, shouting what sounded like commands back-and-forth. Then they would continue stepping forward. "What are they saying?" Kameni asked their tracker at one point.

"One is saying that they should give up. It was nothing," replied Dominguez, in a low, hushed, but shaky voice. "But, another said he heard men rustle around."

Perhaps ten minutes went by and by then about twenty or so combatants were within one hundred meters of Kameni, Kaval, and Dominguez. All three of them had their rifles at the ready now, although not yet chambered, less the sound of the bolt sliding back and forth alert their prey. Kaval had his left hand in a fist around the bolt's small lever, ready to pull it back at a moment's notice and begin to fire. The enemy stopped again for a few minutes, then kept moving forward. *What are they looking for?* wondered Kameni. Then, from back in the camp, came another shout. This time it was louder and had a stronger tinge of alarm in it. In front of them, the almost two dozen insurgents suddenly crouched down farther and brought their rifles to the ready, scanning everything around them in a wide arc. They were soon not much over 50 meters away.

Kameni could almost smell the stench of their sweat. In a flurry of hand signals, the *Gi'Sargént* told his partner to wait for the order and then cover his withdrawal back behind the berm. He'd leave the laptop in place, hoping that the enemy wouldn't find it until their little present had arrived. His HUD read 46 meters — the pirates were upon them.

The *Gi'Sargént* gave the order to fire.

Two clicks of rounds being chambered echoed through a rainforest that had fallen into silent anticipation for what was about to erupt. Seconds later, the gunfire started. As the two men with him opened fire, Kameni scrambled back toward them, almost rolling down the berm. Nearby hits flung moist, worm-ridden dirt into his face. It was only seconds later that he had his own rifle up and ready, squeezing the trigger to gun down the 20 militants who had been caught in their crossfire. By the time they realized what they had discovered, the enemy was dead or wounded. Some groaned in agony, others died without making a noise.

In the camp, the pirates were in as much disarray as their now-deceased brethren had been. Thinking that the Macabeans or GNLFF had come in great numbers, they started to withdraw. A bad thing that, because if they got away then Kameni and his men would have to chase after them again. Chances were, the enemy wasn't going to make the same mistake twice. No, they had to eliminate them now, here.

In the distance, thunder rumbled, or that at least was what it sounded like. Kameni knew that sound. If whatever that was had been a hundred kilometers away a second before, it was now screeching overhead. The pirates broke into a rout, running through twisted branches and sneaky roots, but there was not much time before an explosion shook the grounds. The rainforest burst into bright colors as trees lit on fire and burned down. Those who had not died

were crawling about, many missing legs and arms. One of them was struck only but shrapnel, but it had hit him in the jewels. He sat there, his back to a tree, staring into a distance, hoping that death was near. None of his friends around him pay any attention, regardless. They were too busy with their own pains or they were still running. The *Koro Kirim* fired at them as they escaped, killing three or four in their retreat.

Dominguez had curled up. The poor guy hadn't expected this! No matter, he had done well on his first mission. Kameni would use him again.

Sixty-four pirates were confirmed dead. There must have been as many wounded, but they were nowhere to be found once a larger *Koro Kirim* unit was transported in by means of tilt-rotor. Still, it was a good tally. As the reinforcements were counting bodies, the two operatives and their tracker were already on the trace for more foes to destroy.

[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 Tue Aug 08, 2017 6:07 am, edited 3 times in total.

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The Scandinavians
Senator

Posts: 4948
Founded: Oct 09, 2004
Capitalizt

by [The Scandinavians](#) » Fri Aug 04, 2017 3:37 pm



*"Who is he to command us!", the haughty burghers of Neadresgad proclaimed.
We are all born free, each of us given liberties which cannot be constrained.*

*We have seized your agents of righteous fire,
In its shadow our new lands never tire,*

*Born from the dres'Erid, or born amongst those are low,
Each of us is made to live beyond the place we were born to know.*

*Without caring for thought they believed themselves safe,
Yet in the end did they see that Neadresgad was little more than a waif.*

*The price for their pride came in the fire they sought to control turning upon
them,*

*By the hand of the Almighty were they laid low and their rebellion brought
only mayhem."*

(The Lament of Neadresgad)

Valdra, Imperial Advisory Body on Internal Affairs

Lord ap Erid, the imperial chancellor, was standing before the assembly which had been called to draft new legislation in order counteract treasonous elements within the Empire. "My lords, for the last century the sovereignty of the Scandinavian Empire has been consistently undermined by the machinations of international commercialism which seeks to destroy all the independent nations of the world so that it can make liberal capitalism the sole ruling order. With the aid of the wannabe plutocrats within our own dominion the ideology of the liberals sought to infect the minds of our people by first aiming to convert the Crown Prince Fenric to their fold. They hoped to be able to turn the greatest foe to their plans to their cause. However, by the grace of the Almighty, where their designs torn asunder by the iron will of our current regent for when he took over the reigns of the Empire did he purge all the cowards, vermin, usurers, and traitors who were enthralled to their degenerate agenda.

These points ultimately require us to utterly crush the mechanisms under which commercialism to take root within the sanctified lands of the dres'Erid. We must accept that a great effort must be to stamp out their infection. We must understand that this not the heresy of a few peasants which can be recruited, but rather is something which has touched the highest of lords at times.

The need to address the subversion presented by such elements therefore demands that we now act before the enemy lands upon our shores and engenders such groups to support them. In order to do this I hereby propose that the advisory board fully endorse the proposed provisions which will certainly help enact the needed policies to keep our nation secure during this time of tribulation. Additionally, I might that if we fail to act the Crown Prince will be forced to act unilaterally on the matter.

1. The Inquisition shall immediately begin to investigate all activities related to usury and heretical commercial activities.
2. Unauthorized people found consorting with non-allied foreigners shall be tried for treason and heresy.
3. There shall be an immediate renewal of all traditional judicial practices which uphold the ancestral practices of the order of Erid.
4. All businesses will be required to submit to morality reviews.
5. Every prostitute shall be enslaved for they have proven they lack the willpower to remain free.
6. All pimps, drug dealers, loansharks, distributors of heresy, foreign sympathizers, and assorted vermin are liable for execution due to their treasonous actions during a period of war.
7. Public cries for peace whilst the enemy is still attacking the sovereign soil of our Empire can be considered treason.
8. All unauthorized persons who attempt to access restricted data shall be tried as heretics and traitors.

With this I conclude the proposal to this body and I ask all persons who agree I ask that you respond with the traditional refrains. Those who do not should simply remain quite. Christus!"

"Invictus."

"Erid!"

"Invictus."

"Dres'erid!"

"Invictus!"

"Excellent the proposal carries and shall be sent to Crown Prince Fenric within an hour. Thank you for your time my lords."

Last edited by [The Scandinvans](#) on Fri Aug 04, 2017 3:38 pm, edited 2 times 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



Imbrinium
Diplomat

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

by [Imbrinium](#) » Wed Aug 16, 2017 7:15 pm

QUOTE

It had been four days since four fleets and a support fleet peeled away from the main Imbrinium effort in this war. The TGT high command had sent down a mission to invade and secure three islands north of the main effort.

Drones and recce flights had some hunting lodges and cabins and some small docks but nothing much else. The plan was to have two divisions invade each island and search and destroy anyone living on the islands.

The weather was playing the karma card the sea state was at three and there was a moderate rain falling, while not bothered by the weather as it was the ride in for the marines would be a rocky one closed inside their landing tracks. There wasn't a need to prep the shores or islands due to the lack of having no or little civilian or military personnel on the islands.

One by one the tracked landing craft and other landing craft made their bumpy

way toward their beaches, the beaches where dark there wasn't any lights no nothing. Shortly after the landing craft left the fleet the air mobile units loaded and took off toward their landing zones. They flew a little higher than they would've normally do to it being night and raining. This operation along with the other two operations were given their operational names.

"The Island of the Wights" Operation Fish Hook

"The Island of Game" Operation Lion Hunt

"Isle of the Southern Sun" Operation Rabbit Hunt

These operations were all underway at the same time involving the 103rd, 104th, 70th, 73rd, 60th, 61st and 54th, 55th Marine divisions with the 54th and 55th being in reserve in the just in case.

