

CHAPTER EIGHT

—ADVENT—

**Port Norald, Elsa
October 9th, 2985**

“On this day, we set forth on the greatest military endeavour in our planets history,” Patterson said. He stood at a podium, speaking into a microphone, addressing all of Jekotia. “In an hours time, when the tide comes in, raising the water and our spirits, our fleet will disembark for Bren. Two hundred thousand soldiers will fight for Jekotia, bringing us back from the brink of annihilation. In one hour, history will be ours. This day, nor the coming month, will ever be forgotten. We are the true ancestors of those that once inhabited the ancient city and the surrounding continent. We will reclaim what is rightfully ours and restore it to its former glory.”

In front of him, the entire Jekotian fleet disembarking to Bren was moored. Soldiers were on the decks cheering at his speech. Behind him, an even louder roar could be heard from the crews of the three Raven Spears, currently in dry-dock waiting for high tide. Patterson continued,

“To all of those disembarking, I salute you. Your bravery and commitment is what will bring our nation this victory. Without Jekotia, you are nothing. Without you, Jekotia is nothing. The road ahead is filled with hardship and sacrifice. Everyone, the entire Jekotian nation, is with you in spirit. Good luck.”

Patterson stepped away from the podium and the camera crew followed him. The general public had not been told the details of what was happening; what little information available to them was to boost moral and explain the massive increase in military movements recently. Nevertheless, the camera crew was very persistent, pestering him for more details. He called for guards to escort the camera crew from the premise, and to lock the outer gates. Patterson drew his portable communications tablet from his pocket, and sent a brief message to the port authority requesting that all non-military personnel be cleared from the port area immediately. The departure was less than an hour away, the public needed to be removed. He then sent a message to NAVALCOM instructing for all personnel to ready themselves for departure. He headed to the port authority’s office, the makeshift command center for the departure. Tisha Breckyard waited for him inside.

“High Commander Patterson,” she said, saluting him.

“You know I don’t care for the formalities, I wish you would stop,” he replied. She ignored him, like always. She was stubborn when it came to formalities. Her family history was in the Jekotian military, and she refused to ignore formality.

“I trust that the entire fleet is ready to depart,” he continued. “Food stores filled, crew, personnel, armour, aircraft, weaponry, munitions, and anything else essential, all accounted for and onboard?”

“Yes, sir,” She replied.

“Excellent. You can read the seas better than I, how long till the fleet can depart?”

“The main fleet could disembark immediately, but the Raven Spear’s will need another ten feet of water before the dry-docks can safely release them. At the current rate the tide is coming in, the fleet can depart en-masse in ten minutes,” she replied.

“Excellent work Lieutenant.”

A horn sounded, long and low. Moments later, more joined it. The first was the port signalling departure, the rest were the fleet, acknowledging. It was for moral more than anything. The horns of a full naval fleet lifted the spirits of any sailor. The silence broke as the main fleet pushed their engines to full power, and moved out of the harbour, creating a synchronous roar. Once the ships were clear, the dry-docks holding the Raven Spear’s slowly rolled into the harbour. The dry-docks themselves were absolutely massive. Three moved together, side by side, away from the ship-yards. Seven years of work, on a project where a single mistake would equal disaster. Seven years of uncertainty, where no one knew if the vessels would ever see completion. Seven years building three machines of war.

The dry-docks slowly followed a concrete track built into the harbour itself. Pushing each, the equivalent of eighty diesel train engines. As the platforms reached the waters, they gently sloped downward, into the sea. In turn, each dock released the constraints on its ship, causing the ships to slide off, thousands of rubberized wheels relieving their load. As the first ship cleared the dock, floating from its own buoyancy, water surged around it as the mass of the ship sank below the surface. Suddenly, without warning, the ships engines roared to life, moving it with startling speed. To see something so large, moving so quickly, brought on a sense that nothing was impossible. Moments later, the second ship did the same, and then the third. The main fleet was holding, waiting for the Raven Spear’s to take the head of the formation; and so they did. The entire fleet manoeuvred into formation behind the Raven Spear’s, and then moved south.

The plan was to sail south, past Mycene, and towards the South Islands. There, the fleet would pass through the border, kilometres from the mainland, where the coastal defences would fire blanks at the fleet. The intent was to make the Brenodi think the islanders were against the Jekotians, for their own safety. If the South Islands were dragged into the war, they would fall within weeks. After the initial volley of blanks, made from chromed plastics, dropships would land on the fleets’ aircraft carriers and deliver missiles. The ordinance was a special type of missile, long range supply delivery perfected by the Southern Alliance during the first Great War. The fleets ‘missile boats’ would use them to launch masses of supplies mainland once the invasion force was ready to erect bases. Twenty of them in total would deliver the majority of the supplies needed for the initial entrenchment, the rest would follow by boat. This would occur over four days.

After taking on all the missiles, the fleet would sail west, around the south most point of the Brenodi Empire, and blast its way through the naval defences on the island of Thule. At this point, the fleet would likely be a day from Imperial naval resistance, which should fall easily against the sheer number of Jekotian warships, and the fact that Jekotians have always held naval superiority over the Empire. By then, the fleet will be two days from Bren. Two days from the largest conflict their planet will ever know.

The beginning of the end was finally upon the two nations, and for Jekotia, everything was riding upon TOVR. By the end of it, either the Brenodi Empire or the Jekotian Republic would fall. Years later historians would look back and wonder, why? Why go on such a suicidal campaign? Why weaken their nation for a single assault? Why not surrender, and save millions of lives? The answer is simple; Jekotians will never give up. At any cost, they will fight for their nation. It is this innate ability that has allowed them to survive for so long. Their bloodline has existed since the creation of man; their heritage as old as recorded time itself. For a race like this, surrender is not undesirable, it was nigh impossible. Or so they believed...