————CHAPTER TWO————

–BRIEFING, DAY TWO–

Jekotian High Command, Ronan, Southern Wing
June 29th, 2985

"Ah, excellent, I trust you are well and up to speed now, Borden?"

"Yes, sir. The freezer burn was minor, but medics quickly treated it. I spent an hour on the range, and an hour in the gym. I was then briefed on this 'Operation TOVR' proposal." Borden replied, grinning. Patterson could tell he was excited about his upcoming missions.

"Good, now, if you will please follow me, we have a meeting to attend in conference room five," replied Patterson.

The two walked for a few minutes, in a silence broken only by shouting in passed conference rooms, and the hum of recessed projectors. After two minutes, the silence was broken by a sharp voice over the communications network recessed in the ceiling.

"High Commander Patterson and Sergeant Borden, please report to conference room five, your late."

"Ah, don't worry about her," Patterson told Borden with a chuckle, "she's always been a nag. Has something to complain about even when a persons on time. Excellent receptionist though. No idea how she gets through all that paperwork."

Soon after, Borden asks Patterson,

"I'm sorry, sir, but what is the date? It seems everyone has been instructed not to tell me, no one would answer while I was training," Borden asked.

"Ah, I suppose you would find out on your own anyway. I'm sorry Borden; it's been sixteen years, your family, their dead. Killed by a Brenodi bombing run. They hit the entire city of Emin. It's nothing but a crater now."

Just as abruptly as the topic came up, Borden had collapsed on the floor sobbing, shaking, cursing. Patterson knelt down beside him, patted Borden on the back, and said,

"It's not your fault. Nothing could be done. They flew in high, above radar range, and used satellite guided bombs. No one could do anything. I hope it's of some solace, a squadron of Vulture pilots took out the bombers before they re-entered Brenodi air space. None of the bombers survived. They paid dearly for their horrendous attack on civilians," Patterson explained, "but not dearly enough."

"She was only two. It would have been her eighteenth birthday in two weeks. I never even got to see her. Only pictures," Borden said as he broke down.

Minutes passed in silence, the only disturbance being over the communication network, another reminder that they were late. This time Patterson replied,

"Oh shut up! Maybe you should try surveillance for once, and see to what's going on before you harass someone. Sergeant Borden needs some time to himself, so just be quiet!"

The receptionist abruptly shut off her microphone, and went back to her paperwork.

“Come on now, your strong, give an old man a hand. I can’t lift the weight of both of us,” he chuckled. Borden looked up and smiled. He was cheerful again, for now.

“I feel sorry for the first Brenodi soldier that gets to meet you, he probably wont even have enough time to see your face.” continued Patterson, “I trust your ready now for the operation ahead?”

“Yes, sir,” Borden replied with a big smile, “and your right, the first Brenodi I encounter will only have enough time to see his finger get shot off before I finish him,” he said with a somewhat sickening grin. Patterson sighed and thought, “*He may be the best we have, but he scares the shit out of even me sometimes. The man’s got spirit though. He might just make this operation work.”*

“Again, thank you all for being here today. A quick refresher before we begin: we left off yesterday with the task of unit requisition. Would everyone please report on what they have been able to allocate for this operation,” stated Patterson. A tall thin woman, Patterson vaguely remembered from his days at the academy, stood, clipboard in hand, and began. In a few moments, for Patterson, it clicked. She was the Lieutenant Commander of Naval Defence, Tisha Breckyard.

“I regret to inform everyone that we cannot afford to allocate as many naval resources as requested. Recent increases in Brenodi sea-going aircraft has greatly increased the need for oceanic anti-air defences. If we withdraw too many ships we will have bombers and dropships hitting the border and the mainland as if there was a worm hole to the heart of our nation. We must keep at least sixty-two percent of our current anti-air equipped warships where they are now, or risk exposing our entire nation to the rage of Brenodi air support. We are, however, in the process of readying the other thirty-eight percent of the fleet. Food stores will be fully stocked on all vessels by weeks end, and munitions are in transport. Across all vessels involved, we will be at full crew and operational capacity in two weeks. We also have three dry docks running at double capacity finishing new Raven Spear warships.

“For anyone not familiar with the work of the Spear Point Military Corporation, they have been pushing and innovating our military technology for years. While their works are few, they have openly shared all their research and blueprints with Jekotian corporations and government for years, allowing mass production and cross-corporation development and refinement. The result has always been new cutting-edge technology with unprecedented efficiency. Their latest work, the Raven Spear Heavy Support Carrier, is in its own class.

“Never before has a ship of this size been created without severe handicaps on mobility and speed. Ten of them side by side could potentially cover a quarter of Ronan. They can carry and transport over two-hundred thousand tons of munitions, crew, arms, armour, aircraft, and small water craft. They are, in essence, aquatic military encampments. Their armament consists of five 131mm anti-air flak-batteries; six 200mm heavy artillery cannons for both ship-to-ship warfare and extreme range artillery support; eight 74mm rotary cannons, four along the port side and four along the starboard side, for point defence; precision-guided five-kilogram depth-charges; five missile racks, each holding seven modular missiles launchers; and two twin-linked 253mm high-explosive cannons for ship-to-ship combat. Powering each ship are eight three-meter propellers, powered by four fission reactors, outputting at twenty terawatts. The airstrip can launch four conventional aircraft, or sixteen VTOL aircraft, simultaneously. The living and

sleeping quarters include that for the one hundred-fifty person crew, and five hundred additional combat personnel. The interior water-craft bay can store eight vessels in dry dock, and three ready to deploy out of a partially submerged blast-door. The vehicle storage bay can hold nearly one hundred light vehicles, and the aircraft hangers, approximately fifty aircraft.