As the first elements of the air mobile units of the 70th and 73rd Marine division made land fall and approached their landing zones there was still no enemy contacts. The first to hit the LZs where security and engineers to make the landing zones long and wider to make sure there was room to move once more troops hit the ground.

The Navy's LSTs moved in ahead of the landing craft three for each beach as these hit the first and their ramps dropped and the assault engineering vehicles made their way onto the beach. These specialized tanks and armored vehicles cleared the beaches of any mines and or other obstacles. Right behind them where the tracked landing craft rolling up to the edge of the beach and dropped their ramps and the marines exited and rushed to setup a defensive/offensive line till more marines have landed.

As soon as the tracked landing craft dropped their troops they moved to the sides and headed back to the ship to reload more marines. The next to hit the beach where the general and heavy landing craft dropping off more marines and armor to the beach to expand and strengthen the lines.

The LST lowered their rear ramps and also dropped their floating dock pieces to extend the rear ramp and begin a causeway behind the ships. The LST's heavy support weapons stood by in case they were needed. Above attack helicopters and aircraft patrolled looking for any enemy response.

H+4

Just four hours after the first troops landed, the sun was coming up still under a gray sky and rain, the marines already had most of their divisions ashore and were moving toward the LZs to close in the area between the beachhead and the landing zones as one.

Patrols were moving out of the controlled sectors to recce the area around them. The causeways were setup and supplies and operational equipment was flowing to shore, there were some roads most gravel or dirt being hard to travel for some 70ton tanks. The engineers had their work cut out for them building and improving the roads as the forces moved out from the beach head.

The landing zones where the tripwire but with a number of marines there it would be a hard fought battle if they were attacked.

HMS Spadefish

HMS Spadefish was the operations flagship for the over all operation. At the end of the first day, everything had gone smoothly only a handful of casualties all non-combat related. All three beachheads where secure no enemy contact and units were fanning out into their missions to secure the islands. This mission was small compared to the over all operation, some in command wondered if it was worth it risking a landing for no gain with so far nothing reported on the islands.

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



Ghant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

by Ghant » Sun Sep 10, 2017 4:47 pm

QUOTE

THE ROUGHER THE SEAS

"Some pirates achieved immortality by great deeds of cruelty or derring-do. Some achieved immortality by amassing great wealth. But the captain had long ago decided that he would, on the whole, prefer to achieve immortality by not dying." — Terry Pratchett, The Color of Magic

Tiwanaku, Territory of Thechuanacu

August 2025: Voyage to Dienghant

(Co-written with [the Macabees](#))

The city lay in absolute ruins. Tall buildings sprawled half-toppled, streets were twisted and churned as if something had dragged an anchor through them, and there was still the stink of death in the air. Tiwanaku was as desolate as it was empty, as most of the surviving citizenry was holed up in their homes like turtles hiding in their shells 'til the danger was over. They were lucky to be alive. If Fedor truly had his way, they'd all be put to the sword for testing his patience. He despised disloyalty.

In the end, the city had burned enough. Tiwanaku had endured a long siege, a siege like none other it had ever seen. Towers of smoke still rose toward the sky and suburbs still smoldered, while the wreckage spread as far as the eye could see. Even historic buildings stood in ruin, their walls crumbling and no glass window left intact. It was a surprise that anything still stood, or breathed, at all, given what the city and its people had endured. And it was all the product of three hard years of grim and morbid fighting in which all of those not on your side were the enemy. Artillery had carved the city up like a rifle rips into a man, drilling into his organs and causing him to slowly bleed out. Much like that, Tiwanaku eventually fell. Of course, the civilians were to pay the worst price of all.

Riding between the charred ruins of a once proud and independent pirate city-state were dozens, if not hundreds, of patrols moving up and down the many streets like columns of ants through their hive. The city seemed quiet, but the pirates gave difficulty even in their last desperate throes. Of course, Palenque had already agreed to peace and Tlaloc...well, Tlaloc had already lost whatever once made it pirate. But those who still lived in Tiwanaku no longer had anything to live for, except die with honor by fighting on until they were killed.

Today, though, the city stood quiet.

Fedor arrived that same early morning. After a short flight from North Point, he was taken from a large airbase just west of Tiwanaku to command's new headquarters deep inside the city. The drive was in silence more often than not, broken only occasionally by a military officer pointing out a landmark that now only half-stood. Everyone, including Fedor, was in a

somber mood. Even victory lay on a path fraught with danger. Peace was all too often a larger threat than war. For every leveled building that they passed represented another million *riokmark* that was now owed. Every shattered brick might as well be another debt. This would all have to be rebuilt, the empire's tired armies would have to be paid, and those that the empire had borrowed from during the wars would only hassle the victorious creditor even harder. There is a strange paradox in the nature of public debt. It was only in her darkest hour when the empire, financially impeccable 'til then, borrowed, and soon it became like a drug. Banks financed the conquest of Theohunauac, of course...and then the rebellions. Fedor could have swam in the money he owed, if he had any of it to give.

"Surely, Your Majesty, you don't truly mean to travel *tonight*?" It sounded more like a statement than a question from the mouth of Vorteg Loret, *Lasagos* of *Armiegrup* 'Thoehuanacu.' Fedor had entrusted his with command of operations against the pirates during the war, a decision that came at a great cost, in the form of both gold and life. Fedor's grandfather, the great Jonak, had always said, 'A bloody victory is no victory at all.' A bloody victory is what Fedor got in this war. Thanks to Loret.

"I do," was all that Fedor said in return.

Loret's eyes went wide with incredulity. "What of the Triumph?" he said, any attempt to hide exasperation on his part a failed one. Of course, that was what he was worried about. Truth be told, Fedor had guessed it. Loret was a vain man, after all. A man who thought himself the victor, above all others. The man who sought a Triumph, not for the glory of his emperor, but for his own. Loret would one day die, Fedor would see to it.

That day was not to be this one. As they conversated, their convoy rolled through the broad, desolate avenue that snaked down the middle of the mutilated city. The land was black as far as the eye could see, something not helped by the natural tint of the armored glass that protected them from an enemy's bullet. It was a ghastly site. In some part of him, it made Fedor want to heave. So much death, so much destruction, and for what? For power. "There shall be no Triumph for this...victory." He said the last word with distaste, and he puckered his mouth as if chewing a bitter herb. "Our dead deserve more respect, don't you think?" The *lasagos* attempted to get a word in, but Fedor spoke right over him, "Your judgment in this war was...lacking. But, alas, you have completed the task. For your service, you shall receive a retirement fit for a great general. That I promise, and I am a man of my word."

"Retirement?" asked Loret, voice gruff.

"Indeed. As of the moment we arrive at your headquarters, *Lasagos*. Congratulations." There was a wicked smile on Fedor's face. "By the way," he said, "it would have done you well to say Your Majesty a bit more often...alas, we cannot look back now, only towards the future. And your future is that of a wealthy farm owner and an imperial title, *Varos del Manzanar*."

Loret looked at the emperor as if he couldn't believe

what was being said. "And what if I refuse?" He stared a cornered resilience

Fedor broke into a loud, deep laugh. He went on for some time, coming into a chuckle before giving a great big sigh. "Don't be foolish, *lasagos*. When the emperor says you are retired, you are retired. Is it not a good offer? Is a noble title not prestigious? And is ample land not generous?"

"They are, Your Majesty," Loret said resignedly, after a few seconds of pause.

Minutes of silence came and with some awkwardness, although perhaps more so for the commander than for the emperor. Fedor seemed to have forgotten about the man entirely, looking through the vehicle windows at the desolation around them. Until, suddenly, Loret spoke, "I know your grandfather, you know. I fought with him during the finals wars. He was a brilliant military commander and a wise leader. It was an honor to fight with him. I see a lot of him in you, Your Majesty. But there's something more to you, something more feral and more dangerous. I fear that should you not tame it you will get us into more trouble than we can struggle to handle. Do you know what I speak of, Your Majesty?" He looked at him with tight eyes.

"And what is it that you see in me?" Fedor's blue eyes gazed coldly at the other man like two daggers made of ice.

"Fury, Your Majesty. Fury."

