

# CHAPTER SIX

## —REARMAMENT—

**Mycene Shores, Southern Jekotia, SSMS-A4**

**July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2985**

On the shores of the island of Mycene, it was noon, and the tide was low. Off of its high bluffs, there was an incredible view of the ocean, and it was difficult to believe that it harboured such a deadly secret. Concealed within the bluffs was an intricate network of decaying tunnels, a stripped command center that doubled as bunker, and small hospital whose backup generator had been salvaged and relocated. Half a kilometre out at sea, a solid titanium flat-topped column measuring ten meters in diameter sat above the rough sea, showing fourteen years of rust and wear. Fifty feet below the top of the column were open blast doors, nested in the natural sea bed, which created a snug fit around the column. The column continued through these blast doors for another sixty feet, where it met massive hydraulic cylinders that raised and lowered the column. Or at least, that's how it used to be.

Over the last month since Jekotian High Command ordered the silo to come back online, it had been refit and repaired. The one-hundred-ten foot column had since been hollowed to lighten it, and the hydraulics had been replaced by much more reliable mechanical engines. The dormant command center had been refitted with state-of-the-art fire control systems, and an external satellite dish on the bluffs. The hospital had been expanded with a fifty person apartment suite, and the backup generator replaced with one thrice as powerful. All of this in preparation for today.

As an aircraft cleared the bluffs, it carefully dropped down towards the column, which had since had a circular platform welded to it, and burning signal flares around the edges. It was a modified Locust dropship; a craft favoured by many for its durable airframe, four turbine lift system, and the fact it could be inexpensively modified for any task. In place of its standard transport containers, was a massive missile, with the nose held in place by hastily repurposed and welded docking clamps. The pilot on the craft was Zack James, an experienced transport flyer in the Jekotian Airforce for the past twenty years of his life. He had joined at age forty three, after a particularly horrific encounter had left him unfit for duty in the Jekotian Armed Forces. Today's flight was routine, he had already made deliveries to SSMS-A1, SSMS-A2, and SSMS-A3, and had learned and memorized the new protocols.

"Transport pilot Zack James to SSMS-A4 command center, requesting clearance to lower missile into vertical position at one-hundred feet altitude."

"Affirmative, all crews are clear, clearance granted," came a reply.

Pressing a number of switches on his control panel, Zack engaged the pneumatic cylinder anchored to the rear of the missile. Over the course of the next several minutes, the missile was slowly and safely lowered into a vertical position. Once the missile was perpendicular to the dropship, the explosive bolts anchoring the pneumatic cylinder to both the missile and the dropship were detonated, causing the now useless piece of hardware to drop

away into the sea. Now swinging freely, the secondary cylinder, a much smaller one attached near the nose of the missile, locked the missile into position.

“Missile secure and vertical, requesting clearance to offload onto the launch pad,” Zack said over the COM.

“Clearance granted, engineers in the water are waiting to secure the missile to the launch pad,” replied the same person as earlier.

Over the next ten minutes, as Zack lowered the dropship and the missile towards the launch pad, he maintained constant radio communication with the engineers to ensure it safely made contact. Once it was flat on the launch pad, Zack set the autopilot to hold position, and the engineers climbed up ladders and out of the water to secure the missile. Inside marked compartments in the launch pad itself, the engineers found electric bolt fasteners, which they used to securely bolt the missile directly to the launch pad. These would be later replaced with the explosive bolts required to safely release the missile from the pad upon launch.

When the missile was secured to the launch pad, Zack deactivated the docking clamps securing the missile to the dropship, and then moved to the same height as the platform, setting the turbines to hold altitude at the edge of the platform so that the engineers could board the craft and be moved to safety. With the area now clear, Zack moved off towards the bluffs and radioed the command center.

“Launch site is clear of all personnel, missile secured and ready to be lowered into the silo. I have the engineers safely onboard,” he called out over the radio.

“Roger that, drop my boys off then head back to the airfield,” came a reply from the same voice as before.

After dropping the engineers off on the bluffs near an entrance to the tunnel network, exchanging farewells, Zack took off, back over the bluffs, towards the distant mainland, where he would land at Jekotian Airforce base Charlie-Delta, the main launch point for all aircraft in the Jekotians eastern theatre of war.

As he cleared the bluffs, he banked north, getting a better view of the now sinking missile. Around it the ocean was alive with turmoil as the massive column and its missile sank into its silo. Just another day in the life of a dropship pilot.

Below the surface, as the platform ceased its decent, engineers scrambled to work. The missile silo itself was separated from the facility with cylindrical blast doors, to contain the water that fills the silo when it’s open. With the missile clear of the overhead blast doors, an engineer hit the switch that controlled the blast doors, and engines roared to life, closing the door with such force that it was impenetrable to water or leaks. Once the blast doors were fully closed, the same engineer hit the switch beside the first, activating the pumps that drain the silo. The roar of water overcame all sound in the silo and attached facility, nearly deafening one of the new engineers that was beside the blast doors separating the missile from the facility. Once the water drained, the engineer hit the final switch, and again the roar of engines filled the chamber as the cylindrical blast doors separating the missile from its crew were opened. Once the doors rumbled to a stop, the room erupted in celebration. It was the first missile the facility had housed in fourteen years. It was the beginning of months of preparation, and putting years of training to work. Another day in the life of a missile silo crew. Another day at war...