

The dawning sun stretched its long fingers toward Gremantville. The rich red light the last of the dull damp grayness of a quiet night. As the dawn crept over the city it brought with the ground shaking, ear splitting sound of the renewed bombardment that is reducing this grand metropolis into an ashen waste.

Colonel Griff Nox was standing at the shattered viewing port on the blast tower on the northern gate. His head moved slowly from side to side as he took in the view, surveying the progressing destruction with a grim face.

'Surprisingly punctual' he said, quietly

'Sir?' his young aide was surprised at the broken silence.

'I said the greenskins are surprisingly punctual for the scum of the universe' he repeated, looking at the face of his companion as if waiting for an answer. The steely silence was broken by a polite cough from the entrance to the viewing room.

The nodded to his aide who withdrew from the room. He waited until he was sure the young officer had left and called.

'Enter'

'Commissar Jon Koll, Reporting as ordered sir'

The salute was crisp and sharp, as was the ebony black uniform. The colonel felt distinctly grubby in the presence of the commissar. He straightened up and returned the salute.

'Commissar, welcome'

He gestured the officer to the briefing table. Picking a bottle from the table poured two glasses of the dark amber liquid.

'A bit early for Amasec colonel'

The commissar chided gently.

'Quite my dear commissar' came the reply.

Once the commissar took the glass Griff picked up a dataslate and activated it handing it to the commissar.

The commissar scanned the contents. The colonel saw his eyes widen and the sharp intake of breath was cut short by quickly taking a drink from the glass. The commissar looked up at the colonel who raised his glass in salute.

'Now read the rest' he said, turning to look out the view port again.

The colonel knew that commissar had finished reading the dataslate when he appeared beside him with the bottle of Amasec in his hand. Griff allowed him to refill his glass.

'Your assessment is correct, colonel' the commissar said quietly 'Which option have you chosen'

'I cannot surrender the city, to disperse and continue the fight requires fuel supplies I never had to begin with, so that that leaves a fight to the finish or until we are relieved. Which with the greenies in control of the orbitals there will be no relief.'

The commissar nodded. The colonel smiled and raised his glass.

'May the emperor guide and protect us'

The commissar raised his glass and both drank.