Fedor turned his head to look back out the tinted window. That Tiwanaku was once beautiful was clear to see, the jagged segments of grand façades and collapsed fluted pillars laying there like fallen giants. Whatever color they were originally was now largely faded and, in most cases, charred black. The incessant barrage and consequent fires were all too effective at utter devastation, although not as effective in forcing the surrender as one would think given the extent of the damage. "It seems my fury has come at great expense to us. I will have to instruct my next general to temper my orders when interpreting them through their orders." That last was a clear barb.

"You say you knew my grandfather," said Fedor, not giving Lerot an opportunity to respond. "I don't believe he ever spoke to me about you, although you will forgive me if I have forgotten over the years. Truth be told, my grandfather told me very little of his wars, he didn't much like to talk about those things. My father, of course, never liked to talk very much at all."

The *lasagos* nodded. "I fought with him, I did not say I knew him. Still, I know he spoke very little, at least to us troops — especially to us troops, I should say. And, mind you, at this time, I was merely a young *aftleutnant*, fresh out of officers' school. Hardly a rank a king pays much attention to. But I fought under armies he commanded for the better part of almost a decade. He was a wise man who always listened to the council of his generals and he rarely put a wrong step forward. One could see the raw intelligence of his mind through sharp, wrinkled eyes. He was all you expect of a man who inherited a small kingdom and turned it into an empire. Everything

and more. You know,” finished Loret, “I met you when you were but a wee child. You must not remember.”

Fedor shook his head.

“You were no older than five,” continued the *lasagos*. “The Battle of Kabaalg had just ended and the King had your father bring you to witness the carnage. I remember because I was the unlucky, idle-looking officer whom he pointed at and issued the orders to. It was I who went to retrieve you from the camp you were at. ‘He must be prepared for the responsibilities to come,’ he had said. I remember you pointing at the carcass of a burned out enemy tank in wide-eyed wonder. The dead across the field did not seem to bother you. At the time, I thought you a peculiar child.” He laughed at that, although Fedor seemed not to find it funny. He turned serious, “You asked all the right questions, even for that age. Like I said, I see a lot of your grandfather in you. Of course, I see a lot of your father, too — his anger. The balance in you between wisdom and fury, that comes from your dear mother; may her soul have returned to the earth. She was a fiery woman. Your father was not quite the same after her death.”

Silence came after, as Fedor stared at the desolate landscape. Remember his mother always came hard. She did not survive long enough to get to know him; indeed, she had died giving birth to him. He had been told, and so he had come, to believe that he was responsible. And although he had come to terms with that belief and he claimed it no longer mattered, when she was brought up it inevitably left him sore.

Neither did he enjoy being compared to his father, the man who betrayed his own son. Like his mother, his father too fell at the hands of Fedor. With an axe, the son beheaded the usurper. It rolled across the wooden platform as soon as it fell, falling off the ledge and onto the open space between the stage and the shocked, silent crowd. His mother had died purely out of Fate, but his father’s demise was Willed. The sacrifice would go on to win him The war — a war that he should have lost, outnumbered on all sides as he had been. In his head, he replayed the fall of the axe’s shining silver blade. He could feel the adrenaline pump through his veins as if he were standing there all over again. Sometimes the memory still haunted him in his nightmares.

“You know,” said Loret, after all, “you should reconsider hosting the Triumph, Your Majesty. Surely, you...and the men deserve recognition for this great victory. Riding with your general, the man who extended your Will to the battlefield. The People know no greater glory.” If he wasn’t licking his lips he must have been trying very hard not to, at least that was the impression Fedor got.

“I tire of you.” Fedor tapped on the glass pane between his head and the driver in the front cabin, just on the other side of the glass. The driver’s companion looked back, gave a start, and tapped his comrade on the arm. The vehicle came to a stop and with it the rest of the convoy. Very quickly, the second man in the cabin had exited through his door to open the hatch that led to carriage of the emperor’s HIM-TAC. “Rid him for me,” was enough for the soldier to grab his protesting once-general by

the collar and drag him out of the vehicle. Loret stopped fighting and tried to regain any semblance of composure and serenity that he had had only moments before. "Congratulations on your retirement, commander," were his last words to the *lasagos*. "Soldier, see him out of the city to the airbase from where we came. He is to take the first flight to Levante, do you understand?"

"Yes, Your Imperial Majesty." The soldier saluted and then gently took the field marshal away, putting him in the vehicle behind.

The sound of not-too-distant gunfire, most likely some firefight that had erupted in a nearby neighborhood, was shut out once the hatch was closed once again. Everything in its place, the convoy rolled forward again. The HIM-TAC with the commander turned around and with it followed another like-vehicle, but the rest moved on with the emperor. Far ahead, several groups of mine-roller-sporting vehicles escorted by heavy-gun infantry fighting vehicles cleared the way. Fedor looked at his phone but saw that it still carried no signal. They said the area was thoroughly jammed. To block radio-signal-detonated explosives, they said.

For all the apparent danger, Fedor was at peace. He could finally *think*. And so he pondered while they made their way to the far eastern edge of Tiwanaku. As they got closer to their destination, one could see lines of POWs made their way toward the camp. There were a lot more than Fedor expected. He was about to ask the *lasagos* why, only to realize that he had ordered the man out. Oh well. He tapped on the window between him and the crew cabin instead, then made a motion for one of them to slide it open.

The navigator turned around, saw the motion, and slid the middle piece of glass out. "Your Imperial Majesty."

"Where are these POWs from, do you know? Were not all POWs shipped out last week?" The soldier may not know the answer or he may, although he had no reason to. But, rumors always circulated and something as big as last week's deportation would have become known.

Fedor did not turn his head during the exchange. He looked with steady gaze at the rear wall of the HIMTAC's hull, as if unaware that he had even called for the driver's partner.

The soldier's eyes veered to his right. The driver was evidently forcing himself to focus exclusively on the road. Speaking to the emperor was difficult. Fedor had made it so that he was more of a story than something truly tangible, but it made communicating with most people rather difficult. As was evidently the case here. "Uh..." apparently the soldier was afraid of giving the wrong answer. "Uh...um...yes, I do believe that they were taken away by ship, Your Imperial Majesty. These here were captured in recent days," the boy finished, finally.

"So many?" Fedor's voice came out surprised. He mused whether any of his subjects ever thought he could even be surprised.

"Yes, Your Majesty," responded the navigator. "There are still hundreds of them or more in the

suburbs and rubble, waiting and preparing to ambush. Just two days ago we were hit by a *sektón*-sized force of gunmen. Didn't do much damage, luckily."

The emperor did not respond, but merely waved the soldier away. The man closed the sliding window behind him, leaving Fedor to his thoughts again. Tiwanaku had fallen, but not really. Now he was feeling comfortable again about his abrupt decision to retire the *lasagos* prematurely. The field marshal had made a mess of things, and winning the war this way was almost as bad as losing it. Continued violence would make reconstruction hard. At least most of the bad apples had been rounded up and shipped away, although Fedor wondered just how many 'bad apples' had actually been captured. The grey-clad prisoners he saw now looked numerous enough to equip a small, fearsome force. Fedor arched an eyebrow at that thought — his armies were quickly filling with foreign, recently conquered soldiers —, but quickly placed it aside. These pirates had fought too dishonorably to take them in; it would be an insult to the men who lost brothers here.

It was not soon after that they arrived at *Barbakán* 'Prim Tiwanaku.' It was a large base that covered most of the harbor, which was partly intact — that that was overfilled with ships loading and unloading men and equipment. Ships like these had, just over a week ago, taken about two hundred thousand prisoners of war and set sail to Dienghant, which did not know that they were arriving. It would be a surprise, and it was a gamble whether it would be taken well or not. Fedor figured it wouldn't, but that had its advantages too.

The sun was already had already reached its maximum height and he would leave soon, for Degusa. His last hours in Tiwanaku were spent speaking with high-ranking staff, including *Lasago* Loret's staff. He promoted *Vicstrategos* Yor Kalomar, Loret's executive officer, to *Lasagos*, something which was done rarely — but something an emperor could do, as most men believed he could do anything. He did not meet most personally, but rather watched as the general officers talked to the men on the parade grounds. The generals spoke of their glory and what was to come, the rewards they would get for their valiant service to Will, and then pinned the *Nielos* sword on those who didn't already have the medal. Those who did were given the laurel wreath, and the very few who had that were given a diamond-shaped gold piece that went directly below the middle point of the wreath. One could keep earning those pieces as time went on, although very few men earned even one. Those who had that stood there had most likely fought during The War.