"The facilities alone for these vessels construction took two years. It's now been almost five years since construction on the ships began. They are the pinnacle of Jekotian engineering. They are the most powerful weapon platforms to exist since Jekotian fighters intercepted the Brenodi's orbital rail gun cannon as it ascended into high orbit twenty-three years ago," Breckyard finished.

"Thank you very much for that information Lieutenant Commander. Now, who else has information to share," Patterson asked. This time it was a man. He measured approximately six feet tall, and was slightly overweight. Lieutenant Commander Jonathan Skeer of the Armoured Corps.

"We have been able to meet, and perhaps exceed, your request. I am happy to announce that approximately sixty-three percent of the Jekotian Armoured Forces are allocated to this operation. The frontlines will remain strong even with this unit decease, and we don't just have battered stuff off the front lines. The units are already in transport, a good balance of heavy tanks, medium tanks, light tanks, artillery tanks, and APC's. However, since the Sidewinders aren't yet fully deployed, they do not fall under our jurisdiction, so I have no idea when, or how many, will be available. Upon arrival at the regions where the ships are moored, the vehicles will be refitted with newer and better technology. It will take approximately three and a half weeks to complete this process," Skeer finished.

"Excellent, Skeer. Good work. Now then, that leaves only you, Lieutenant Commander Casten, would please share your information," Patterson said.

"Yes, sir," Casten said as she stood. She was a middle aged woman, average height, with a strong build. She had worked her way up from being a transport pilot, to a fighter, then a bomber, and eventually the Lieutenant Commander of Jekotian air forces. She was a fine example of determination and true Jekotian spirit.

"We will be able to allocate only fifty-one percent of our air force to this operation. The same increase in sea-going Brenodi aircraft that has called for more naval activity has also created the need for increased aircraft patrols. However, the allocated aircraft are among the best available. Available, there are: thirty-two Locust heavy transports, eighteen Phoenix Mark-III bombers, twenty-three Raptor fighters, and nearly thirty prototype Boomer gunships. I wont go into the details since were running late as it is, and we need to start on battle plans," Casten finished.

"Excellent work Casten. And as she said, yes, we do need to start on battle plans. Let's get started then, shall we," Patterson asked.

The noise levels in the room slowly dropped, pierced by the occasional shout of anger. They sat for hours, proposing new and old tactics, poking the flaws, and refining them. Eventually, Patterson stood and announced,

“And now our last order of business for today. As you all know, our history with space-bound technology hasn’t been anywhere near as efficient as that of the Brenodi. However, that is set to change. If you will all please follow me, bring your belongings if you wish, we are done in here for today,” Patterson said as he strode to the door, opened it, and waited in the hall.

“As you should all know,” Patterson said, as he led everyone through a complex corridor, making many turns, “our attempts to launch a satellite into orbit have always failed at one point. Fifty-three years ago, MIRACLE-ONE detonated into a three megaton fireball on the launch pad, hitting the city of Calyene with a devastating supersonic blast wave. Most of the city was levelled, thank god there were few deaths, and the entire craft and crew was destroyed. Eleven years later, after thousands of revisions, simulations, tests, and innovations, REBIRTH was launched. The shuttle encountered difficulties in low orbit when one of the rockets failed, and it plummeted into the Koln Pass military base, creating a thermonuclear fireball and obliterating it. No one survived. Sixteen years later, SATCOM was launched successfully into high orbit. After weeks of using it for communication, it broke orbit and collided with a passing asteroid. It turned out that a spy was on the team programming the satellite, and he had added a backdoor routine to allow full manual control of it. He was shot.

After that, all attempts to launch a satellite were grounded. That is, until thirteen years ago,” Patterson said as he stopped at a massive blast door. He turned to face everyone following and continued,

“Ladies and gentlemen, what I am about to show you is the most ambitious project in the history of our nation. A new type of satellite, a new breed of technology, a new era of hope,” he said as he turned back to the door and activated the security verification. The system quickly scanned his retina, voice, thumb prints, and finishes by having him enter a code on a keypad. As soon as he finished, the sounds of heavy bolts releasing, gears moving, and chains pulling filled the corridor. Slowly, a bright white light crept around and under the door. Very slowly, the door moved, as if being forced by unseen giants. Beyond the door was a massive, busy room. Everywhere there were engineers working on some aspect of the monolithic structure in the center of the room. Once the group entered the room, it was quite clear what it was.

“Ladies and gentlemen, this is HOPERISING. The single largest piece of military hardware ever conceived,” Patterson said, and turned to see everyone standing there, eyes wide, shocked, “it will launch into high orbit in two weeks. It’s equipped with a communications array capable of connecting our entire military network simultaneously, with a fission reactor that can output five terawatt for five years. It can support an unlimited number of data channels, as well as broadcast coordinates, and provide pinpoint targeting aid to any weapons system. As a last resort, it’s equipped with a solid fuel propulsion rocket that can be used to direct it into a ground-based target, should all else fail,” Patterson finished.

“My lord, how big is this thing,” Casten asked in awe.

“Approximately five hundred meters long, and forty-three meters in diameter. It will require its weight in fuel to even get it off the ground. The launch site is in a two square kilometre clearing, three kilometres from the outskirts of Ronan. Effectively the middle of nowhere. If we were to launch from High Command, like originally planned when it was still a small project, it would destroy this entire facility with its thrust alone. This is the key to

Operation TOVR, this is what will allow us to communicate with the assault, and relay information and orders.

"That is everything for today; we will meet again in two weeks, when HOPERISING launches. Borden will be sharing information on infantry available, and we will have some engineers to explain the new prototype technologies were intending to use. Dismissed," Patterson finished.