All the while Fedor watched with a cold gaze, intensely but without strain. Some men broke discipline and looked up at him. Most had probably never seen him before.

That same night, well into the morning hours of the following day, he left for Degusa under the cover of a starry darkness. His aircraft lifted up beyond the clouds, its outside walls soon ablaze as it sped through the upper atmosphere, and finally it silently ascended into Earth's lower orbit. It would be a short trip. His captain called it 'skipping over the atmosphere.' Whatever it was, they were in Degusa

just as the sun once again started to rise. Fedor had gotten no more than a few hours asleep, but after a quick shower and a change of clothes he washed the tiredness away.

The aircraft burned once again as it descended. Below it, the city of Degusa lay sprawled in all its splendor.

Fedor had been briefed some on his host. An aristocrat, the emperor was a man of culture, and even when he had none he was of the mind to at least cram before making an official visit — his first official visit, no less. So he had one of his many aides brief him during the flight.

Degusa, the capital of the Lordship of Dienghant, was a Free City located on the southern coast of the country, between the Provinces of Orade in the west and Txora in the east. It was an old and sprawling city, but like most of the large cities of Dienghant, it was worn and weathered. The shape of the city was essentially a half-circle, with the flat side being its long coast, which consists of rocky shore broken by segments of sandy beaches. Quays filled natural harbors and easily accessible stretches of coastline.

Somewhere down there the cargo vessel precedent from Tiwanaku had found somewhere to dock and inspectors were shown its contents. They'd stay in the ships until accepted onshore, huddled together half-naked in the cold, gray water that collected in small pools on the steel ceilings dripped on them like a slow torture. The light would be dim and rifle-armed guards around them kept watch, and when time came they'd get their food thrice a day, eating it from a bowl like dogs and their hands cuffed together behind their back. Pirate rebels, it was hard to be a greater kind of scum, and the empire held no sympathy for them. But perhaps there would be salvation in them as a tool toward greater purpose. Perhaps, but it would depend on the Lordship.

As his aircraft descended closer and closer to the surface, he could see the beaches clearly using telescoped cameras that made for 'windows' that allowed to emperor to look in whatever direction he pleased. The beaches consisted of black sand, soft and crunchy, full of shiny midnight-hued stones polished by the rough waves. A giant sloping hill led down to the coastline, with an otherworldly cave to the side. Black birds swarmed above, with basalt columns looking like fists stretching towards them from the sea. Indeed, the rocks protruding from the surface of the water would have been a menace to ancient mariners, and was partially the reason why the city emerged where it did.

Indeed, it emerged so quickly that it seemed to swallow the aircraft whole as it landed on a military airstrip just outside the city. They arrived to null fanfare, as had been requested by the Macabéan emperor. Truth be told, he detested excessive arrival parties and thought them a waste of his time, preferring to get on with it. In that spirit, all that awaited him and his two bodyguards was a small group of Gbantish politicians or bureaucrats and their own security team standing by a string of military vehicles. After the appropriate handshakes, they were off to Castle Degusa, which Fedor had ordered his aide to leave off the brief. He rather experience it himself for the first time, and the things he *had*

heard of it made him all the more excited to see it.

It was not long before the convoy reached the city proper. Its architecture consisted of old, sturdy stone buildings, with cracked facades and walls covered in ivy and vines. Between the buildings the roads were broad, snaking through the city like meandering rivers, lined and divided by trees and shrubs. Garish lighthouses stood vigil upon the cliffs, surrounded by buildings that became larger the further one got away from the coast.

Fedor was told that once upon the time the city was encased within a wall, but over the centuries the walls wore down, turning to ivy covered rubble that were used as property boundaries and climbed upon by children. Great manors sprawled out into the countryside, as did sections of light industry. Even here, the streets were long, winding affairs, lined with old cars and gnarled trees.

Castle Degusa lacked either the magnificence of Imperiala Palace in Ghish or the splendor of Castle Gaztelua in Gholghant, he was told. Yet, Castle Degusa was an incredible fortress, ancient and formidable as any in lands where Ghantar presumed to dwell. It sat upon a hill overlooking the ocean, where a cliff towered above the rocky, treacherous waters below. It surrounded by a great outer wall, tall and thick. The wall consisted of thick slabs of rough black stone packed with sand and gravel, and while they were cracked and partially covered by overgrowth, remained strong. On the side of the wall facing the sea, there was a steep drop down to the sea below.

Within the outer walls were a number of towers, thick and short, and each differently designed from the other, indicating how old they were. Between them was a great grove of trees and a garden. A single paved road led up to the central keep, through the main gate and down the hill all the way to the city. The way was lined with mighty trees, their roots snaking through the ground and occasionally poking through the pavement.

Fedor took it in as he looked through the thick, clear glass windows of his vehicle. Tilting his head up he caught glimpses of the tower spires, where flags and herald-sewn banners fluttered in their many colors, giving a flourishing of color to a blue sky. There were castles strewn across the empire, many of them as grand as this one in their own way, but Castle Degusa still managed to tower imposingly over its city, something few castles still did. "A beautiful palace," he said to no one in particular. His two guards, the only two others in the passenger cabin with him, looked at him. They said nothing, knowing that the emperor was most certainly not speaking to them.

The mighty towers loomed over him now as they onto the castle's grounds and into a courtyard at which the vehicle stopped. "Stay here," he said to the guards. One of them opened the door for him and he stepped out.

The Ghantar that accompanied Fedor from the airport all fanned out into the courtyard, beside the cracked grey steps at the entrance to the central keep. Guards wielding ceremonial spears stood like statues there, with the double doors shut behind them. The doors began to open slowly, and from the

gap emerged a man clad in a rainbow colored rod wielding a white staff. His hair and beard were long and unkempt, and he limped along with the aid of his staff, staggering as he did so. "The Golden Emperor Feodor, I presume," the man said. "Come, the Lord Protector has been expecting you."

With right eyebrow subtly raised, Fedor took in the man who emerged from the opened double doors. With his look and attire, he looked like some kind of wiseman or a pet madman, the lines between the two blurred. The corner of Fedor's mouth curled slightly in a hidden smile. Whatever this man's story, it must be an interesting one. "Aye, that is I. And who might you be?" asked the Macabéan emperor.

The man stood and waited for Feodor to catch up with him, before turning around and limping back into the castle's interior. The back of his robes were so long that they dragged behind him, all the way down the steps, sliding across stone and dirt alike. "They call me Basokobegia. I am the seneschal of this stronghold...among other things," he spoke monotone, keeping his eyes ahead of him.

The interior of the great hall was dark and drab, lit by a combination of burning braziers along the walls and faded chandeliers dangling from the ceiling. The windows were narrow slits flanked by hanging banners and tapestries of bygone days, krakens and sea monsters and other great beasts of the depths. The upper balcony of the great hall was empty, though the procession of courtiers and retainers that arrived with Feodor began to find their way up by sets of stairs on either side of the hall. On the ground, a single drab green rug ran the length, from the double doored entrance to the throne hall just beyond the great hall.

With hands clasped behind his back, the emperor followed. He looked at the walls around him, smiling. "Seneschal," he said, after some time, the word foreign in his mouth. Fedor's aide had briefed him on the role of the seneschal, a chief administrator of sorts. "I assume it is you who I should praise for the upkeep of this castle. It is a truly spectacular thing, even if it's a bit...medieval for my taste, at least as far as being a living quarters and all. But don't mind me, my predecessors have spoiled me. In my lands, there are men of power who live in the same city quarters as do their subjects. Can you believe that? One must appreciate that at least the Lord Protector has taste. And, without doubt, this is as mighty as any castle comes." He looked up at plain ceilings as they walked through the hall. "If I may ask, when was the first tower built?"

The Seneschal was silent for a minute after the Golden Emperor finished speaking, merely plodding along the long green rug that ran the length of the great hall. Then he spoke, deliberately and astutely. "It is a fortress that has seen better days, like most of the country. I do what I can to keep it from falling apart." Basokobegia paused in speech for a moment before continuing. "The first tower was built four thousand years ago, or three, depending on the sources. They are not wholly reliable. It is mostly empty now, though the dungeons beneath it have seen more heavy use in recent decades."

"Change can be a cruel mistress," replied Fedor, almost absent-mindedly. He was apparently satisfied

with his line of inquiry, because he left it at that and followed the Seneschal in silence.

“So can stagnation.” The guards standing before the next set of doors opened them with hefty heaves, and before the Golden Emperor and the Seneschal was another large chamber, though this one was square, and better lit with light fixtures on the walls. The upper balcony continued here, supported by thick, squat columns.

At the back of the room was a lone seat of old, carved stone. Upon it sat an old man, large and rotund, dressed in dark green robes wearing a bronze crown in the visage of entangled roots. His hair was a wispy blonde, fair and faint and only barely covering a bald spot. His beard was cut short, only long enough to cover the fat folds of his neck and chin. With beady eyes, one green and one blue, he stared down at the Seneschal and the Golden Emperor.

The Seneschal bowed. “My lord, may I present the Golden Emperor Feodor.” Then, turning to the Emperor, he said, “may I present Balabar Bordugas, Lord Protector of Dienghant.”

The man did not seem the type of ruler Fedor had grown up to know. His grandfather, the great Jonak I, had been a large man, but tall and strong, a man accustomed to battle. Over six feet tall himself, with muscular arms and legs, and a thick neck, Fedor fulfilled his grandfather’s model to the finest detail. This man simply seemed...decadent, as if he were gluttony himself sitting on a throne incapable of satiating the demands of his weight. Was this the inevitable end to all long stories of power and family? Was this where the empire would be headed too? It was all he could do to not curl his nose, but beneath whatever façade of etiquette there was a forming disappointment. Fedor hoped that dialogue would improve his impression of this Balabar Bordugas. “Lord Protector,” he greeted, accompanied by neither a nod nor bow.

“Golden Emperor,” Balabar bellowed out, his booming voice filling the chamber. He gripped the arms of the throne as he leaned back into it. “Jonak’s scion, truthfully. I knew your grandfather...he was a decent man. Those were good days back then, better than the shitshow we have now.”

A *decent* man! Fedor’s face remained a parable of calm. “Those were better times, indeed. Of peace. Stability...tyranny. I suppose it would depend on who you’d ask, but truth be told, things are not so bad now either. Not for me, at least.” Of course, the truth was quite different. There were creditors collecting at his doorstep and the imperial treasury was worse than empty. A parable of calm.

Balabar frowned. “Did you come all this way to gloat, Feodor? Spare me your self-aggrandizing. I hear plenty of that already from the Emperor of Ghant. Almost forty he is, and he still boasts like a child. Is that what you are too?”

Fedor chuckled, but more so to himself than the room. He gave the Lord Protector a blue-eyed gaze edged like a razor of ice, as if analyzing him as if weighing his worthiness. This was the Emperor of the

Golden Throne, He Who is Willed, Conqueror of Safehaven, Guffingford, and Theohuanacu. What room to waste time would a man like this have? "I seek peace," he started, voice deep like a bottomless ravine. "The first ten years of my reign have been marked with war, and I am done with it. But I have found myself embroiled in conflict with pirates, and although I have crushed Tiwanaku and frightened Palenque to peace, I am afraid that these continued spats send the wrong message. You see, the truth is that I could not care less about piracy, as long as they accept my rule where I assert it and they leave my ships alone. Beyond that, I could not be more apathetic." Fedor's lips curled into that half-smile of his once again. "I know full well your domain's history with piracy, as well as its reality. The reason I am here, Balabar, is to make it plain that I see that as no problem."

He paused. Soon it would be time to bring up the...gift, but not yet. First, "Tell me, Lord Protector. How far does the reach of your power *truly* go?"

Balabar leaned forward, and grinned. "The first rule about power, your Majesty, is that it resides where men believe it does. Let's take you and I for instance. The reach of my power only goes as far as I need it to go. Not want...want has nothing to do with it. Need...that's what I concern myself with. I only do the things that I need to do." the Lord Protector wiggled his lips and shifted his bulk to get more comfortable in his seat. "Now, as for you. You demand that they, whoever 'they' might apply to, accept your rule where you assert it, as you so eloquently put it. Well, if men choose not to recognize your assertions, then they don't mean shit, now do they?"

"Political philosophy bores me, Lord Protector," replied Fedor. "It's such an impractical thing, don't you think? The truth of it is, I believe in much the same as you. My power is driven by need as much as yours, although perhaps as a ruler rather than a vassal mine may be a little broader. And, yes, you are right, sometimes my needs trumps those of others. But, such is the nature of the world, no? But let us agree to disagree and move to the meat of the matter. Does your power touch the pirates of Dienghant?"

"Of course it does," Balabar answered candidly. "They are, after all, a means to an end. They address certain needs of our people as it happens, and unfortunately, sometimes the wrong people get caught in the crosshairs. Collateral damage, you see. But, like you said, such is the nature of the world."

"Good then," he said, simply. "For years, I have been fighting piracy. I have subjugated them under my will in central Greater Dienstad twice now, and should they try to rebel again I promise to put them all to the sword. Piracy is a proven losing endeavor when it clashes with my needs, Balabar. But, you know as well as I that so much conflict has taken a toll on the wellbeing of my empire. Wars, after all, cost money, and after so much war how can I possibly have money. That is what you are asking yourself, no? That is the hammer that so many have tried to hold above me. And for a long, lonely time, my advisors had convinced me that the only solution was bankruptcy, something the empire had never

declared before, not ever in its history, even prior to the breaking. I almost believed. I realized, though, that the land I conquered was mine. In the Havenic Territories and Theohuanacu alone, massive tracts of land were being reserved for future settlement by retired soldiers. How much money do you think all that real estate was worth? Trillions, as it turns out.” He smiled. “Convenient, no? But, although I could continue to hunt down piracy in all corners of the region, and most likely with ample support of our neighbors, I would prefer not to. I have much grander plans in mind and I would like to focus my attention on them. I propose an agreement between the Golden Throne and the pirates of Dienghant, and as a starting gift I offer them a hundred thousand scoundrel buccaneers eager to escape my shackles. One hundred thousand fighters to add to their ranks, with their own ships. I will hand over whatever frigates of theirs my navy captured to add to their fleets. But I cannot accept that the ships that represent the mercantile lifeline of my people be attacked without consequence. I am sure that as a ruler yourself you understand that. This goes beyond ego, Lord Protector.”

Balabar rubbed his chin and pursed his lips in thought. “Yes...I suppose you’re right about that...at least. Beyond ego, as you say. You’re certainly a clever man, more clever than your father at least, decent man that he was. I counted him amongst my friends, and I still rue the day that word reached my ears of his untimely demise. Such is the fate of those that oppose you, eh Feodor? The Golden Emperor, come all the way to Dienghant to offer such generous gifts to it’s humble Lord Protector,” he finished speaking with a smirk.

A cold fire burned in Fedor’s crystal-blue eyes at the mention of his father. Father no more. “Heinrik was a weak-minded man who lusted for power but knew not how to earn it. He did not die. He was executed, and there is a difference.” He spoke his words with a hardness that had come with the years, the wars, and the unexpected. “I am not an unreasonable person,” he continued, after some pause. “My enemies have all sought to attack at my weakest moment — damn the deaths they caused — and yet, still, they could not defeat me. Perhaps it speaks more of my enemies than it does of me. My offer, Lord Protector, is no threat, but I think we ought to speak plainly.”

At this, Balabar laughed. “We’ve been speaking plainly, Feodor. Your father lusted for power, sure, but no more than you do now. The only difference is that you don’t have a son old enough to covet his father’s inheritance. Maybe one day when it’s your head on the executioner’s block, you’ll understand what your father felt, eh?” the Lord Protector leaned over the arm of his chair and called out, “fetch us some wine, will you?” turning back to Feodor, he asked, “I hope you like your wine as red as blood. I assume you have a taste for it.”

“You missed my point,” said Fedor, coolly. “It’s not about lusting for power. Most men who earn power lust for it, and those who don’t and simply inherit it tend to waste away. My grandfather understood Heinrik to be the latter of the two. The rightful emperor of the Golden Throne passed the throne to me, and that is that. I earned my crown, not once but twice, and I earn the power that comes to me —

Willed it, in fact. You may argue otherwise, but you would be arguing incorrectly. It seems that you knew my father not very well at all, or perhaps you're a man just like him and that is why you defend him so. Either way, this is a pointless line of argumentation, as my father is dead and no words will bring him back. And I am what I am, and you are what you are, and so if we are speaking plainly as you say, let us forget these games of valueless words about a man who now rules only the dirt packed around his half-decrepit bones. You can turn away my gift, I care not. I will merely have them executed. But let us speak of why I came here, so that I can be on my way. Your dark, hollow halls are beginning to depress me. I wonder what Nathan thinks of what all this has become, if he thinks anything at all of it. Ghantish men are always difficult to pin down." He held his hand up to decline the wine.

"...The Obsidian Emperor has a taste for the ancient," the Lord Protector laughed, before raising his hands. "Yes, the offer a a hundred thousand pirates and a hundred thousand ships. A hundred thousand pirates that will undoubtedly crave vengeance against the Golden Throne, which would be denied to them because if I took them, I'd have to agree to prohibit them from availing themselves of the Golden Throne's assets at sea, and they'd resent me for that, and undoubtedly turn against me and start raiding Dienghant out of spite," Balabar scratched his chin before accepting his glass of red wine. "And so many ships that there aren't enough men to operate them. As I said, Feodor, you are clever, but you're also arrogant. You think that because I'm old and fat that I'm stupid and unassuming. I am neither."

Shooing away the servant that brought him his wine, Balabar turned back to gaze casually at Feodor. "I don't need you to explain to me why you've come here. You came here because you know that due to a complex web of fealties and alliances, that Dienghant is a safe haven for piracy, that we support it and that we condone it. Well, we don't. The fact of the matter is, that piracy in Dienstad and Gholgoth is prevalent as well as pervasive, has been for a long time and will continue to be. They will loot, plunder and pillage where they believe they will have the easiest time doing it and getting away with it. I don't think I'd need to tell you that the easier place to do that in would be Dienghant. It'd be far too easy."

Taking another sip of his wine, Balabar added, "so, in order to keep the pirates from pirating Dienghant, I need to offer incentives for them not to do so. Ports, turning a blind eye, monetary incentives to not attack any ship of Ghant or town in this country. That's the price that has to be paid for peace here, Feodor, and it's a great shame that they've taken a liking to your vast, bloated empire, but it is as you said. Very large, with new, rich lands that have been depopulated, only now being settled, and far flung at that. That there's great hunting grounds for many a pirate, and you're clever enough to try to come to one of the main sources to try to stop it. Unfortunately, it's not that easy, and so we seem to be at impasse," he shrugged. "Better to have someone else's lands looted than mine."

Fedor let out a boisterous laugh that was as loud as a mountain splitting in two. His laughter faded into a

chuckle. "They won't be looting my shores either, believe you me. All they need to see is the conquered city of Tlaloc and its flattened sister, Tiwanaku. They might not see their deaths at all; they surely won't even reach any shores in central Greater Dienstad. Our armies may be smaller than they once were, but the empire is not weak, Lord Protector. And on these matters we have allies, even those who on other concerns would name us enemies. No, I doubt the Golghantish pirates will be any threat to central Greater Dienstad at all." His words sounded matter-of-fact. "That does not mean they are no threat at all, for if they weren't I would not be here, obviously. Your pirates will prey on closer people, those of Mokastana, Haishan, Coltarin,...and if they are especially brave perhaps even Lyras'. Their welfare is not my concern. That of my peoples' trade ships that call to their ports *does*. And I would much sooner gather up my fleets, mobilize my men, and cleanse your island of pirates than pay them a gram of tribute. And don't flash anger at me or give a laugh that's no more than thinly veiled discomfort, you know as well as I that pirates have few allies in this region. This is not Gholgoth, Lord Protector, this is a region well-known for its hate of slavers and other criminals."

The emperor let out a sigh that revealed more than just a little frustration. It was a frustration directed at nothing in particular and everything at once. "I did not come here to make threats nor play this game of wits. And I do not waste my time assuming anyone a fool, just as I would not waste my time with a fool at all. Burn me, perhaps I am the fool. With half the region at war with each other some say I should take advantage of the chaos to bring all pirates to order, just like I have in Theohuanacu. But, with new sights on the horizon I grow weary of fighting mere beggars of the sea and I am ready to offer more than what I may have only a few months ago."

Fedor's eyes, two burning topaz gemstones, were like drills that could bore through a man. "I offer you an alliance and I offer your pirates the use of imperial harbors, following the harbors' rules and subject to imperial law."

"I do not mean to deceive you, Balabar. Should your pirates raid some defenseless coast and spark an invasion of your island lands, the Golden Throne sits far away. But no matter the enemy, no matter the coalition that should rise against you and your pirates, the Golden Throne always commands respect and its word is always worth hearing. I am a good man to have by your side during the worst of times. And knowing the dagger's side of disloyalty painfully well, my word is as good as my gold."

"As for the pirates, friendly ports in the pit of the region would undoubtedly be of great value to them. Without my consent, perhaps they reach as far as Indras' northern golden beaches before my fleets pluck them out of the sea. I tell you, the war" — the Great Dienstadi War, as some called it even as early as now — "has come to a great cost to us all and the seas have become easier to sweep, and if the other nations' warships are preoccupied then that only means that my own simply have free range. It does not have to be admitted here, but your pirates will soon tell you as much the day they try to venture that far. Suppose, though," he said, pausing just for a few seconds before continuing, "if they did not have

to fight their way into the heartland of our archipelago. Suppose if they could sail to it *under escort* of the *Kriermada*, untouched by any vessel not looking to start a war with the Golden Throne. I would imagine that, should they be willing to keep civilized during their stopovers in my harbors, it would open opportunities beyond their dreams, including nearly unhindered access to the west, where they say that wealth piles up like stone at a quarry.”

With an expression of cool aloofness, Balabar pursed his lips once more, and scratched the side of his nose with a sausage-like finger. “The use of Imperial ports, eh? You certainly do catch on quickly, don’t you?” Shifting in his seat, the Lord Protector raised a hand, while the other tilted his wine glass back towards the wall behind his chair. “Use of your Imperial ports, the men and the ships you previously offered, and one more thing.” Balabar leaned forward and drew a heavy breath. “I cannot accept an offer of alliance because that is beyond the scope of my power. For that, you will need to talk to the Obsidian Emperor himself. Yet know this. The greatest threats to our people, other than pirates that cannot be bribed, are the Haize and the Kravenites. Imbrinium is an ally of Ghant, but they alone cannot stand against the Reich should they move against us. So if you wish to be a true friend of the Ghantish, consider that.”

Fedor gave a short nod. “The politics of Gholgoth are no concern to me, at least not until — as you say — Nathan and I have spoken, but this I can say with backing as strong as any guarantee, should the Kraven Reich ever step foot on Greater Dienstadi soil, my armies will be first on the fields to drive them back to whence they came. As for the Haize...” he paused to think. This would be no light statement, for whatever he agreed to here he’d be pledged to be true to and it shape his relationship with Haishan forever. That was how his grandfather had raised him. “As for the Haize, I cannot promise you my support in any war or under any circumstance, but I can agree to using my soldiers to defend your homeland should it ever be under threat of Haize invasion. But I will not defend the actions of your pirates.”

“Privateers,” Balabar laughed. “I tolerate pirates and discourage them from attacking us...I don’t possess them. No, the men under my general purview are privateers, and they are far more principled than pirates,” he explained merrily before drinking down the rest of his wine. “But yes...that shall suffice. Very good, Fedor...very good indeed.”

There was a shadow in the back of the Macabéan emperor’s mind, a lingering doubt. He did not like this Balabar Bordugas very much. But if he could get the Dienghantish pirates to feed on the unimportant coastlines of Firmador, Blood Red Moon, and Qurighar, away from imperial cargo vessels calling port in northeastern Greater Dienstad, all the better. Whether he liked Balabar or not was without consequence. “Yes, very good,” replied Fedor. He outstretched his arm. “Let us shake hands.”

Balabar looked at Fedor’s hand warily, before reaching out his hand and grasping it tightly. “It is done.”

The uneasy clasping of hands went as quickly as it had come. "Until next time, although I pray there never be a next time. Once here is visit enough," said Fedor, who barked a laugh before turning and leaving, each step reverberating off empty, cold stone walls.

"I'm sure there will come a day," the Lord Protector laughed after Feodor, as Seneschal Basokobegia followed the Golden Emperor out. "A day when the Golden Throne must deign respect for the Ghantish, we ancient and proud race of men who, unlike all the rest of the old races, yet persist in a world so eager to cast us into oblivion." the Seneschal limped along on his staff behind Feodor as he tried to catch up beside him, making their way back towards the main entrance of the old castle.

↑↑↑
Ghant
↑↑↑

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



The Scandinavians
Senator

Posts: 4948
Founded: Oct 09, 2004
Capitalist

by [The Scandinavians](#) » Thu Sep 14, 2017 7:38 am



The war had finally come to the shores of the Scandinavian Empire. After years of preparation the system designed to drive off any foreign invader will be tested. After years of relative idleness the Scandinavian people will finally be awoken from their slumber. After years of plotting the scheme of the Sons of Erid will come to fruition and hopefully result in the restoration of the old spirit of their people. A gambit which would have terrible costs even if it went fully according to plan.

The fighting on the front lines would require careful coordination so that the forces of the dres'naalr did not greatly exceed projected levels of force projection. Any massive breakthrough would potentially require the exposure of assets that were best kept hidden until they were needed. The general design being to forge the conflict into one of bitter attrition warfare by maximizing the advantages that the Scandinavians have in their homeland. With superior manpower, much shorter supply lines, advantageous terrain for the defending side, and entrenched defenses it would be quite possible to ensure that the plan would largely be conformed to.

The truth told to those in command and on the front would of course be quite different. The only thing the brass really knew about it was that the Golden Throne had decided to attack the Scandinavian Empire in retaliation for the actions of private slave traders largely operating within the grey market. Therefore the stated reason for the invasion was a farce used as a justification to invade the Glorious Empire of the Scandinavians and hopefully overthrow it. The common man on the ground was told that the actions of the the Golden Throne's forces were done in order to undermine the sovereignty of the Scandinavians and hoped to overthrow their divinely ordained ancestral order.

Each of the positions being promoted were largely true in the eyes of the imperial administration, but were selected to appeal to the general mindset of each group whilst hopefully containing enough information that the picture itself can be viewed as factually incorrect. The normative strategy being to merely go about things by using deliberate omission to prevent sympathy for developing for the other side. Outright fabrications were simply prone to failure to be worth employing.

Regardless, of the motivations the Scandinavian government was willing to use almost any means to eventually drive back the invasion. Any longstanding efforts to occupy and reform Scandinavian land would create an intolerable precedent. For, after all, revolution was so often born from a single ember proving that change was truly possible.

*"I bring the light of truth to those blinded in the darkness,
I offer the proof of salvation to those who know not the way,
I carry the word of true justice to those who have not seen the law,
I walk the path of hardship so that I might show everyone the purity of the
faith,
I live in service to divine will so that all might come to live by it,
I face the spears of the enemy freely as the Almighty embraces all matyrs,
I seek redemption not just for myself but so that humanity might be liberated,
We go to war so that the enemy will understand that none can overcome our
belief."*

-The Way of the Righteous Warrior

Southern Front, Operation Willled Vengeance Response

The current plan was to simply rain fire down on the enemy from the higher positions in the hills. There was a consensus among the generals that there would be an inability to properly contain the enemy merely along the beachfront. The cost of the battle would not be enough to deter the enemy from attempting to probe for weaknesses until they found a breach in the defensive network. However, the Scandinvan defenders would be able to draw the enema into paying a noticeably higher cost than the Scandinvans by compelling them to launch a powerful assault against the coastal fortifications.

The decision to do so was certainly meet with some objections, but the consent was that by drawing them into the rubbus marsh terrain that only the Scandin knew well the Golden Throne's commanders can be drawn into what was effectively a war of attrition that they could not win. Additionally by doing so the power armor advantage possessed by the opposing forces could be negated. The damp soil would make them as knights in plate mail chasing light infantry through a bog in days gone by. Furthermore, in the areas were plains predominated the low cost yet high powered Doomani model tanks that the Scandin employed would be able to reasonably seal any piercing attempt made by the invading dres'nalar. As well, it would compound the supply line issue by forcing them into the interior of the Empire where the locals would provide a means to draw out the enemy further by harassing their frontline support systems.

One of the greater concerns in the command was that slave populations in the region would pose a significant threat as a collaborationist force for the enemy if allowed. Therefore a general withdrawal of all slaves to the more northerly areas had been taking place ever since the last rubbus harvest ended some months earlier. With that done the food supplies had also been moved north and added to the grain stores of the great northern cities which now had well over a year of supplies available for distribution in the event that the worst came to pass.

The situation at the beaches was however going in the favor of the Golden Throne. Despite having a noticeable advantage of fortification, the enemy's advances was capable of doing more damage as most Scandinvan forces were being reserved for the bloody fighting further inland. Though the Scandin were able to get a higher kill to death ratio thanks to their artillery doing their job of hitting the enemy as they landed or as they were attempting to do so.

The combined air and naval superiority enjoyed by Maccabean forces at this point was overwhelming them quite readily. Though the Scandin forces were making a valiant effort to attempt do as much damage as possible on first waves of the attack. Ideally, they would leave a nasty mark on the mindset of their forces and not leave them with any significant boast from having won the initial phase of the war handily.

As the enemy advance began to batter away the defenses the general recall order was given to forces to withdraw into the interior via escape tunnels which had been put into place linking their artillery guns nests to the other side of the hills. There support craft were aiming to create a line of escape for them by attacking any enemy aircraft which advanced to the other side and anti-aircraft emplacements had been prepared to provide cover. With these combined the situation was hoped to be in their favor due to the perception that the Maccabean commanders understood their withdrawl intent and did not consider it worthwhile to fight them over it.

If the enemy choose to immediately engage them the Hellfire Array and the spider drones would be forced to be deployed earlier than hoped. Nonetheless, the Scandinavian leadership was prepared to accept either outcome. They merely did not want to create a perception of knowingly leaving men to their deaths in a maneuver publicly known to be only a stalling operation. After all, morale had to be kept high especially during the opening phases of developing prolonged war.

In the rubbus marshes and plantations the Scandinavian military was preparing for the real fight. A drawn out punching match designed to determine who had the resolve to do whatever was necessary to defeat their foe. There they would show the vile invading dres'nalar the true fury and might of the dres'Erid.

Last edited by [The Scandinavians](#) on Thu Sep 14, 2017 7:40 am, edited 2 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



The Scandinavians
Senator

Posts: 4948
Founded: Oct 09, 2004
Capitalist

by [The Scandinavians](#) » Tue Oct 10, 2017 6:41 am



“ Havensky wrote:

This evening, with the consent of Senate High Council, I instructed Supreme Allied Commander Richard Bexar to begin operations against the Scandinavian island of Vismer. Our forces in cooperation with our allies, shall begin heavy bombardment of the island to render inert its military and economic power.

HRS Orcinus

Task Force Hell - Brimstone Fleet
Off the coast of Vismer, Gholgoth

Commodore James Koji stood center of the darkened command and control room of the *Ravana*-class submarine HRS *Orcinus* and watched the clock on the wall.

Tick tick tick tick tick...

The *Orcinus* and two dozen other *Ravana* class submarines were awaiting the appointed hour of judgement day. The submarines had spread out in a long time of destruction off the coast of Vismer. Their mission had been two fold. The first, was ensure that there were no hidden enemy combatants standing between the Brimstone Fleet and their targets. The second, was to present a nice first wave of strikes against the slaver fortress island.

Tick tick tick tick tick...

The submarine pack carried hundreds of Vishnu cruise missiles which would be lobbed at radar installations, communication towers, power plants, ports, airfields, airports, bridges, fuel depots, and any previously identified missile installations. This would be followed up by the rest of Brimstone Fleet launching their own barrage at enemy army bases and follow-up attacks on ports, airfields, and finally any targets of opportunity that popped up - mainly missile batteries that were expected to fire back at the Brimstone Fleet.

Tick tick tick tick tick...

Koji looked at the clock again and typed into his command console.

All hands, Brimstone Actual: Prepare to launch on my mark, over

Tick Tick Tick Tick Tick..

As the clock on the bulkhead spun around to the top of the hour, Koji typed in the command to fire and held off on hitting send until the pre-ordained time.

Tick Tick Tick Tick Tick...

Ifrit, Ifrit, Ifrit!

The pack of submarines breached the surface of the ocean waves and opened up their missile tubes. Over three hundred cruise missiles launched from their tubes sending green tinted plumes of smoke into the air and over the horizons.

It is true, I confess, that the conscript armies of the Scandivan Empire vastly outnumber our Legionary forces. It is true, that the Sons of Erid and their henchmen have brainwashed and radicalized thousands of fighters for the sole purpose of participating in a scheme to deliberately destabilize the region to serve only their own domestic political goals. Those goals, not to build up a nation that treats everyone with fairness and equality, but instead to unify themselves against a common enemy to galvanize their population to ignore dissenters and perpetuate the abominable institution of slavery.

HRS Unity
Brimstone Fleet
Off the coast of Vismer

The *Unity's* hull crashed through the waves of the busy sea as Brimstone Fleet sailed towards the shores of Vismer. Sea Marshal Marcus Titan stood on the command bridge as the clock ticked down to zero.

Tick tick tick tick tick...

It was unnerving just waiting. Titan has expected the slaver's to send a fleet out to oppose them. However, it had been all quiet so far even as they treaded closer to the their optimal firing range. He turned to look at the flight board.

"Red Squadron, standing by, out."

Sixteen Accipiter fighters led by Lady Thorn launched from the *Independence* broken up into four flights. These would stop any enemy aircraft launched and help the fleet to find SAM batteries and target them for annihilation. This was probably the most dangerous job in the fleet.

"Blue Squadron, standing by, out."

Fourteen Spitfighter aircraft appeared on the board in the ready position. Also launched from the *Independence*, these multirole fighters craft would help intercept enemy aircraft as well as hit any targets of opportunity spotted by Red Squadron.

"Gold Squadron, standing by, out."

Finally, twenty-four Blackheart attack aircraft reported in ready to hit bunkers, command centers, SAM battery locations, and anything else that Red Squadron found that would make an interesting target.

This potent mix of fighters and attack aircraft was repeated by two other aircraft carriers *Liberty* and *Freedom*. They were joined mid-flight by drone squadrons launched from Airship Carriers *Defender* *Defiant*, and *Dauntless*. All together, over two hundred jets were screaming towards the Vismer coast.

"It is also true, that never before have so many nations come together to defend common values and a desire for peace in this region. Together with our brave allies, we will form a southern wall to defend our freedoms

and liberate those under the occupation of the slaver empire.”

Below, three dozen *Naga[i]-class arsenal ships had targets pre-programmed and launch tubes at the ready. Each [i]Naga heavy strike cruiser carried a potent arsenal of 480 Makara and 152 Shingami cruise missiles that would be pointed at military targets throughout the island.*

Tick...tick...tick...tick...

Titan checked the time again.

”Ready the flak screen, let’s get ready.”

The flak screen was a bit of a misnomer. What Titan really meant was the forty-eight *Devil-class battleships* that were riding in the front of the formation. Each one began to tilt themselves to enable all of their railguns to the forward position of the fleet. Their captains began to charge up their railguns in preparation for shooting down any incoming cruise missiles.

Ifrit, Ifrit, Ifrit!

All at once, every offensive ship in the Brimstone fleet began to launch their cruise missiles quickly passing the fighter jets. Their green contrails filling up the sky. On the island of Vismer, a thousand missiles began to fire back at Brimstone.

The battleships aimed their guns in the air and began to fire intercepting rounds. High above them, *Skyan Flying Fortress-class* airships began to power their lasers and tag incoming missiles. The CWS on all vessels began to fill the air with bullets.

The sky had been lit on fire.

To those in the Pudite Resistance, I say unto you... hold fast to hope and stand strong. Regardless of how dark these times may seem, the dawn is coming!

The Scandinavian commanders on Vismer were fairly bemused at the pathetically small force which had been dispatched to attack their island stronghold. In some ways they were grateful for the chance to be able to combat the hated democratic infestation which had taken root within Gholgoth due to the arrival of Havensky. In other areas they were concerned that their enemy might be preparing for a more forceful punch in the near future.

The relatively small force in turn caused the brass to readily conclude that the enemy had no real intention to actually take Vismer. They believed it to be a probing attack of sorts ideally meant to distract attention away from the Scandinavian homeland. However, they had always predicted that when given a chance Havensky would muster a truly significant force to attempt to counter the Glorious Empire with a scheme designed to utilize their fast strike approach which had been used against the Kravenite threat previously. This failure of materialization required an immediate shift in the tactics employed and a turnabout in priorities.

Regardless of the comparative intensity of attack to that of the Golden Throne, the staff of the imperial palace debated the topic in detail. They concluded that it was best to utterly obliterate the forces of Havensky so that they would understand the price of defying the Scandinavians. Added into this was the common belief among Scandin that the Havenites had sponsored a regicide of a prince resulted in the mood being overwhelmingly set against them which in turn compounded the demands to bloody their approaching foes as much as was possible. Such a victory early in the war would raise spirits and punishing Havensky more properly would serve as a good precedent upon which to build.

The message that would be sent to the world be clear. There would be a bloody reckoning for who dared to attempt to invade the lands of the throne of Erid. The land which had been chosen by the Almighty to shelter the people of the new covenant.

The enemies of the faith would be made to pay for their arrogance in daring to

attempt to export their wretched doctrines to the rest of Gholgoth. They would be forced to accept the errors of their doctrine when confronted with the righteous fury of the dres'Erid. The dres'nalar would again be shown their proper place in the Almighty's order.

Vismer, Scandinavian Possession

When the response was quickly authorized from the higher ups that Vismer could respond to the Havensky provocations the island's defensive grid came online in short succession. Their fury would show the dres'nalar the price of defying the dres'Erid. They would be shown that the wages of sin are indeed death.

The five thousand long distance cannon arrays of the island with a range of over 200 miles thanks to their rocketed accelerant system and the sheer power of the initial propellant, nominally designed for anti-ship actions, began to hurl shells at the fleet now attacking them. The rounds were directed to target both the ships and the airships that were the enemy's particular fondness, in effect turning the batteries into anti-aircraft emplacements against the grandiose devices. The airships were especially valued targets due to the notion of harming a key aspect of the enemy's martial identity. A type of psychological warfare basically.

The barrage of these batteries would not be a quick affair despite the relatively high cost of the shells compared to normal rounds. There would be a constant rain of hell brought to the enemies of the Empire. They would be forced to pay a high price for daring to even attempt to attack the fortress island of Vismer. An island which played a critical role in the transportation of slaves from Parthia to the rubbus fields of the Scandinavian Empire. A route which required a new blood seal to remind the enemies of the Scandin of the price of daring to defy the Empire and especially to indicate that no efforts to limit its slave trade would be fruitful in the long term.

After the first of the cannon arrays were activated the island's missile defenses went online. The missiles were namely a mixture of low altitude devices designed to fly below 100 yards for most of their journey. Once they reached within 10 kilometers of their targets they would descend or ascend to the proper level to strike then. They however were not the fastest of missiles. They merely could travel at a speed of 1500 kilometers per hour. Nonetheless setting them at a higher threshold than most. A total of 3500 such missiles were launched in the first wave.

With that done, the order was given for the forces of the five million soldiers stationed on the island to enter combat mode and assume battle positions. Though the attack posed no real threat for even establishing as spearhead it still was a situation which was ideally ended in an absolute defeat of the enemy. Therefore orders were given to repel any landing as quickly as possible and that no quarter should be offered save to those who surrendered under their own accord.

The Scandinavian commander of the garrison responded to the broadcast from the enemy with his own by quoting the Book of Erid, "I am the God of war and of peace. I am the god of compassion and of wrath. I am the god of creation and of destruction. I am the god of the beginning and of the ending. I am the god of hopes and of lamentations. I am the god that is everywhere and nowhere. I am the god of your ancestors and your descendants. I am that I am.

Those who would live for me are embraced, those who would preach my word to the world are hallowed, and those who would die for me are redeemed without exception."

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

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